

ASSETS AND NEEDS OF LOCAL FOOD PRODUCERS IN SEDGWICK COUNTY: AN  
EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS

A Dissertation by

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Master of Arts, Wichita State University, 2016

Bachelor of Science, University of Oregon, 2014

Submitted to the Department of Psychology  
and the faculty of the Graduate School of  
Wichita State University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

December 2020

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## DEDICATION

To my parents, friends, and family who have supported me in my pursuit of higher education, my graduate cohort who have supported each other throughout graduate school, and the supportive and inspiring professors and graduate students at the University of Oregon and  
Wichita State University

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'd like to thank the participants of this study, many of whom invited me to their farms and showed me great hospitality and enthusiasm. They are an inspiration and great role models for thinking about agriculture and society at large. It was a pleasure to talk to such humble and down-to-earth people that pursue something they truly care about and enjoy.

I'd also like to thank local food advocates and organizations that were not participants in this study but were still influential and helpful, such as those who attended the ICT Food Circle meetings. They are the innovators and leaders of the local food movement in Wichita and were a pleasure to discuss and understand local food with.

I'd also like to thank Dr. Meissen and the clinical-community faculty at Wichita State for letting me pursue this topic as a dissertation. What started as a simple question to Dr. Meissen about community gardens as I walked by his office turned into a full-fledged dissertation. I'd also like to thank Dr. Meissen's lab members for their input and help throughout my time in the lab completing this project.

Thank you to all my dissertation committee members for their time and input throughout this process; Dr. Robert Zettle, Dr. Louis Medvene, Dr. Brenden Clark, as well as Dr. Michael Birzer, for sharing his excellent knowledge of qualitative methodology with me.

## ABSTRACT

The current agricultural food system has been criticized for its economic, social, and environmental consequences. Alternative and local food systems have been proposed to be movements reacting against current agricultural food systems, as they emphasize social and environmental issues over purely economic ones. Such systems include farmers markets, community gardens, community-supported agriculture, and urban agriculture. The current study focused on the perspectives of local food producers in Sedgwick County. Using in-depth and in-person qualitative interviews, participants were asked what the assets and barriers are to alternative food systems in Sedgwick County, motivations to participate in such systems, and what Sedgwick County's food system has the potential to look like in 10 years. Using qualitative methodology, major themes from participants' interviews were produced from coded interview data. Major themes connected to assets and barriers included those related to infrastructure, knowledge and desire for local food, the climate of Kansas, business and institutional interest in local food, and bureaucracy and policy surrounding local food systems. Major themes connected to motivations included those related to a connection to people, community, nature, as well as emphasizing and being conscious of environmental and social impacts of agriculture. It is hoped that by better understanding the assets and barriers of Sedgwick County's food system as well as what motivates one to be involved in local food systems, this study can connect and inform key stakeholders, organizations, citizens, and food advocates in Sedgwick County.

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## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

**Context of the Present Study**

The current agricultural food system is efficient in its ability to produce and distribute cheap food to large populations (Born & Purcell, 2006). Though this system may be deemed efficient, it has been criticized for its economic, social, and environmental consequences (Altieri, 1998). These consequences include decreased democratic control of decisions relating to food production (Magdoff, Foster, & Buttel, 2000), environmental degradation (Turner, 1999), the breakdown of the social fabric in rural communities (Berry, 1977), increased rates of obesity (Kraak, Gootman, & McGinnis, 2006), and loss in profits for farmers, but not agribusinesses (Pretty, 1999). Alternative and local food systems have been proposed to be movements opposing the current agricultural food system (O'Hara & Stagl, 2001). Such systems include farmers markets, community gardens, community-supported agriculture, and urban agriculture. Though these systems have their flaws (Hinrichs, 2003), they are seen as real and powerful ways in which citizens can counteract the detrimental effects of the current food system (Pascual-de-Sans, 2004).

The current study focused on how these alternative food systems can thrive in Wichita, Kansas and Sedgwick County from the perspective of the producer. Many studies have focused on consumers' attitudes and behaviors regarding local agriculture, but few have addressed the assets of the people producing the food for local consumption. Alternative food systems stress the importance of democracy, community initiative, and assets and strengths of the local stakeholders involved in the systems (DeLind, 2002). In this sense, the current study will be framed from the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) framework proposed by

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993). The ABCD model, like alternative agricultural movements, stresses the importance of understanding and utilizing the strengths of the community members involved in the issue (Goldman & Schmalz, 2005). The goal is that by understanding and giving a voice to local food producers, their assets and unique perspectives will provide valuable data for stakeholders and community members who are involved in the creation and maintenance of alternative agriculture in Sedgwick County. They will be more informed and connected to successfully implement these systems, and hopefully reap the economic, social, and environmental fruits of these systems.

### **The Current Food System**

Food is one of the most essential substances in one's life and culture. Food and the food systems that create it serve more than simply the function of satisfying a physiological need (Murcott, 1982). Food has offered humans a way to create meaning in their culture, both symbolically (Munn, 1986) and through memory of rituals (Sutton, 2001). The importance of food can be seen in that the consumption of food is often used in many cultures as a means to reference the sacred and recreate cultural stories and myths (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002). The ritual practices that surround food consumption can reaffirm and establish deep relational, cultural, religious, and ethnic boundaries (Bahloul 1989; Fabre-Vassas, 1999; Munn 1986).

We now face a new crisis surrounding our food and the system that creates it. Many scholars, scientists, and activists have raised concerns over the sustainability and consequences of the existing modern industrialized food system (Altieri, 1998). Such concerns involve issues relating to the environment, economy, society, and public health. Though modern industrialized society and its agricultural food system have their benefits, such as increased life expectancy

(Maller, Townsend, Pryor, Brown, & Leger, 2005) and efficient food production with increased crop yields (Born & Purcell, 2006; Horrigan, Lawrence, & Walker, 2002), it has also left us with environmental degradation, public health issues, and oligarchical decision-making structures that profit and serve the interest of few (Magdoff, Foster, & Buttel, 2000; Shiva, 2000).

A food system can be seen as an intricate network of interrelated commercial and noncommercial activities by which food is managed and moved from creation to elimination, all the way to assimilation back with nature (Dahlberg, 1993). The modern industrialized agricultural food system is distinguished by its emphasis on the mechanization and specialization of production, focus on profit and high yields, large-scale farm operations, homogenization of crops, factory-style mode of production, and is usually operated by multinational agricultural corporations, also known as agribusinesses (Altieri, 1998; Horrigan et al., 2002). The current food system is also highly subsidized, produces a high amount of pollution, is dependent on high chemical inputs such as pesticides, and depletes the soil of nutrients (Altieri, 1998, Horrigan et al., 2002).

**Environmental impacts.** The practices listed above have been observed to lead to detrimental environmental outcomes such as increased air, water, and soil pollution, overconsumption of natural resources, and the diminishment of biodiversity (Horrigan et al., 2002). The focus on monocultures (one species of crop), absence of good crop rotations, lack of diversification, and increases in chemical input have led industrialized agricultural ecosystems to be more vulnerable to collapse (Altieri, 1998). By the year 2050, it is estimated that 200 million people will be “environmental refugees” due to ecological damage from phenomena such as the destruction of cropland, lack of water, and pollution (Myers, 2002).

In the case of livestock, the current mode of factory farming comes with its environmental consequences. Like mass-produced agriculture, factory farming exists to increase yields and reduce costs (Turner, 1999). This method usually compromises the livestock's wellbeing, denying them adequate social and behavioral needs while paying little to no attention to the health and welfare of the animals (Stevenson, 1997). Factory farming has also been found to consume large amounts of energy, water, and land, as well as pollute nearby waterways with excess nutrient, fertilizer, and insecticide runoff (Turner, 1999).

The current system of large-scale farming on a global scale means that in some cases food may have to travel excessively long distances to get to the consumer. The average pound of food travels 1,200 miles before it reaches the plate of the consumer (Norberg-Hodge, 1995). With these long distances comes the use of energy and fossil fuels, which leads to some scholars framing the issue from the standpoint of energy efficiency (Kunstler, 2005).

**Social consequences.** Industrial agriculture's insistence on large-scale mechanized farms has also come with a social toll. It has been argued that the trend towards globalization and industrialization has led to an era of identity-confusion and loss of spatio-cultural identity (Pascual-de-Sans, 2004; Windsor & McVey, 2005), with farm consolidation leading to the breakdown of the social and economic fabric of rural communities (Berry, 1977; Strange, 2008). In *The Unsettling of America* (1977), American author, environmental activist, social critic, and farmer, Wendell Berry, portrays how many rural agricultural localities lose their sense of community as the result of the allowance and tolerance of large agribusinesses, noting that the industrial food system has taken food production, something strongly related to culture and community, out of its socio-cultural context. This loss of community under industrialized agriculture has led to the diminishment of farmers' social networks, with work patterns being

more isolated and having fewer shared tasks (Raine, 1999). The current food system is also said to put pressure on farmers to favor economic efficiency and quantity over social values and product quality (Hinrichs & Lyson, 2007). Though the existing system is expansive and effects the majority of the population, decisions are made by a small group of executives that leave others with little or no say in the way their food is created (Corigan, 2011).

Farming communities struggling to handle cultural shifts due to agribusiness have also suffered financially, as the current system has left farmers receiving 10-20% of total profits while 70 years ago they were making approximately 50% (Pretty, 1999). This loss of financial earnings is also problematic because while food prices for consumers have increased by 52% from 1982 to 1992, the farmers only received an 18% increase in earnings from supermarkets in that same time period (Raven & Lang, 1995).

Not only are farmers losing social and economic ground, they profession have one of the higher rates of depression and suicide (Booth, Briscoe, & Powell, 2000; Fraser et al., 2005) and mortality (McCurdy & Carroll, 2000) compared to other industries. Chronic exposure to pesticides and other chemicals (Gerrard, 1998), physical demands, increasingly isolated work patterns, and long work hours in a wide range of weather conditions (McCurdy & Carroll, 2000) have been associated with these physical and mental health disparities in farmers (Gregoire, 2002).

**Urban impacts.** Urban areas are also places affected by the current food system. In the last century there has been a shift in people moving from rural to urban areas (Katcher & Beck, 1987), with more than half of the Earth's population now living in urban areas (Obaid, 2007). People living in urban areas are less likely to produce food, less likely to see food being grown, are more likely to eat food that has traveled long distances, and are more likely to consume

processed food (Campbell, 2004; Clement, 2010). This urbanization has led to a widespread disengagement of humans from their natural environment, which has been argued to have far reaching environmental, societal, and psychological consequences that are yet to be fully known (Axelrod & Suedfeld, 1995; Katcher & Beck, 1987).

Though the current system is deemed efficient, there are still 49.1 million people that are considered food insecure (USDA, 2009). This problem is worsened by uneven distribution of quality food outlets, which leaves large segments of the population in “food deserts”. Food deserts are specified as areas in which it is more difficult for people to access healthy and fresh foods, and is exacerbated by being low-income and having limited mobility (Furey, Strugnell, & McIlveen, 2001). Many food deserts are also characterized by an abundance of fast food restaurants and are often found in low-income urban areas (Morland, Wing, Diez Roux, 2002; Pothukuchi, 2005). Beyond just a neighborhood, entire nations can have worries over food security as the globalized food system allows for more countries to import and export food. Australia has raised questions about its food security as the country imported around \$8 billion dollars in food in one year (Food Policy Section, 2009), while 70% of the organic produce sold in the UK was imported in 1998 (Rose, 1998).

Researchers have suggested that the rise of food deserts and cheap production of low quality food is related to the government’s heavy subsidization of the agricultural system (Story, Kaphingst, Robinson-O’Brien, & Glanz, 2008). Not only is there heavy subsidization of the food system, the majority of these subsidies disproportionately go to large farms, with 30% of total subsidies going to the top 2% of farms and the top 30% getting up to four-fifths of the total subsidies (Myers & Kent, 1998).

This subsidization and related food policy leads to the favoring of certain types of crops being produced over others, which in turn incentivizes what producers and manufacturers make, and narrows consumer options (Schoonover, 2007). Such policy has led to the overproduction of corn and soybeans, thus leading them to have an artificially low price (Schoonover, 2007). These subsidies and food policy have made fats, sugar, and high fructose corn syrup exceptionally inexpensive, which then leads to manufacturers favoring those ingredients in their products (Schoonover, 2007; Schoonover & Muller, 2006). From 1970 to 2000, the amount of fats and oils found in foods increased by 38% while the amount of sweeteners increased by 20%, with the average American getting 50% of their calories from sugars and fats (Putnan, 2000). These trends in production then lead to a food system in which high-sugar and high-fat foods give consumers the most calories for the least amount of money (Drewnowski & Darmon, 2005).

To further cut costs and increase profit, manufacturers mass produce and mechanize the production of heavily subsidized crops like corn, which has led to more unhealthy processed food that is available at all times of the day and in multiple settings (Story et al., 2008). The resulting environmental and economic changes spurred by heavy subsidization and mass production of food have influenced what we eat, where we eat, and how much we eat, and are suggested to be a key player in the current obesity epidemic (Koplan, Liverman, & Kraak, 2005; Kraak, Gootman, & McGinnis, 2006). Given these trends of industrial agriculture, it has been suggested that the subsidization and policy surrounding the current food system is not in favor of the health of American citizens, but rather the profit of a few companies (Story et al., 2008).



### **Local Food Systems**

Due to the previously stated consequences of the modern industrialized food system, there has been a movement that is regarded as a reaction against the current system. This counter movement is manifested in a variety of ways and goes by a collection of related names such as alternative agro-food (Agyeman & Evans, 2004), alternative food systems (Feagan, Morris, & Krug, 2004), alternative food initiatives (Allen, FitzSimmons, Goodman, & Warner, 2003), the “good food” movement (Connell, Smithers, & Joseph, 2008), civic agriculture (Lyson, 2000; 2004), community food security (Anderson & Cook, 2000), shortened food chains (Renting, Marsden, & Banks, 2003), the “quality turn” (Goodman, 2003), and local food systems (Feenstra, 1997; Hinrichs, 2003).

Though different in name, these local and alternative food systems share a variety of common characteristics. These systems are all claimed to be a reaction against industrialized global food markets (O’Hara & Stagl, 2001). These alternative systems also move away from the current systems’ emphasis on profit, standardized mechanistic production, mass production, and distant actors as the major decisions-makers (DeLind, 2002; Goodman, 2003; Hendrickson & Heffernan, 2002).

In opposition to the damaging aspects of global industrialized agriculture, these local food systems place an emphasis on civic issues and values rather than purely economic ones (DeLind, 2002), such as acknowledging that food system change must be accompanied by and incorporate changes in social, political, economic, and cultural arenas that value social justice and environmental sustainability (Altieri, 1998). These movements focus on community and social values like stewardship, self-reliance (Ruttan, 1997), tradition, trust, localization, regionalism (Goodman, 2003), organic produce, fair trade products, and sustainability (Agyeman

& Evans, 2004). These alternative food movements can also be described as emphasizing the decentralization of decision-making by focusing more on democratic participation with direct and authentic connections between producers and consumers that empower people at the local level (Feenstra, 2002).

These movements are also suggested to be a way in which communities can retake and find a sense of place and cultural identity that have been lost in the mass production and homogenization of globalized industry (Beery, 1977, Pascual-de-Sans, 2004; Windsor & McVey, 2005). Other authors have suggested that the values of these alternative movements strike an ethical imperative and can be framed on moral grounds (Sage, 2003). Lastly, some authors have placed the local food systems movement as part of a larger movement that has been called the “second industrial revolution”, which emphasizes resource conservation and social values rather than the values of the first industrial revolution such as resource extraction and money (Suzuki & Dressel, 2002).

**Types of alternative food systems.** These local and alternative food systems manifest themselves in a variety of forms. The most common of these embodiments include farmers markets (Brown & Miller, 2008), community supported agriculture (CSA) (Bougherara, Grolleau, & Mzoughi, 2009; Brehm & Eisenhauer, 2008), urban agriculture (Goldstein, Bellis, Morse, Myers, & Ura, 2011), and community gardens (Corrigan, 2011; Guitart, 2012). Less common and less researched endeavors include food preservation (Click & Ridberg, 2010), farm apprenticeships (Jarosz, 2000), and food circles (Hendrickson & Heffernan, 2002).

An important avenue in which local food systems are manifested are farmers markets. Brown and Miller (2008) consider farmers markets to be the “historical flagships” of local food systems while Gillespie, Hilchey, Hinrichs, and Feenstra (2007) call them the “keystones” for

rebuilding local food systems. Halweil (2002) claims that farmers markets are the best example of farmers “taking back” a portion of the profits that have been taken by agribusiness, and the best example of community members wanting to support local agriculture. Due to the low-cost and few barriers to entry, farmers markets are believed to be informal business incubators as they nurture entrepreneurship and diversification of small farms and allow vendors to experiment with new crops at low risk (Feenstra, Lewis, Hinrichs, Gillespie, & Hilchey, 2003; Hilchey, Lyson, & Gillespie, 1995).

It is estimated that the number of farmers markets in the United States has grown 394% from 1994 to 2016 to over 8,600 markets (USDA, 2016). The value of food purchased from farmers markets doubled from 1992 to 2012 hitting \$11.4 billion in 2012 (USDA, 2012). Though farmers market have become more popular, some studies report that they still represent a small portion of the total food economy, with only 1% of all produce sold in California in 2003 coming from farmers market sales (Wolf & Berrenson, 2003). A survey of farmers markets in Oklahoma (Henneberry et al., 2008) reported that total gross sales from the 2001 season were \$3.3 million. Payne (2002) found that 28% of farmers use farmers markets as their sole income outlet and that vendors make \$11,773 on average.

Another avenue for local food systems is community supported agriculture (CSA). Community supported agriculture is a way in which farmers and consumers can both share the risks and rewards of farming (Cooley & Lass, 1998). In CSA, community members pay for a share of a farm’s production (Brehm & Eisenhauer, 2008), creating a dynamic social interaction that allows members to share social, economic, and philosophical values (Kelvin, 1994). In some cases CSA can be more hands off, in which members provide farmers the capital for food production and the food is then delivered to members’ households (Bougherara et al., 2009). In

other cases of CSA, members do more than simply providing the capital, as members can become involved in tending to the farm and be connected to all processes of production (Cooley & Lass, 1998). In some cases, multiple farms may collaborate with each other in what is known as collaborative community supportive agriculture (cCSA) (Flora & Bregendahl, 2012). CSA can provide goods such as fruits, vegetables, and meats and are said to produce community and environmental benefits such as increased community engagement and collaboration, increased access to healthy foods, and preserving farmland through sustainable practices (Feenstra 1997).

Community-supported agriculture is reported to have started in Japan in the 1960s when food started to become increasingly imported and farmland was slowly going away. Local women became concerned and asked farmers to grow fruits and vegetable for their families, in which the farmers agreed only if the families would economically support the farm (Van En, 1995). The estimated number of CSA operations in the United States varies depending on what dataset is examined; with some studies reporting 1,650 in 2012 (Flora & Bregendahl, 2012) and other studies reporting 12,549 in 2007 (USDA, 2007). Most CSA operations in the United States are reported to be located in the Northeast, Upper Midwest, and West Coast (Flora & Bregendahl, 2012).

Community gardens are also seen as an important aspect of the alternative food system movement (Baker, 2004). Community gardens are interpreted as open spaces in which members of a local community can collectively manage and operate the cultivation of food and flowers (Holland, 2004; Pudup, 2008). Community gardens can be located in a variety of locations such as schools, prisons, hospitals, and residential housing grounds, and serve a wide range of demographics from young children to the elderly (County, 2010; Pudup, 2008; Teig et al., 2009). They can also serve an assortment of functions such as communal gardens, therapy gardens,

training gardens, youth gardens, senior gardens, food pantry gardens, and church gardens (County, 2010; Pudup, 2008). Community gardens are said to give rise to a variety of social processes including community engagement, community building, mutual trust, reciprocity, and building social of connections (Armstrong, 2000; Cohen, Finch, Bower, & Sastry, 2006; Twiss et al., 2003). In the past, community gardens have been a food resource in times of need such as relief gardens during the great depression (County, 2010) and liberty and victory gardens during the world wars (Lawson, 2005).

Urban agriculture is another arena that is considered a part of local food systems. Urban agriculture may incorporate many aspects of alternative agriculture such as community, commercial, and personal gardens, farmers markets, and community-supported agriculture (Goldstein, et al 2011). There is debate over the exact meaning of urban agriculture, but scholars broadly agree that urban agriculture is the act of feeding local populations with food crops and livestock that is from an urban setting (Goldstein, 2011).

Lastly, on-farm apprenticeships, resource sharing, food preservation, and food circles are seen as other parts of the local food system that tend to be less researched. Apprenticeships provide participants with firsthand knowledge in local agriculture and can provide both learning and employment opportunities for a wide range of people from students gaining class credits to apprentices aspiring to work in the field (Jarosz, 2000). Resource sharing allows farmers to share equipment such as tractors or processing facilities (Jarosz, 2000). Preserving local food is reported to allow one to build a deeper awareness of food and environmentalism and though its impacts are less tangible, people report it is an important socio-political practice to counteract the global food system (Parkins & Craig, 2009). Food circles are seen as ways in which local community members commit to reworking dominant food systems (Hendrickson & Heffernan,

2002). Food circles return a sense of control to local communities, as well as emphasize concepts such as trust, regard, and allow education of the seasonality and customs of the local food system (Hendrickson & Heffernan, 2002).

### **Issues with the Local Food Movements**

Though there are many benefits and good intentions associated with local and alternative food movements, they are not without their own issues, critiques, and unintended consequences that demand further examination. Problems with local food movements are proclaimed to involve issues related to socioeconomic barriers (Alkon & McCullen, 2011); perceptions, interpretations, and social construction of the term “local” (Born & Purcell, 2006; Ostrom, 2006; Selfa & Quzi, 2005; Zepeda & Leviten-Reid, 2004); racial and ethnic barriers (Alkon & McCullen, 2011); advocating change through consumerism (DeLind, 2002); conflating the term local with good (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Hinrichs, 2003); fostering elitism (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005); being defensive and reactionary (Hinrichs, 2003); exploiting, romanticizing, and appropriating rural culture (Alkon & McCullen, 2011; Park & Coppack, 1994); and failing to notice more sustainable alternatives (Weber & Matthews, 2008).

**Local trap.** A key criticism of the local food systems movement is the idea of the “local trap” (Born & Purcell, 2006; Hinrichs, 2003). The local trap refers to the phenomenon in which it is automatically assumed that the term local equals “good”, presuming that anything that is local is believed to be inherently more sustainable or socially just than something that is not (Born & Purcell, 2006; Hinrichs, 2003). In many cases, social and environmental issues do not consistently and predictably map directly onto spatial relations such as local or regional

(Hinrichs, 2003) so that systems at one scale are no more likely to be just or sustainable than systems at other scales (Born & Purcell, 2006).

It is proposed that people may fall into this local trap because the term local has been dichotomized with global (Ward & Almas, 1997). The tendency to think in dichotomies (e.g., nature vs. culture, civilized vs. primitive, art vs. science) then leads to the conflation of one side with good (local) and the other side with bad (global) (Born & Purcell, 2006; Hinrichs, 2003; Ward & Almas, 1997). In this sense, the term local becomes a potent signifier for a wide range of “good” issues such as sustainability, quality, and justice (Holloway & Kneafsey, 2000) though many times local movements can still be the sites of injustice (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Hinrichs, 2000). This misguided conflation may also come about because our culture tends to associate globalization with capitalization, leading one to mistakenly see local food movements as reactions to globalization when they are suggested to be seen as movements resisting capitalization (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; McMahon 2002).

Rather than strictly focus on what is local, authors have suggested that alternative food movements should primarily focus on social justice and democracy (Born & Purcell, 2006). These criticisms still leave room for local spaces to be sites of social justice and resistance, but suggest that one should make local food systems more just rather than simply making food systems more local (DuPuis & Goodman, 2003). Lastly, discourses around these movements should seek more nuanced and interactionist views of what constitutes local rather than adhering to strict dichotomies such as local vs. global (Ward & Almas, 1997).

Weber and Matthews (2008) study on the climate impact of food choices greatly exemplifies how the local trap can be misguided by automatically assuming that local is inherently better. In their study they examined the environmental impact of food choice in terms

of the amount of greenhouse gasses generated from the production and transportation of food. They found that a dietary shift of consuming less red meat has greater environmental impacts than simply buying local. Specifically, they found that a simple shift in food consumption away from red meat and dairy-based diets to chicken, fish, eggs, and vegetable-based diets for one day a week is more climate friendly than purchasing all locally sourced food.

**Constructing the term “local”.** Another important and related critique of the local food systems literature is the debate over how one defines and frames the concept of “local”. The term “local” is suggested to be one that is relational, socially-constructed, and continually open to change (Hinrichs, 2003). Authors have noted that a tension has been created in the failure of researchers to develop what the term local means, citing that few people have attempted to define it, and when they do, definitions are often inconsistent (Ostrom, 2006). Born and Purcell (2006) note that because spatial dimensions such as local are socially-constructed, resulting definitions and understandings of what is local may serve the agenda of those that define it.

Some studies suggest defining local in terms of distance in miles, with a variety of studies leading to definitions that define local as a 12 mile radius (Pretty, Ball, Lang, & Morison, 2005), a 30 mile radius (Flint, 2004), a 200 mile radius (Nabhan, 2002), or anywhere one can get in a day’s round trip drive (Devine, 2004). Some researchers have asked the producers and consumers themselves how they perceive and construct what local means. Selfa and Qazi (2005) interviewed consumers and producers in King County in Washington state and found that what constitutes local varies across class, ethnicity, and region. They found that one-third of consumers reported the entire state of Washington or the Pacific Northwest as local, while the majority of producers reported that adjacent counties represent what is local. Other researchers have found that what constitutes local may vary across ethnicity, as they found that Blacks in



their study tended to define local as a much larger geographical area than did Whites (Zepeda & Leviten-Reid, 2004).

Though the term local may not be as well-researched and lack a clear definition, the term “community” has a vast history of research and is suggested to be a better way to conceptualize local food systems (Ostrom, 2006). Communities can be seen as dynamic social networks that are developed on the basis of shared values, interests, identities, and are continuously recreated and reformed through discourse and practice (Flora, 2001; Liepins, 2000). In this sense seeing local food movement through a community development lens that stresses building social networks and generating social capital to generate community action may be a better way to frame the issue (Flora, 2001).

**Sociocultural and economic issues.** Other issues that permeate local food systems include those relating to race, socioeconomic status, commodification, and appropriation. With regards to race, some scholars advise that farmers markets and the alternative food system movements more broadly may be inundated with discourses and cultural practices related to whiteness and that this may inhibit participation of people of color (Guthman 2008a, 2008b; Slocum 2007). They posit that white affluent consumers at farmers markets may be blinded by how the current food system affects people of other races and socioeconomic classes, seeing themselves as ethical consumers without acknowledging racial and class privileges (Alkon & McCullen, 2011). This blindness and whitened discourse may also romanticize a pastoral image of local agriculture that forgets the large number of underpaid immigrants who worked California’s first factory farms or the primarily Mexican farm laborers who harvest the majority of produce in the United States (Allen 2004; Guthman 2008b).

Often related to racial issues are economic issues in the local food system. Local does not always mean better, as local movements and groups can become places where local and wealthy elites can create and abuse power or serve self-interests (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005). Some propose that the products of local food systems such as farmers markets risk becoming overpriced niche markets, sometimes mockingly referred to as “yuppie chow” (Bell & Valentine, 1995).

One’s consumption habits are intricately tied to the construction of identity, and thus the types of foods that one purchases can be seen as a type of cultural capital, carrying a symbolic function in terms of marking status and distinction (Jackson & Thrift 1995; Bell & Valentine, 1997). In this sense yuppie chow, or other locally-produced and purchased items may risk becoming a status symbol or a lifestyle choice that plays into the status-seeking class-based system that ultimately does not lead to any significant social and economic change (Bell & Valentine, 1995).

Related to racial, socioeconomic, and identity distinction issues is the idea that alternative food movements may overly romanticize and appropriate rural culture (Alkon & McCullen, 2011; Bessièrè, 1998; Park & Coppack, 1994). Often local produce is symbolically embedded with meanings of authenticity, quality, naturalness, and tradition (Park & Coppack, 1994). Consuming local products may represent a way for one to temporarily exploit rural culture; such as wealthy urbanites going to farmers markets to have short-lived appropriation of a rural identity through consumption (Bessièrè, 1998; Park & Coppack, 1994). As stated previously, this romanticizing the image of rural agriculture may be perpetuated by an upper-class or whitened worldview, in which rural agriculture is seen as a pastoral leisure hobby that fails to

acknowledge other groups of people exploited by modern agriculture (Allen 2004; Guthman 2008b).

**Reactionary politics.** Another criticism of local food movements is that they may be reactionary and are sometimes created out of defensiveness (Hinrichs, 2003). Specifically, Hinrichs (2003) suggests that when localization is approached defensively, it tends to create and emphasize boundaries and distinctions between a socially and culturally homogenous in-group reacting to nonlocal others, what she calls “defensive localism” or “food patriotism”. This defensive localism may lead local food movements appealing to narrow nativist sentiments that risk becoming xenophobic (Allen, 2004).

Lastly, some critiques have pointed out that local food movements may focus too much on solving comprehensive and deeply entrenched social problems through consumerism and the marketplace, rather than via democracy, policy, civic debate, and citizenship (DeLind, 2002). For alternative agriculture to really have a deep and sweeping impact, it has been argued that it must challenge conventional agriculture rather than simply provide a small alternative market niche for consumers (Allen 2004; Buttel, 1997).

A key argument in this critique is to highlight the difference between being a citizen versus consumer with regards to local food movements. This argument notes that democracy and being a citizen is not a simple consumer or lifestyle choice, but rather a first order social value (Gabriel & Lang, 1995; Sclove, 2000). The critique proposes that we need to go beyond our consumer-selves and find our citizen-selves that are active and engaged in policy, democracy, and citizenship (Gabriel & Lang, 1995; Sclove, 2000). As Delind (2002) indicates;

When our only voice is through the marketplace, it is a very poor voice at best.

When we connect principally as producers and consumers, we are still living off the land and not in it, off nature and off each other. (p. 223)

Though these criticisms state that local food movements can be misguided and places of injustice, they do not leave out the prospect that these movements can also be places of great social change. Most of these criticisms suggest that the local food movement should be more self-reflective and critical (Dupuis & Goodman, 2005) by focusing on how these local systems can address social justice, sustainability, and democracy, rather than simply focusing on the idea of local (Born & Purcell, 2006). Hinrichs (2003) notes that local food movements have the ability to promote diversity and receptivity through exchange and contact, moving away from defensive localism to a diversity-receptive localization, and sees local as a term that is open to change depending on the needs to the community. Though local food systems like farmers markets are places of consumption they are also places of social change and entry points for more collective food policies and the spreading and exchange of ideas (Alkon & McCullen, 2011).

### **Benefits and Motivations for Local and Alternative Food Systems**

The characteristics and consequences of modern agriculture, the alternative food systems resisting it, and criticisms of those alternative food systems are complex, but also provide opportunity for positive change. Attention will now be turned to the benefits, both perceived and measured, of local and alternative food systems as well as what makes people motivated to seek

out and participate in such systems. Also discussed will be constructs related to benefits and motivations of local food systems that help frame these behaviors in a larger theoretical context.

**Farmers markets.** As stated previously, farmers markets can be seen as the flagship of alternative food movements (Brown & Miller, 2008). Motivations for attending farmers markets and the associated benefits cover a wide range of topics though research tends to consistently find similar trends.

There have been numerous qualitative and quantitative studies that have examined consumer and producer motivations for participating in and attending farmers markets. Most of the research has found consistent themes, finding that primary motivations for attending farmers markets include the availability of fresh, nutritious, and seasonal food (Connell, Smithers, & Joseph, 2008; Feagan et al., 2004; Guthrie, Guthrie, Lawson, & Cameron, 2006; Selfa & Qazi, 2005; Trobe, 2001; Wolf, Spittler, & Ahern, 2005), knowing that animal welfare is taken into account (Connell et al., 2008), supporting local economy and local farmers (Connell et al., 2008; Feagan et al., 2004), environmental concerns such as reducing packaging, processing and transportation (Halweil, 2002; Norberg-Hodge, Merrifield, & Gorelick, 2002; Trobe, 2001), and providing a sense of community and face-to-face social interaction (Feagan et al., 2004; Griffin & Frongillo, 2003; Szmigin, Maddock, & Carrigan, 2003). These points will be further elucidated below.

Farmers markets have also been found to provide particular economic benefits. Research has found that farmers markets provide spaces for entrepreneurship and expansion of small farms and food enterprises (Hilchey et al., 1995), allow diversification by allowing vendors more room to experiment with less risk (Hilchey et al., 1995), and provide few barriers for entry to allow new businesses to grow (Feenstra et al. 2003; Sommer, 1989). Having more small businesses in a

community has been found to lead to more income equity, economic stability, and a more robust community infrastructure (Shuman, 1998; Tolbert, Lyson, & Irwin, 1998). Farmers markets also provide a way for people who do not normally contribute to the economy to do so, such as part-time growers who have significant off-farm income, craftspeople, artisans, and small-scale food producers (Hilchey et al., 1995).

**Community gardens.** The benefits of participating in community gardens as well as reasons for doing so are multifaceted and affect a broad range of areas and issues ranging from physical health to community development. A survey of members from 22 community gardens in upstate New York (Armstrong, 2000) revealed that the most common motivations for participating in community gardens were to enjoy nature, obtain fresh food, and the associated health benefits. That same survey also found it was four times more likely that other neighborhood issues were addressed if the garden was in a low-income neighborhood, suggesting that community gardens can serve a social function such as being a catalyst for community empowerment and development. Specifically, it was found that participation in a community garden led to more participation in local politics, better community cohesion, development of neighborhood associations, and more awareness of other groups involved.

Other surveys and studies on community gardens have found similar results, revealing common themes and benefits of community gardens. Overall, research suggests that participation in community gardens leads to increased physical activity (Litt et al., 2011; Park, Shoemaker, & Haub, 2009; Wakefield, Yeudall, Taron, Reynolds, & Skinner, 2007), increased consumption of safe and nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables (Litt et al., 2011, Twiss et al., 2003; Wakefield et al., 2007), increased appreciation of neighborhood aesthetics, leading to perceptions of one's neighborhood as more beautiful (Hale et al., 2011; Litt et al., 2011), and

alleviating food insecurity in food deserts (Corigan, 2011), with some suggesting that community gardens can become powerful domains for the food security movement (Baker, 2004).

Many studies highlight the increased social benefits of community gardens. Community gardens lead to members having stronger connections and attachments to their neighborhoods (Comstock et al., 2010; Litt et al., 2011). Community gardens are believed to increase this connection by fostering social inclusion (Ferris, Norman, & Sempik, 2001), increasing social capital and collective efficacy (Hancock, 2001; Teig et al., 2009), strengthening a sense of safety (Ferris et al., 2001), providing a platform for organizing around other neighborhood issues (Purdup, 2008), and fostering local environmental knowledge (Andersson, Barthel, & Ahrne, 2007). This increased connection, knowledge, and efficacy then leads to increased neighborhood volunteerism, leadership, civic engagement, and collective decision-making, which can ultimately lead to empowerment (Armstrong, 2000; Teig et al., 2009; Twiss et al., 2003).

Researchers have noted that in terms increasing attachment to one's neighborhood, the relational nature of community gardens allows people to overcome dualist, subject-object distinctions, and to adopt more nuanced and holistic views of themselves and their physical environments (Story, Neumark-Sztainer, & French, 2002). In this sense, people have found that beyond the benefits such as healthy food, exercise, and civic engagement, garden experiences can contribute to experiences of deeper meaning, emotional connections, greater connections to culture, and an increased sense of purpose (Comstock et al., 2010; Hale et al., 2011; Milligan, Gatrell, & Bingley, 2004).

Community gardens have also been found to improve mental health (Wakefield et al., 2007; Hale et al., 2011). In one study (Rappe, Koivunen, & Korpela, 2008), a community garden was tended by a group of psychiatric outpatients. Participants reported that gardening helped

improve concentration, made them feel more invigorated and cheerful, and led to enjoying better sleep. In another study (Hale et al., 2011), participants reported therapeutic affects of gardening such as a more holistic sense of well-being and a noticeable reduction in stress. Gardening has also been found to lower admission risk for dementia by 40% in gardeners compared to non-gardeners (Simons, Simons, McCallum, & Friedlander, 2006). In a study of community gardens in prisons, gardening was found to decrease assaults amongst prisoners (Hunter, 1970).

**Community supported agriculture.** Another domain of alternative food systems is community-supported agriculture (CSA). Like community gardens and farmers markets, the motivations and benefits of community supported agriculture span a wide range of topics.

The reported motivations of members for joining CSA tend to be similar across multiple studies that survey CSA members. Specifically, the majority of surveys report that members find that food quality and related domains, such as access to fresh fruits, vegetables, and nutritious foods, as among the main reasons for joining (Brehm & Eisenhauer, 2008; Cooley & Lass, 1998; O'Hara & Stagl, 2001). Another common motivation was improving physical health via consumption of healthy foods (O'Hara & Stagl, 2001).

Another major factor that motivates people to join community-supported agriculture is concerns relating to environmental and ecological issues such as reducing environmental impact and preserving farmland (Bougherara et al., 2009; Cooley & Lass, 1998; Feenstra, 1997; O'Hara & Stagl, 2001). It has also been found that members of CSA tend to perceive themselves as more ecologically and environmentally minded (Brehm & Eishenhauer, 2008).

Another common motivation for joining community supported agriculture is related to social domains. Specifically, members tend to report motivations such as supporting local farming (Cooley & Lass, 1998) and building a stronger sense of community (O'Hara & Stagl,



2001). Observed and reported social benefits include increased collaboration (Feenstra, 1997), a returned sense of agency to the community (Ostrom, 2006), and increased democracy in food systems (Lang, 1999). One's perceived attachment to their community has also been found to predict motivation for joining a CSA (Brehm & Eisenhauer, 2008). Interestingly, surveys have found that though social capital and social connections may be motivators, they are not primary reasons for joining a CSA (Brehm & Eisenhauer, 2008). One survey found that CSA members consider themselves more politically active (O'Hara & Stagl, 2001). CSA members are found to save money on produce, saving 60% to 150% compared to the same produce found in regular markets, though economic reasons are not reported as a primary motivation for CSA membership (Cooley & Lass, 1998).

Because producers are also involved in community-supported agriculture, a study by Tegtmeier and Duffy (2005) surveyed producers' motivations for participation. The study found that 76% of producers found having financial capital to be important, 40% reported social capital, 24% reported cultural capital, and 12% reported environmental reasons, while none reported political reasons. Though financial capital was an important reason, producers were not completely drawn to CSA for economic reasons.

**Urban agriculture.** Urban agriculture is an arena of the alternative food movement that combines previously mentioned enterprises such as community gardens, community supported agriculture, and farmers markets, all of which must take place in urban settings (Goldstein et al., 2011). Like other alternative agricultural movements, motivation and benefits for urban agriculture have been found to be related to access to nutrient rich food, food security, physical health, and social organization (Bellows, Brown, & Smit, 2003; Vitiello & Wolf-Powers, 2008). Other commonly cited motivations include educational opportunities and community building

(McClintock & Simpson, 2014). Though in many cases, urban agriculture has been promoted as a way to attract capital, increase property values, and create jobs (Kaufman & Bailkey, 2000), it is suggested to have greater potential in the social capital and community building that it fosters (Brown & Bailkey, 2002; Vitiello & Wolf-Powers, 2008).

**Environmental concern.** As previously noted, a commonly reported motivation for participating in alternative food systems revolves around environmental and ecological issues. Though people often have worries about the environment, social and behavioral scientists have long been interested in what makes people actually take action. Regarding alternative food systems, more is needed to be known for actually predicting and influencing related behavior and action.

A concept that can help contextualize motivations and behaviors for alternative food systems is environmental concern. Environmental concern is understood as an attitude or evaluation towards facts, one's own behavior, and others' behaviors that are related to environmental and ecological issues (Sjoberg, 1989; Takala, 1991; Weigel, 1983). Environmental concern can be a specific attitude determining intentions, a broad and general attitude, or value orientation (Franson & Garling, 1999).

Researchers suggest that environmental concerns revolve around three areas; (a) concern for oneself, or egotistic concerns, (b) concern for others, or social-altruistic concerns, and (c) concern for nature, or biospheric concerns (Hansla, Gamble, Juliusson, & Gärling, 2008; Schultz, 2001). Researchers have suggested that these concerns can be related to how people value themselves, others, and nature, as well as how they see an interconnection between themselves and others (social-altruistic) and themselves and nature (biospheric) (Schultz, 2001). Interestingly, environmental concerns do not directly relate to environmentally-related behaviors

(Bamberg, 2003). Researchers have found that environmental-related behaviors may be mediated by knowledge of environmental issues, internal locus of control, threats to personal health, and personal responsibility (Franson & Garling, 1999), as well as how attached one is to the location (Vorkinn & Riese, 2001).

Vess and Arndt (2008) suggested that one's environmental concern is related to self-esteem and existential insecurities about death. Specifically, they found that when participants were reminded of their mortality, those who derived self-esteem from environmental action were more likely to have concern for the environment than those not deriving self-esteem from environmental action. This research suggests that though people may have environmental worries and knowledge, taking action may be related to the degree to which one obtains a sense of self-esteem through environmentally-related action.

With the destructive environmental consequences of modern agriculture becoming more known (Altieri, 1998; Magdoff et al., 2000; Shiva 2000) and the fact that environmental issues are commonly cited as motivators for local food systems (Bougherara, et al., 2009; Cooley & Lass, 1998; Halweil, 2002; O'Hara & Stagl, 2001; Trobe, 2001), environmental concern can be a powerful construct in understanding and changing attitudes and behaviors relating to participation in these food systems.

**Place attachment.** Another construct that appears to influence attitudes and behaviors relating to participating in alternative food systems is place attachment (Brown & Perkins, 1992). Much like the term alternative agriculture, there are many constructs related to place attachment that go by other names, though they appear to be referencing similar phenomenon. Such names include emdeddedness (Thorne, 1996; Hinrichs, 2000), belongingness (Cockshaw, Shochet, & Obst, 2013), neighborhood attachment (Comstock et al., 2010), social-belonging (Mahar,

Cobigo, & Stuart, 2013), place identity (Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003; Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983) and rootedness (Vitek & Jackson, 1996). These terms also come from a wide variety of intersecting academic disciplines such as community psychology, environmental psychology, geography, and sociology (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). At their core, all of these terms appear to be referencing people's relationships to place (Manzo & Perkins, 2006).

In general, place attachment and the related concepts can be seen as behavioral, cognitive, and emotional experiences related to sociophysical environments (Brown & Perkins, 1992) that lead to positive bonds and a sense of self-identity with these social and physical settings (Brown, Perkins, & Brown, 2003). Such cognitions and emotions can include values, memories, attitudes, feelings, preferences, meanings, conceptions of behavior, and experiences that relate to the settings (Proshansky et al., 1983).

Place attachment has been found to translate into feelings of pride (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996) and feelings of wellbeing (Harris, Werner, Brown, & Ingebritsen, 1995). They can be fostered by friendly encounters with neighbors, the environment, seasonal celebrations, and continued physical upkeep of the neighborhood (Brown & Werner, 1985; Sampson, 1989; Werner, Altman, Brown, & Ginat, 1993). Also linked to place attachment is one's level of community and citizen engagement, as the more attachment one has to their community or neighborhood, the more likely they are to participate in activities relating to the upkeep, improvement, and maintenance of the community (Cuba & Hummon 1993; Perkins, Brown, & Taylor, 1996; Saegert, 1989; Schorr, 1997), which then leads to higher community confidence (Varady, 1986), collective efficacy (Brown et al., 2003), sense of security and control (Proshansky et al., 1983) and residential stability (Sampson, Raudenbush & Earls, 1997). An extensive amount of research has also found that sense of belonging, especially amongst farmers,

is strongly linked with reduction of depressive symptoms (Choenarom, Williams, & Hagerty, 2005; McCallum & McLaren, 2010; McLaren & Challis, 2009).

Some researchers have also examined the connection between environmental concern and place attachment. In a study of residents in a rural community in Norway, Vorkinn and Riese (2001) examined residents' attitudes towards a proposed major hydroelectric power plant. They found that place attachment explained more of the variance in attitudes than any sociodemographic variables combined. These results support Relph's (1976) idea that attachment to a place also involves a concern and care for it.

Given that a strong sense of place attachment relates to the above benefits, some have argued that place attachment can be seen as a community asset, in that having shared place-based values are essential for the wellbeing of communities and vital for participatory community planning (Kemmis & Jacobs, 1995). Place attachment has also been found to be related to empowerment and social capital, which greatly strengthens participatory community planning (Horelli, 2002). Place attachments may also be a way for people to recapture a sense of spatio-cultural identity that was lost in globalization (Pascual-de-Sans, 2004; Windsor and McVey, 2005).

Like environmental concern, place attachment can be an important construct for understanding the attitudes and behaviors of community members and producers participating in local food systems. It is seen not only as a concept for understanding attitudes towards a geographical location, but also a variable that can influence community empowerment and development.

**Contact with nature.** A sense of belonging and attachment to a community, as well as environmental concern have been tied to motivators and benefits of alternative food systems.

Another domain that is commonly seen as a benefit and motivator for local food systems is the opportunity of having a healthier and closer connection with nature.

There has been an extensive amount of research documenting the benefits of coming into contact with nature. For instance, studies have found that being exposed to real and depicted scenes of nature can lead to stress reduction (Kaplan, 1985; Talbot & Kaplan, 1986), natural environments are perceived more favorably than artificial environments (Kaplan, 1987), and most places perceived as restorative and recuperative tend to be natural settings (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Rohde & Kendle, 1994). In a study on patients who had just undergone gall bladder surgery, Ulrich (1984) found that patients whose rooms had views looking outdoors with natural features such as trees, recovered faster, spent less time in hospital, had better evaluations from nurses, and required fewer painkillers compared to patients who had a view of a brick wall. Similar studies have been done in prisons, with prisoners whose cells had a view of nature exhibited lower stress-related symptoms such as digestive illnesses and headaches, and had fewer sick calls (Moore, 1981).

Other studies examining how natural views can influence people found that having views of nature lead to better test scores in students (Tennessen & Cimprich, 1995) and lower levels of perceived stress, higher levels of job satisfaction, and fewer reported illnesses in employees compared to those who did not have natural views (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). It has been found that people who have access to natural settings have better overall health, have more positive outlooks on life, and have high life satisfaction (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Leather Pyrgas, Beale, & Lawrence, 1998; Lewis, 1996).

In a survey of members of a retirement community (Browne, 1992), 99% of the members indicated that living with pleasant landscape grounds is essential and 95% indicated that they

needed windows facing green landscaped grounds. In a study of public housing projects in Chicago, it was found that residents whose buildings faced trees had lower levels of aggression, violence, and crime, and higher levels of self-discipline compared to those whose buildings were surrounded by barren landscapes (Kuo & Sullivan, 2001a, 2001b; Taylor, Kuo, & Sullivan, 2002).

Beyond simply viewing nature, actually making physical contact with animals, plants, and wilderness has been found to have beneficial physiological effects (Friedman, Katcher, & Meislich, 1983; Parson, 1991; Rohde & Kendle, 1994). A group that participated in a wilderness retreat reported feeling an increased sense of aliveness, wellbeing, and energy, with 90% of them reporting breaking an addiction and 77% reporting a major life change (Greenway, 1995). In a similar study, inpatients at a state mental hospital in Oregon had improved functioning and increased likelihood of discharge following wilderness adventure programs (Jerstad & Stelzer, 1973).

Along with wilderness excursions there have been other instances of using nature as a therapeutic device such as care farming (Hine, Precock, & Pretty, 2008b), which is the use of commercial farms and agriculture as a base for promoting mental and physical health (Braastad 2005; Hassink 2003). Other occurrences include horticultural therapy (Relf, 2005; Relf & Dorn, 1995) and the use of companion animals, or animal assisted therapy (Berget & Braastad, 2008; Ormerod, 2008; Scholl et al., 2008). All of these examples can be subsumed under the broader concept of nature-based therapy (Nicholas & Gullone, 2001; Pryor, 2003; Russell, Hendee, & Phillips-Miller, 1999) or ecotherapy (Burls, 2008).

One cannot ignore the extensive evidence supporting the physical and mental health benefits of coming into contact with nature, in addition to the social and economic benefits of

alternative food systems. Because alternative food systems inherently contact nature, it can be presumed that one can frame alternative food systems as arenas that cultivate and promote connections to nature and foster the associated benefits.

### **Food Systems in Sedgwick County and Wichita, Kansas**

The current study will have its spatial focus on local food systems in Sedgwick County Kansas. The Health & Wellness Coalition of Wichita, along with the Kansas State Research and Extension Office of Sedgwick County produced an expansive report (Health & Wellness Coalition, 2014) that outlined agricultural and food system data for Sedgwick County. The report includes a multitude of sources and covers a wide range of topics from farmers market assessments and community gardens to consumption habits and local policies affecting food systems.

The report highlights data that help conceptualize Sedgwick County's local food systems and consumption and production habits. The report indicates that Sedgwick County has a growing interest in local food, and the surrounding counties can greatly contribute to a robust local food system.

The average per capita food expenditure in Sedgwick County is \$2,147.50. Of that food expenditure, 62% is eaten at home, while 38% away from home. Of all types of food, the largest expenditure is "Other Food at Home", which includes sugar, sweets, fats, oils, non-alcoholic beverages, processed foods, and "junk" food. Sedgwick County residents spent over \$1 billion on food in 2012. It was calculated that if only 5% of that \$1 billion was used on local purchases and estimated \$54.6 million would circulate through the county each year.



There are 234 food retailers in Sedgwick County, which are mostly comprised of national chains with a few locally owned stores that carry local food. There is still a challenge for farmers and stores to provide a consistent supply of local products, even during peak season. A majority of these restaurants source their food through large wholesalers like Sysco and Ben E. Keith. There are 14 community supported agriculture operations in the region in 2012, four of which are based in Sedgwick County, though they are reported to have difficulties with sustainability.

The assessment also reported data on farmers markets. There are 10 farmers markets in Sedgwick County during peak season, five of which are weekly markets in Wichita, the two largest being on Saturdays. Two of the markets accept SNAP benefits. Two farmers market assessments using rapid market assessment techniques were conducted in the summer of 2011 on two Wichita farmers markets; one was on the Old Town farmers market and the other on the Kansas Grown farmers market. The Kansas Grown market is in West Wichita and has 93 vendors during peak season, while the Old Town market is in downtown Wichita and has up to 30 vendors during peak season. It is estimated that Old Town market generated sales of \$25,132.10 on that one day while the Kansas Grown market generated \$49,868.98 on that one day.

The assessment also reported information from a local community focus group about perspectives on local food in Wichita. This group was held to understand demand of locally-produced foods from consumers, farmers, and food businesses. Consumers reported that local foods are not easily available and that they would rather go to Dillons or other grocery stores as it is deemed easier and more convenient. The consumers also expressed concern around lack of knowledge and education about local food systems.

Because Sedgwick County has a large urban center it must rely on global and regional food systems. Most food produced in Sedgwick County is sold through the broader food system at the global and regional level. In terms of Sedgwick County land use, 50% of it is used for nonirrigated cropland and the next highest is nonfarmland (24%), which includes residential, industrial, and retail space while less than 1% is used for fruits and vegetables. Sedgwick County produces far more grains and beef than is consumed, with these products being primary exports. Sedgwick County only produces 0.04% of the chicken, 4.4% of the turkey, 1.44% of the eggs, 0% of fish, 2% of vegetables, and 0.1% of fruit that it consumes.

If local food systems are to be increased in Sedgwick County, it is suggested that there needs to be an increased capacity of existing farmers and ranchers, increased medium and large scale commercial growers selling in the local food system, increased small scale producers found in robust urban agriculture communities, development of a food hub, and encouragement of noncommercial gardening activities such as community gardens and school gardens. Barriers to a robust local food system include access to and cost of land, expertise and know-how, cost of equipment, labor availability and cost, costly start up capital and grant funding to reach a break-even point, infrastructure, and the challenge of marketing perishable crops.

The report also assessed community and school gardens in Sedgwick County. Barriers to community gardens include identifying locations viable for gardening, soil contamination in urban cites, access to quality water at a reasonable cost, and lack of gardening expertise and experience. Current efforts in Sedgwick include 25-30 garden sites per year, which are owned by multiple entities such as city, churches, individuals, business, and nonprofits. Barriers to school gardens include lack of support from teachers and administration, lack of gardening knowledge, inadequate locations at schools, and schools closed during prime gardening season. Efforts for

school gardens and agriculture can be seen in Maize High School as it implemented an Agricultural Science program from a KDA grant and plans to use produce in the cafeteria, though overall Sedgwick County schools lack farm-to-school or farm-to-childcare programs.

The assessment suggests that each stakeholder group in Sedgwick County has different ideas about what is important, what should be done first, and how to accomplish these goals. In order to establish a healthy local food system, finding common ground amongst stakeholders will be useful, as well as education and engagement of a diverse group of stakeholders. Evaluations of assets, strengths, opportunities, barriers, and challenges to the region are important in understanding and promoting local food systems.

While much is known about local consumer attitudes, assessments of farmers markets, the number and viability of community gardens and community-supported agriculture, there is little data regarding perspectives, needs, and assets of food producers that contribute to or have an interest in contributing to these alternative food systems.

### **Present Study**

The current industrialized food system has many detrimental consequences that reach into a broad range of domains such as environmental, social, mental, and physical health issues. In reaction to these detrimental consequences, alternative and local food systems are seen as a socially and environmentally viable way to confront these issues. Such movements discussed included farmers markets, community gardens, community-supported agriculture, and urban agriculture. These movements have a variety of social, political, economic, mental, and physical benefits. It is also clear that Wichita and Sedgwick County have the desire as well as potential for more robust alternative agriculture systems. Local food movements can fall into traps, such

as equating local with good and being niche markets for the wealthy. It is important to take these issues into account and as some researchers have suggested, make local food systems more just and sustainable, rather than more local (Born & Purcell, 2006; DuPuis & Goodman, 2003).

The current study will be framed within the Asset Based Community Development model (ABCD) (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). ABCD focuses on linking assets in the community by mobilizing, connecting, and empowering individuals, institutions, and associations. The model advocates that change can and needs to come from within to be truly empowering and serve the needs of the community. The present study will examine the assets and needs of local food producers in relation to participating in and understanding local agriculture. Assets are important to understand because they provide a strength-based outlook that can help foster empowerment (Goldman & Schmalz, 2005). Needs are oftentimes defined as identified gaps or discrepancies between a current state (what is) and a preferred state (what should be) (Alberta, 2010).

Many studies have examined the motivations and perceived benefits of consumers for local food systems, but less so for the producers. The goal of the present study is to get a better understanding of the assets and needs of local food producers (key informants) in Wichita, Kansas and Sedgwick County. Specifically, the study wants to understand the perspectives that local food producers have regarding;

- 1) Perceived assets and strengths for developing more robust local food systems
  - a. Assets of local food producers including themselves
  - b. Geographical assets of the region
  - c. Organizational and institutional assets of the region
- 2) Perceived barriers hindering the development of local food systems
  - a. Barriers to local food producers including themselves
  - b. Geographical barriers of the region
  - c. Organizational and institutional barriers of the region

- 3) Own motivations for participating in local food systems
  - a. How they define and understand local food systems
- 4) Perceptions of what a robust local food system in Wichita and Sedgwick County has the potential to look like

In understanding these research questions, the study will provide much needed information that both gives local producers a voice and situates problems facing alternative food systems in Wichita and Sedgwick County. This information can then guide policy, reframe debates, link assets and stakeholders, and allow citizens and producers to better understand the nuances and strengths of local food systems.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Participant Population**

The current study interviewed key informants who are producers and whose operations are located in or near Sedgwick County. More importantly, the producers interviewed are individuals who have expressed interest in local food systems. To meet criteria as a key informant the producers had to be involved in the production of produce or livestock and sell it primarily through a local or regional marketplace. To explore multiple dimensions of food production the study purposively sampled participants who were producing a variety of foods, from fruits and vegetables to livestock. Though the perspective of a producer selling goat milk might be different than a producer harvesting peaches, the present study is more concerned with how the producers understand the local food system at large. Though a variety of food producers give the sample diversity, they all still share a common experience of having experience with or knowledge of the local food system. Some producers came from surrounding counties as their primary consumer base is in Wichita though their operations are in an adjacent county.

Though important to local food systems, community garden leaders and members, community-supported agricultural members, and local food consumers were not a part of the current study. Much is known about consumer attitudes, assessments of farmers markets, community gardens, and community-supported agriculture, while data are lacking regarding perspectives, needs, and assets of food producers. The current study used purposive sampling techniques due to the small sample size and similar experiences of all participants. Key informants were sampled through the ICT Food Circle. The ICT Food Circle was established in 2016 and is a group of people made up of local farmers, local restaurant owners, community

garden leaders and members, students, professors, and local food advocates. The food circle is a way for concerned citizens of Wichita and Sedgwick County to come together and discuss, develop, and promote local food systems. The Food Circle had multiple meetings during the spring and summer of 2017, which the author attended. During these meetings it became apparent that the producers' voices were less researched and not being listened to, which gave way to the present study to sample them as the participants. Business cards of local farmers who attended the meeting were collected and were used as ways of contacting the farmers. In addition to business cards, the "snowball method", or participant-driven recruitment (Johnson & Weller, 2002) was used to further collect names of participants, in which interviewees refer other potential key informants to be interviewed. The current study sought for approximately 10 - 15 key informant interviews, at which point saturation would likely occur.

### **Interview Instrument**

The current study used an in-person semi-structured qualitative interview with open-ended questions. The qualitative research interview is a method designed for exploring and describing a range of attitudes and experiences, rather than presenting a typical sample of opinions or quantifying experience among a group of people (Kvale, 1996; Strauss & Corbin, 1997). Because the nature of the study is exploratory in nature, it has been suggested to use open-ended questions in such situations (Taylor-Powell, 1998). The development of an interview template is an integral aspect of qualitative research (Krauss et al., 2009). The current interview template was designed with the primary research questions in mind such as topics relating to assets of the key informants, self-perceived barriers, perceived strengths and weaknesses of the surrounding location, as well as motivations for participating in local agriculture. Given that

novel information may arise in the early stages of data collection, it has been suggested that qualitative interview instruments make slight revisions to accommodate new themes that emerge (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The logical order of questions was taken into account, e.g., asking the snowball questions for other key informants at the end.

The interview included nine open-ended questions and took approximately 90 min. to 2 hr to administer. It has been noted that a tension can arise with interviews between keeping the “open-endedness” while keeping the interview “on track” (Krauss et al., 2009). All interviews were conducted by the primary author to keep the interviews as consistent as possible across all participants. Major points from key informants responses were hand written by the interviewer during the interview. With consent from the key informants, the entirety of their interviews were digitally recorded into an audio file. The audio record was transcribed (verbatim) at a later time for in-depth analysis.

The interview instrument asked questions ranging from perceived barriers; e.g. “What do you see as the larger barriers to local food systems in Wichita”; to questions pertaining to who is involved in local food systems, e.g., “What organizations are involved in developing and promoting local food systems in Wichita”. The last question was a snowball question in which the interviewee was asked about other potential key informants. The entire interview template is located in Appendix A.

### **Background for Analysis**

The audio recordings from each of the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Given that the present study is concerned with the lived experiences, beliefs, and attitudes of a small sample of people with similar backgrounds, the data were analyzed and understood from the



phenomenological perspective of qualitative analysis (Moustakas, 1994). Though phenomenology shares a lot in common with grounded theory (Glaser, 1992), grounded theory was not used as the present study is not concerned with developing an explanatory theory of a system or process, but rather is focused on participants' attitudes and experiences.

Phenomenological analyses tend to be in rich thematic descriptions (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007), are usually conducted with a small number of participants (e.g., 5 - 15) and are primarily focused on getting intimate portrayals of individual experience (Polkinghorne, 1989; Smith & Osborn, 2004). The phenomenological approach has its roots in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl, Jean Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty who were concerned with the nature of experiencing phenomenon (Spiegelberg, 1982) and how meaning is created through embodied perception (Sokolowski, 2000; Stewart & Mickunas, 1974). In phenomenology the researcher "brackets" their knowledge, by acknowledging and setting aside (but not abandoning) their a priori knowledge, with the goal of attending to the participant's experience with an open mind (Gearing, 2004; Sokolowski, 2000).

A specific type of phenomenological approach that was used in analyzing the transcribed interviews is Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 1996). IPA is an idiographic approach that is useful when the topic matters to participants and when they have an understanding of the topic at hand, as well as when they are somewhat homogenous (e.g., local food producers). IPA is also useful when the research question is more exploratory rather than explanatory in nature, with goals of starting a dialogue rather than testing hypotheses (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). IPA, like other phenomenological approaches, is devoted to attempting to understand the subjective world of the participants, though it also recognizes that interpretative

work needs to be done by the researcher in order to make sense of what the participant is saying, thus being “interpretative”.

The interviews were read and then analyzed in line with phenomenological approaches in that themes were reviewed that emerged without forcing or adjusting the data to a pre-set theoretical framework, finding themes as they arose and then forging connections between these themes, and then creating broader themes. Themes were first found from “significant statements” that were highlighted throughout the transcribed interviews (Moustakas, 1994). The process of finding significant statements is what Moustakas (1994) calls horizontalization. These significant statements were then clustered into “meaning units” or themes. Once common themes were established, broader master themes were then created. Exemplars of each master theme were then identified for each category for when data are presented in results (Moustakas, 1994; Smith & Osborn, 2004). Manen (1990) suggests that phenomenological analysis is primarily a writing exercise, in that the researcher can give meaning, narrative, and voice to the participants and thus distill meaning.

A second coding pass was done in which the interview material was searched for discrepant evidence that adds variation and depth of understanding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Also called negative case analysis (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the second pass allowed for intriguing remarks that may not fit a theme, but are still important in that they say something important about the research questions.

The analyzed data were also validated using peer review or debriefing (Ely et al., 1991; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993) which provided an external check of the research process. This process is in a way similar to obtaining interrater reliability in quantitative research. A peer debriefed can be seen as a “devil’s advocate” in that they keep the primary

researcher honest, and ask difficult questions about methods and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Another method of validation was member checks or member validation (Seale, 1999). This type of validation technique is when the researcher takes the analyzed data back to the participant, or member, and allows them to verify and check the themes and make sure that the researcher captured what the participant stated in the original interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). More specifically, the participant is provided with relevant sections of the analyzed report and is allowed to comment on the accuracy of the report. It has also been argued that member validation is useful when the purpose of a study is to seek truth or also when the study aims to produce change (Cho & Trent, 2006).

### **Study Sample**

The current study made use of in-depth interviews of  $N=12$  small-scale agricultural production operations, though there was a total of 17 interviewees. The difference in the number of operations to interviewees is due to some farming operations having two interviewees for the interview (e.g. a husband and wife), that were treated as one participant rather than two. There was a total of five farming operations that had two key informants during the interview. All of the participant's operations were located in or near Sedgwick County and sell their product primarily through a local marketplace such as a farmers market or local restaurants. Purposively sampling provided a wide variety of producers who sell agricultural goods from fruits and vegetables to livestock. The types of products that each producer sells are presented in Table 1.

Most of the participants fell within the age range of 40 - 64 years old and 58% of the participants have lived in the Sedgwick County area for 25 or more years. All participants were

White and 58% of the participants were male. The average time in which the producers have been selling to a local market in the Sedgwick County area is 5.36 years, with the longest time being 10 years, and the shortest time being that of a couple who started selling at a farmers market one year ago. All of the participants, besides one, had some sort of past connection to agriculture, such as growing up with gardens, growing up on a farm, gardening as a hobby, or participating in conventional agriculture prior to settling into local food markets.

Table 1

*Types and Frequency of Products Sold by Each Producer*

Type of Product	Producer												<i>f</i>	
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12		
Beef			X	X				X						3
Pork			X		X									2
Lamb				X	X									2
Poultry			X		X									2
Eggs			X		X						X	X		4
Vegetables		X	X			X	X		X				X	6
Fruits	X										X			2
Herbs						X			X					2
Dry Goods										X	X			2
Tourism	X					X								2
Other*			X		X	X								3
<i>f</i>	2	1	6	2	5	4	1	1	2	1	3	2		

\*Other includes fish, goat's milk, and hosting a farmers market venue (in that order)

**Coding Interview Data**

The audio recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim allowing multiple rounds of coding, with each round making for more refined codes. The codes were implemented using an eclectic variety of elemental coding methods such as structural, descriptive, simultaneous, and

holistic coding (Saldana, 2009). The codes were then grouped into “meaning units” (Moustakas, 1994) or themes and the meaning units were then grouped into larger themes until master themes emerged. Exemplar statements were then found that highlighted or captured the essence of a certain theme from the data. The coding process and assessment of themes were conducted with the primary research questions in mind. The frequency with which each code and theme was mentioned was also documented.

**Trustworthiness.** Qualitative researchers often use the term trustworthiness to discuss things relating to reliability and validity of a data set. The present study used methods to establish trustworthiness from a variety of paradigms including postpositivist, constructivist, and critical perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln 1994; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

After themes were established further review of the data was conducted for discrepant evidence using negative case analysis (Ely et al., 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that highlights statements that do not necessarily fit a theme but still say something important about the main research questions.

Peer review debriefing (Ely et al., 1991; Erlandson et al., 1993) was then used to provide an external check of codes and themes. Peer reviewers provide support, challenge the researchers’ assumptions, and ask questions about the methodology and data that the researcher might have missed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer reviewing allows for those outside or external to the study to assess and critique it, exposing any bias from the primary researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Two peer reviewers were each randomly assigned half of the coded interviews. The reviewers then agreed or disagreed with each of the codes as well as each of the themes. The peer reviewers’ memoranda of disagreements were noted and were then discussed between the primary coder and the peer reviewers to better understand the nature of the disagreement. A

percent agreement statistic was calculated for each peer reviewers' rate of agreement to disagreement with the codes using Miles and Huberman's (1994) percent agreement formula for reliability. The first peer reviewer had a 93% agreement rate with the codes for their sample of interviews while the second peer reviewer had a 92% agreement rate with the codes for their sample of interviews.

Member checks or member validation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seale, 1999) was also conducted to ensure trustworthiness. Member checks allow information to go back to the participants and allow them to confirm or disconfirm the credibility of the information gathered by the researcher (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Primary themes from the participants' interviews were gathered into documents and sent to the participants to have them reflect upon their own data. This allowed the participant to confirm if the researcher captured the primary messages and themes from the interview or to clarify any misunderstandings that were lost in translation. Of the 12 participants, nine responded to the member checks. Of the nine that responded, eight of them reported that the primary themes from their interviews were what they recollected and were accurate. One participant had similar sentiments though had minor clarifications to their data.

## CHAPTER III

## RESULTS

**Major Themes**

The primary research questions were: (a) what are the assets and (b) barriers to local agriculture in the Sedgwick County area, (c) what are the primary motivations for participating in local and alternative agriculture, and (d) what does the local and alternative food scene in Wichita have the potential to look like in 10 years?

As stated in the methods section, codes were gathered from the interview data, which then lead to the creation of subthemes. These subthemes were then gathered into primary themes, which will be discussed below. Statements from the participants, or exemplar quotes, which capture the essence of a theme, will be used throughout this section to give the reader an illustration of the theme.

Due to the dichotomous nature of the asset/barrier relationship, many of the participants' responses tended to gather around a primary theme such as "Infrastructure", which then had elements relating to both assets and barriers (e.g., lack of infrastructure or good infrastructure). In this sense a primary theme can relate to more than one research question. Themes derived from remarks the participants made about how they conceptualize and understand local agriculture will be highlighted as it adds to understanding local food networks. Table 2 shows what the major themes were, as well as the frequency that each theme was mentioned in the coding process.

Table 2

*Frequency of Mentions of Each Major Theme*

<b>Major Themes</b>	<b>Frequency of Mentions</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Mentions</b>
Connection	404	20%
Knowledge, Education, & Awareness	329	16%
Infrastructure	294	15%
Triple Bottom Line	290	14%
Desire and Demand	274	14%
Bureaucracy and Organizational	253	12%
Business Interest	65	3%
Definition of Local	64	3%
Climate	60	3%
<i>Totals</i>	<i>2033</i>	<i>100%</i>

**Connection.** A prominent theme to emerge was that producers see local and alternative agriculture as a means to create a connection. This connection was to nature, the land, other people, one's community, the process of growing, and in a few cases, a spiritual connection. Participants reported this connection as part of what defines local and alternative agriculture, as well as a major motivator as to why they continue to be a part of local agriculture.

Many of the producers said that they enjoy the connection and camaraderie with the other producers at the farmers markets and saw this connection as a major motivation. They saw this connection being fostered by the noncompetitive nature of farmers markets and that they share similar values. These two quotes exemplify this producer connection:

Interesting part of the vendors' relationship is that it's not really competitive. It's kind of like everybody is helping everybody. Everybody is more interested in working together. They don't seem to be worried about losing to anybody.

Going to the farmers market every week and developing relationships with fellow producers is a nice part of it too. One great thing I've noticed about farmers market is how supportive the fellow producers are. They shop from each other quite a bit.



The producers also mentioned that, beyond a connection to other producers, having that face-to-face connection with consumers and the relationship with them is highly important and motivating, and something that alternative agriculture has that conventional does not. A peach orchard owner commented:

There's this huge element of relationship building with customers that great, that's really fun, wonderful thing. The local food system there is a tangible, a real value in the relationships in the relationships that are built. They [customers] say, "I really appreciate the fact that you've planted this orchard here, and that I can bring my family and come here and enjoy this".

A beef, pork, and vegetable producer discussed this relational aspect with customers:

Just hearing health stories over and over and over and looking at the consumers dead straight in the eye, and I would cry with them across the table at the farmers markets because we are trying to find food that they can eat and won't make them sicker. It's very rewarding to have that connection with your consumer or with your client.

In addition to the emphasis on face-to-face interaction and the relationship to the consumer, many of the producers highlighted that local food strengthens community and that they see that community connection as a major motivator. This sentiment is captured by an urban farmer who grows produce in a greenhouse in his backyard:

We would have this big garden and all the kids in the neighborhood and all the adults and everybody would kind of just meet at that garden and people could eat things right off the vine. It created, without even knowing, it created this community strength and unity within just a couple blocks radius of just kids that my kids went to school with and families that we knew that were across the street. Everybody would kind of just round in and end up a couple times a week in our garden. Being stewards to that kind of natural community upbringing. It was just, very, very interesting and very motivating to say the least.

A salsa producer also expressed this sentiment:

It's like we're one big family out there kind of. The growers and producers are a family and all the customers too. It's like a reunion every Saturday. I mean its great. You get to know people, what they're doing, what their kids are doing, you see their kids growing. It's so much more than just food, it's just community you know.

Three of the consumers mentioned a spiritual connection as an important motivator. One producer in particular reported a spiritual motivator as his primary motivator. Related to the idea of a spiritual connection is the religious idea of stewardship, which one producer explicitly used to describe his relationship to his agricultural enterprise:

I think for me, a big part of farming and ultimately selling a product, you know, that is produced on our land flows from the idea of stewardship. I have to do this because this is who I am and I really care about it, I really love animals, I really love sheep. But then what flows from that more, for me, it's how I know God. For me there's a really strong spiritual component in what I do. I always call my sheep the priests, the priests of the land, because there's a level where it's like, it's through me working with them and you know, or any of my livestock, it introduces a relationship to the land in a different way. For me stewardship is part of why we are put here, stewardship is part of worship. It's all about how I engage my design, why I'm here, and how we can pursue God.

Many of the producers claimed that local and alternative food has an experiential component, in that one can learn or be inspired through a direct connection to the process of growing produce or seeing an animal through its developmental process from birth to slaughter. There is especially an experiential element involved in alternative agriculture that is used for agritourism, such as orchards that one goes to in which one picks their own fruit. A peach orchard grower provided a rich phenomenological account of the experiential element:

There's a huge value in people just coming out and seeing what it takes. That local experience is something that is, boy there's a lot of room for that. Yes, and farmers markets have an element of that experiential, but its abbreviated, if you don't want to have an outing. [...] Going out and picking and eating peaches with the kids is something we do. So I think those things, those experiences

can fit. There's a hugely important quality element where that peach off the tree is some tremendous moment, it really is something. That quality, that fresh ripe thing, the experience of just picking it and eating it right then and there is really a fun thing. That's local, that's inalienably local. Coming here and sitting down and meeting me is local. I grew this, God and I grew this. This is a cool thing and I'm so excited to share it with you.

A goat and chicken farmer described this connection well with regards to the process of slaughtering an animal:

We brought it to the school for show and tell, you know. This is our lamb. Here's its throat and we are going to take its life because we are going to eat it. There was an incredible humanity of death. Shows that there's an element of detachment from what we eat, especially in the areas of meat. But what does it mean to teach our children what it means to have a relationship where you understand the value of loving that animal. That animal that we loved and raised became the center of our celebration. So it taught them a lesson, a very different lesson than they would get from a science class in the city. There was a preparation of that, but there was more than just me going and buying something and eating it.

A doctor turned urban gardener who sells produce at farmers markets said:

I think we are kind of being removed that we naturally evolved to distress ourselves from. Get your feet dirty, get out in the sun, do some hard work. I'd like to see people take some ownership of those things. Grow your own food, get your kids out there. Watch something pop up out of the soil, then go eat. I think it's empowering. So we try to get, that's one of the reasons we are involved with Children First. We want to see these kids have that experience.

Overall these excerpts show the importance of connection in the eyes of the producer and how it manifests in a multitude of domains from relational aspects to a felt sense of being a part of nature. These connections are motivations as well as what makes local agriculture unique as compared to other forms of agriculture.

**Knowledge, Education, and Awareness.** A major theme that emerged was that consumers, communities, and the public lacked knowledge and awareness regarding local and alternative agriculture. Such knowledge and awareness entails knowing what alternative agriculture is, the ethics involved in it, where to access local food, what goes into the production of food, and how to prepare certain types of local food. The subtheme related to the lack of consumer knowledge was the most mentioned. This was a major barrier in the minds of the producers but in some, albeit less cases, producers mentioned that there were knowledgeable consumers who proved to be assets.

The producers believed that the lack knowledge and awareness of the majority of consumers in Sedgwick County was a major barrier to the development of a more robust local food system. A vegetable producer said:

It's extremely common for me to hear from customers, at both the farmers markets, to hear, "I didn't know you guys were here". That's an important statement.

A beef producer commented:

I think a lot of it is to educate people, on how things are grown, how vegetables and crops are grown. A lot of people have no idea what is all involved. Like our beef, we get asked a lot of questions. They have no idea from baby calf, what it takes to go all the way up, and it's the same with community gardens. Some people think it all just comes from the grocery store.

Though cited less often, producers did indicate that in some instances consumers awareness of local food could be an asset. Specifically, this knowledge and awareness was seen as consumers having an understanding of what goes into the production of local food and what values are associated with local food systems. This knowledgeable group was seen as small in number though. Take the following quotes about knowledgeable consumers:

They'll say, "I get that it costs more to do this and you charge more, I get it". They'll say, consistently, "That's fine, I'm happy to pay it", or "I understand and I'm willing to pay it". That translates into, "I'm willing to pay a little bit extra for this product because I understand that there are these issues associated with it. If I want it fresh and super ripe and delicious then I have to cover some of the cost".

For the most part there's understanding from the customers and support from the fact that they recognize that they are getting a higher quality product, a fresher product, a more nutritious product, a better tasting product.

Related to the idea of consumers having a general lack of knowledge was the more specific domain that consumers knowledge related to cooking food was a barrier. Specifically, producers would cite that consumers lacked the skills and knowledge of how to prepare and cook many types of the food that are often sold at farmers markets. An agritourism and tomato farmer who runs an agritourism operation discussed such skills:

Part of the 19th and 20th centuries, a great part of that was the industrial revolution where everyone went towards cities. So we lost a lot of the rural skill sets. I see a component there. Well I really feel like the local food community is working to save a set of heritage skills that are dying out. People don't know how to cut up a chicken because we cut chicken prepackaged.

A couple that has an urban farm noted:

Well I mean, yeah, what do they do with it. They're used to everything being processed and put together and how to cook it. There's a little bit of a gap there. But I think people, sometimes they come to the farmers market and they say, "Well how do you, what do you do with that", or "How do I cook that". That's one of the barriers, just a general lack of knowhow when it comes to cooking fresh food. Give them a spaghetti squash and they may give you a funny look. You kind of got to educate them on how they can use it or prepare it.

A topic a majority of the producers consistently brought up related to a knowledge barrier was the idea that many of the labels and terms that are used in agriculture are misleading. The

producers mentioned the terms that are often misrepresented have to do with notions of “organic”, “local”, “grass-fed” and “natural”. To the producers, inaccurate labels make consumers less informed and thus more difficult for them to truly understand the nature of alternative agriculture. In some cases the participants mentioned that such terms are influenced by larger entities that use them for their advantage. A beef rancher said:

There’s a lot of labels that can go in there, whether it’s organic or grass-fed, I mean, so, all that stuff amounts to marketing. You go to the grocery stores and you look around a little bit and you see the word local on something and a lot of that is not local. Those labels are not to be trusted.

A vegetable producer shared:

People ask, “Well why aren't you guys organic, certified organic”. I say, well we looked into it, thought about it, and it was going to be a hassle, about eight hundred dollars a year. The list of chemicals that you could use and still be considered organic, I wouldn't do that. I think the organic label has gone so commercial. Huge companies wanting to call their stuff organic and so they get those different chemicals added to the list. Then people have it in their head, “This says organic, the stuff at the store says organic so it’s got to be better, cause yours isn't”. Well, I don't know about that. Yeah, I have more of a frustration with just labeling it organic than really knowing what the farmer’s practices are because there’s just such wide interpretation of it.

A tomato and peach producer commented on consumers conflating the terms local and organic, also known as the local trap (Born & Purcell, 2006):

There’s an equation with a lot of people of local and organic. A lot of people think those mean the same thing. I spend some time talking to people about that. Somebody will say, “I love local because it doesn't have any chemicals”. I say, “Well you know were not organic, were conventional, and we spray, and if we didn't I don’t know how you'd do it”. That’s a misunderstanding that a lot of people have about local versus organic, they equate them and that’s worth people understanding that there’s a difference.

Though the participants frequently expressed the lack of knowledge on the consumers' part as a major barrier, they also mentioned how the opportunity to educate these consumers was a motivating and rewarding opportunity. Such opportunities include talking to consumers at farmers markets and sharing knowledge with them about what is entailed in their agricultural operation. A couple that produces beef stated this motivation:

To me, it's fun when you can talk to people and they are asking questions and are interested in what you are doing and you can explain to them how you came to what you have and the kind of beef that you have, and what you do to get it to that stage. I enjoy helping people understand better the full circle of how beef is made [...]. So it's more of an education process to help them. I think that's really neat and its very important to do that, so yeah, that's a huge motivator I would say too. That's what got really fun and exciting. We see that people needed the help and needed the education on it.

Overall these quotes provide important exemplars of how concerns relating to understanding and knowledge of local food manifests. One can see that there is a perceived lack of knowledge amongst consumers but that the producers also see filling in that knowledge gap as a motivation and duty.

**Infrastructure.** The producers often talked about both assets and barriers related to infrastructure. The theme included any mentions related to physical places or spaces involved in the production and selling of agricultural products, as well as technological infrastructure like websites or phone applications. Specific types of infrastructure often reported included farmers markets, cooperative grocery stores, food storage facilities, and other local agricultural operations like urban farms and community gardens.

Specific to this theme of infrastructure was the idea that there is a lack of production of food locally such as local farms, local urban farms, greenhouses in backyards, house gardens, community gardens, and that in the future they would like to see there be more local agriculture

production operations. Some producers also see the demand for local food rising, though they also perceive a lack of local production to meet that demand. For instance:

So I don't know, that's a very good question. So kind of what I feel is like, it's a chicken and an egg thing. We only have so many farmers, so if we increased demand we'd need to increase farmers.

Well I'd like to see, a few more urban farms. I mean right now there's probably not enough vendors. There's more opportunities to do more farmers markets right now than there are producers I think. [...] At that point it's a matter of getting more local producers.

In terms of infrastructure for local agriculture the producers unanimously expressed that farmers markets are a major asset. The majority of producers specifically mentioned that the Old Town Farmers Market and the Kansas Grown Farmers Market are major assets in Wichita and they rarely had critiques of them, mostly noting that what they are doing for local food is great.

The following quotes highlight the sentiment towards farmers markets:

A well managed farmers market is, I'm sure, the most supportive thing for local food system, the most, in terms of support structure.

Kansas Grown Farmers Market. It's a huge operation. But there is a lot of promotion of local food at 21st and Ridge. These farmers markets are really powerful and useful. They create this venue for you to sell you stuff. It's a lot of work and very difficult to do that on your own. So then there's this promotion and advertisement so you get on their coattails and you help pay for it and its symbiotic.

Its time well spent. We were very pleased with how Kansas Grown Farmers Market has been for us. This market here seems to be pretty well advertised. They draw in people. That's what drew us down here, the number of people that come down here. But summer time you might see six, seven thousand people come through here. To be able to get in front of that many people at one time. It's definitely well run also. Very clean, they do a good job, they're organized, very organized. They do a great job of abiding by the rules, keep everybody in line, that's good. The structure is there. They do a very good job of communicating with the vendors. They know what its like to be a vendor out there.



With regards to physical infrastructure, farmers markets appeared to be a leading asset, but the producers also expressed how there could be more physical infrastructure that is not related to farmers markets. Most often cited was the need for a cooperative grocery store and a facility or storage unit that aggregates and stores food from local producers for long periods of time. To the producers, these other forms of infrastructure provide a more permanent and stable locale for the storage and selling of their products:

Something that I'm surprised this area doesn't have, and the reason I say it, I know there's one in Manhattan, is a cooperative grocery store. Where it's community owned and people like us can have their beef in there. The local producers can have their products in there. Just a place for people to go and know, all the time people are getting something. Throughout the week there's a store that will accommodate them. That's going to be a big convenience factor.

Its not like you can say, "Well I didn't sell it at the farmers market so I'm going to sell it wholesale". We don't have anywhere to sell at wholesale.

One thing that I see is a barrier is we do not have a way to aggregate food from different producers. We need an aggregating hub.

In addition to physical infrastructure, producers also brought up the idea that nonphysical infrastructure such as technology could be helpful in enhancing the local food system, but that it was not yet available or that it was flawed. Such types of technological infrastructure often included smartphone applications or an online directory of producers and their products:

Essentially and Uber for local food. An app that works for, that people could get on their phone and look up farms. Right now the only people that hear are on Instagram, the farmers market social media utilization, and my Facebook and that's it.

A tomato producer commented on the idea that the current technological infrastructure is insufficient:

The one problem I have with the ICT food directory is that it's very static. If they could move that to being interactive, so that it could be more dynamic. In that, maybe, farmers, maybe we ask everybody who's listed to update their offering seasonally.

Not only was certain infrastructure seen as lacking, some producers brought up economic concerns related to the access and costs of infrastructure, which can be seen in the following quotes:

The other thing is that it is still very challenging to get a small business up and running. Especially market farmers. [...] it's very difficult to insure your crops. [...] I think it would be nice to be able to have access to funds that are easy start up funds. Low interest loans or even grant made. You don't see that. I fits out there I don't know where it's at. But you know a small tractor costs a few thousands dollars. It takes a little bit of money, especially to get started. I think that is prohibitive to some people.

You cannot quit a job one day and start your hobby farm the next day and still expect to make money.

Though the majority of participants reported that there are economic barriers to producing locally, such as seen in the quote above, a tomato farmer said, "It doesn't take a ton of money to get involved in agriculture", and did not see economic barriers as being as big of an issue as other participants did.

**Triple Bottom Line.** A wide variety of sentiments emerged related to environmental and social concerns of agriculture. These sentiments are best encapsulated by the term, "triple bottom line", with the exact term being used explicitly by a few of the producers. The triple bottom line is a term that is related to the term "bottom line", which commonly refers to a business solely valuing economic profit. The triple bottom line is different in that a business or enterprise prioritizes and is conscious of three domains of their operation; (a) economic issues (e.g., making a profit), (b) social issues (e.g., awareness of how their business impacts workers, social groups, culture, and society), and (c) environmental issues (e.g., awareness of the environmental impact

of their business). This consciousness of social and environmental concerns beyond economic ones was seen as a major motivator and as part of the essence of alternative agriculture. A couple that ranches beef commented on environmental aspects of the triple bottom line:

There's a triple bottom line with holistic management; economics, social, and ecological. Every management decision that we make, we make mindful of leaving the financial, I mean financial is important, you have to make money. But it also has to be good for the prairie and good for the animals and good for our customers.

A tomato farmer who runs an agritourism operation felt strongly about the triple bottom line:

I think we all want to, you know, the triple bottom line, financial, environmental, uhh, and sociological. So you have to do all three. And I think this industry more than um, others that I have been involved with in various times of my life pay lip service to that so I hold us all to a higher level. We constantly evaluate our processes to see where we can become more and more sustainable. So the whole concept of growing your food close to where it is being eaten and reducing our use on petro chemicals. So from an environmental aspect if I want to minimize the impact of the petroleum industry on our environment and ecology I want to grow locally because I have further, less, distant to go, to get consumer direct. So getting away from the whole petroleum super structure and moving to alternative energy requiring less use of energy is a piece of that.

Related to environmental aspects was the motivation to produce a healthy and nutritious product, both for themselves and their consumers. Take these quotes on health and nutrition as exemplars:

We have doctors that send their patients to us because our meat is so clean. Every ounce of food we produce on this farm affects your health. Beneficially in the positive or the negative, it affects your health. Why would we purposefully screw it up before we get it to the consumer? That's my theory.

Nutritional value. When you build your soil, especially in an operation like ours, you build your soil with the nutrition that the plants need. Did you know you can buy an orange now from

Florida without vitamin C? So there's a wakeup call. We've destroyed our soil.

I would say even above that is the fact that, either we produce a healthy product or we don't produce a healthy product. For me that's a moral issues. So that's probably the number one motivating factor.

One participant was a retired medical doctor turned small-scale produce gardener who had an interesting take on the sociological impacts of nutrition. From his experience in the medical field, he formed an opinion that appears to fit with an ecological model:

What I learned in medicine was that a lot of the things that I saw on a fairly routine basis, problems, were chronic medical conditions even among children. Many of those medical conditions in one way or another related to nutrition. We had a significant number of kids who were nutritionally challenged, not starved but, ahh, had significant nutrition issues. Lucas, the vast majority of the obesity epidemic that we have in America is a nutritional epidemic. Kids and families eat non-nutritionally dense food because it's cheap and it's fast. [...]. So that was a big thing I care about. I wanted to help with the food aspect of it.

Given that the triple bottom line emphasizes social and environmental aspects, the producers would consistently comment on the flaws of conventional food systems, usually stating that conventional food enterprises focus on the economic bottom line while ignoring the other two bottom lines. In this sense they tended be motivated by embracing the other two aspects while pointing out the flaws in conventional agriculture. A tomato producer noted:

It [documentary] really changed the way I look at our food system because what it exposed is the human rights injustices inherent in the corporate food supply chain. And so, migrant farm labor, which is a necessary component of the food supply chain. They aren't paid a living wage. I just found it very exploitive. [...] I feel, I have a belief that um, bigger isn't always better and I also, from what very brief interactions I've had over my long working career that corporations don't always have very humane policies. Some immigrant farm workers, their living conditions are filthy and inhumane and so that really, um, called to me for a different way, I pay my farm employees \$10 an hour so that was a piece.

A couple that produces beef noted:

We tried to get in Dillon's but they've got, they're just not interested. They've got their own Simple Truth brand, that's what they're going with. Costco, we've been in touch with Costco but they're the same way. Unfortunately what they want is quantity, bulk, and they want it pretty cheap. Whole Foods, I mean when we were in there the money was good but oh, man, it doesn't fit with our holistic management. Well I just don't think that our management style [...] does not align with theirs. I mean they're just basically another big box store that they've, their image is organic and healthy but they are really not.

Though the majority of the producers had the sentiment that conventional agriculture and bigger agricultural businesses were a hindrance, unethical, or the producer defined themselves against those business models, some producers indicated that big businesses are not bad and that they can be helpful in some cases:

There are other places out there, Cargill, which is a, I don't know if it's a Fortune 500 business but it's a traditional business. They just plopped like \$5,000 into the children's garden yesterday. Big guys can be okay too. As long as they give us money we'll put a sign up that says, "Thank You, Cargill".

An urban producer who uses greenhouses noted:

We wouldn't be able to make it without it [conventional]. There wouldn't be enough food, so there's a need for large-scale agriculture obviously and it's not going anywhere.

Social and environmental values appear very important to the producers. These quotes also show how local agriculture is juxtaposed to conventional, and how their enterprises and values are seen as a reaction to the values and practices of conventional agriculture.

**Desire and Demand for Local.** A major theme that emerged related to mentions of desire, demand, and motivation to seek out, produce, or be a part of local and alternative agriculture. Like the Knowledge, Education, and Awareness theme, this demand or motivation is lacking or present in local consumers, the producers, and the public at large. One can be

knowledgeable of local agriculture (e.g., know where farmers markets are located and when they take place), but lack the desire to physically go out and support such operations.

An often-noted aspect of demand was that there was perceived to be a small group of committed and passionate local producers and growers in the Wichita area. For instance:

We have an awesome group of growers around here. Not just around Wichita but urban farms. I mean those have grown a lot in the last couple years. I mean right here in Wichita, farms. I mean that is super, it just kind of blows my mind really.

In addition to passionate local producers, participants reported that there is a small base of motivated consumers. For instance, the following highlights the motivated consumers in Wichita:

Kansas Grown, I believe, is the largest farmers market in the state of Kansas and it wouldn't have got there if it wasn't for community support.

I think that there's a certain, there's a good base of consumers in Wichita that are really supportive of the local food movement and the farmers market and that connection, knowing your food, knowing your farmer.

An aspect of this theme was that some of the producers felt that the culture surrounding food in Wichita and the Midwest has traditional or conventional tastes and demands, especially when compared to other regions. In this sense, producers framed the issue as a type of mindset or attitude. They did note that the mindset is changing, or will eventually change, but that the Midwest tends to lag behind other regions when it comes to this trend:

There are many reasons, culturally it's [Wichita] a little more conservative, agronomically it's more difficult, the risks are higher. There's not a huge impetus for innovation amongst the customers. They're not paying you to innovate very much. They're paying you to be 90% predictable. So I would love, Seattle is probably a different deal, maybe not. I'm just saying I think Wichita could be a little bit more flexible. [...]. If something works in Wichita, then that means its been working somewhere else

really well. Whereas if you had gone to Portland in nineties there would have been a vibrant local food farmers market, already things were happening there, they've been happening there for a long time. It just takes time to get here.

A couple that has an urban farm commented:

The cultural shift is definitely happening, it's in progress. I think, especially since we are in the Midwest these things happen more slowly. It's happening but it will take it a while to fully get there. Maybe the husband doesn't want anything green on his plate and is maybe afraid to try. That might be, I shouldn't say this but maybe that's a little more prevalent in the Midwest, a little bit more steak and potatoes. I think that's probably a fact. Versus, you go to California or the coasts where maybe eating habits are a little different. That convenience culture is pretty strong but it is changing.

Related to consumers having conventional tastes, the producers often brought up the general lack of motivation and desire from the majority of consumers. Many statements had to do with the idea that the base of motivated consumers could be larger:

You know the West market on an average Saturday they tell me is 2 - 3,000 people coming through it. You know, we don't sell to three thousand people but there's still another 290,000 people in Wichita that don't come.

A beef rancher noted:

We were kind of curious if people would continue to call you and want the meat or not. They kind of went away. I hope they resurface come a week or two here, you know, that was the one drawback about the wintertime. You had these customers that were buying from me every week and all of the sudden they kind of quit eating I guess, or went back to the other sources, whatever they were doing.

Though the producers brought up that there is a lack of motivated consumers, some producers also specifically called out the demographic of young people as lacking motivation, or needing more involvement. They also see young people as key stakeholders for the future of alternative and local agriculture:

Another thing is we need younger growers. A lot of them are 60 plus years old and they have all that knowledge and we don't want it to go with them so that could be another thing is umm, just educating younger growers. I mean, there is more and more but come on.

If we are going to see a culture change its going to come from young families and I think we are seeing a little bit of that.

So maybe in 10 years there's going to be more people, more younger producers.

The demand for local agriculture appears to be present, albeit in a small group of consumers that the producers would like to see expand. In addition to this demand it appears that producers felt that the group to truly help this expansion is younger people. Demand was also placed in a cultural context, comparing the Midwest to other regions of the country.

**Bureaucracy and Organizational.** A major theme that emerged revolved around bureaucracy, bureaucratic institutions, and organizations involved in local food, including key individuals involved in those organizations. This theme involved anytime producers would mention things related to policy, the bodies that create and enforce such policy, organizations that try to influence policy, and organizations that educate and provide support for local agriculture. Producers would frequently discuss how things like policy can be a barrier and, in some cases, an asset. Also, producers discussed how certain nonprofit organizations are helpful in fostering awareness and influencing policy. The producers brought up that some of the policies were more harmful than helpful and need to be changed, as well as being out of touch with the producers' lived experience. The following tomato producer mentioned zoning law policy as a specific barrier:

Policy changes so that people could grow on empty lots in Wichita and become true urban farmers would be a piece. But you are supposed to have that zoning and the thing that we really really need in our zoning regulations. So we have an agricultural



designation. We don't have an urban farmer designation. And that's something that our local planning commission needs to adopt. So we need, added to the zoning, the list of possible zoning designations, and some cities have already created this, an urban ag designation. You know, in some of the big cities, the urban farmer, they go around and buy up empty lots and they farm on them. But we have no designation for that in Wichita. If we could advocate for the urban farm designation we could greatly move the movement forward.

One goat, chicken, and fruit producer had a lot to say about policy being a barrier, from bureaucracy being out of touch, to not helping producers meet policy demands:

There's a lot of government red tape. We went to a workshop recently and umm, for about 1 whole day of the conference, it seemed like every workshop I came out of I just felt like, just drained. New regulations, it wasn't inspiring or motivational. It was more like, "Well crap, there's one more thing we can't do". And it's like, I don't think these people have ever been on a farm, much less understand how it would truly work. I mean, we understand, they are coming at it from a consumer standpoint, trying to protect consumers. But there's a major disconnect. It's a barrier. The state's food regulations and best practices, its probably 15 pages long. It's the things you can sell at markets and things you can sell if you have it certified and things you can sell with a license or without. It's just, it's confusing and half of it doesn't make sense and there's some things that contradict each other. Yeah, I guess some more continuity within the policy and maybe more justification for some of the policies the way they are. And then truly, if they are going to implement policies like this, have some sort of way where, okay, this is the policy, here's some resources that can help you meet that policy or get so that you can sell the products you want to sell. It does feel like a lot of the state regulations and things like that are geared more towards large producers. It's not as friendly to smaller producers.

Conversely, the producers also brought up, though less often, that bureaucracy and the resulting policies can be assets, or not that large of a barrier. A tomato producer commented on food safety rules:

They're [food safety rules] not too bad. I mean for what we are doing now. I don't think they're a problem, I mean you know what the rules are and play by the rules. The rules and regulations are set

up that way with the safety of the consumer in mind. They're pretty easy to comply with. Yeah I think Kansas is one of the easier to deal with than a lot of them.

An agritourism operator mentioned the city council:

I think the current city council is a strength. What they are wanting to do with the downtown market is good. And I think the mayor is on board. What allowed me to move into that area was the fact that the Sedgwick County Planning Commission passed an agritourism bill in Fall of 2016. So we really are using that Sedgwick County resolution, with some rules about agritourism to our advantage here.

Producers also mentioned organizations in the Wichita area that are involved with local food. A commonly noted organization included the Health and Wellness Coalition and YMCA:

There's like, the Food Health and Awareness Coalitions, the YMCA is a huge one. They really run a really nice awareness campaign. So I'm really excited that they have nutritionists and these people there that are teaching awareness.

Ten out of the 12 interviews had mentions of the Sedgwick County Extension Office, a state-wide organization that supports agricultural projects through funding, education, and policy, as a major asset:

We have a county extension. They are very very supportive and full of information and help to empower people to do what I do. Extension works very hard for us. That would be my number one. They do everything they can possibly do to make sure that local food producers are successful. Educational opportunities, we have a great database to work on. They do field trials and things like that for us. They hold these training conferences to let us know, to educate us on how to market better as far as different types of marketing, whether it be how to work a farmers market or how you use Facebook and twitter and websites to use them.

Many producers also mentioned the ICT Food Circle. The ICT Food Circle is a part of the Sedgwick County Extension and is a steering committee of local food advocates who connect, educate, and facilitate local food systems. Many participants

mentioned the food circle as a key organization, but where it stood as an asset or barrier remained ambiguous:

I'm kind of confused as to what their mission is. But at the first meeting at the Sedgwick County Extension Office, man there was so much conversation going on about branching out in all different directions and I'm thinking, I just don't know. I really don't know now what their purpose is, I don't.

I think it is logical that ICT would be the organization rather than trying to reinvent something. It's a strength but I think it needs a little shake up. Yeah, cause I think the food circle can be a great resource but its gone through some changes. Like their directory is a huge problem. I mean there's producers on their directory that don't know they are on the directory. They don't even sell you know. It's very out of date. I mean I think a lot of people don't even know it exists.

Along with these key organizations, the producers mentioned key individuals involved with these organizations. Two key individuals in particular tended to be mentioned consistently across interviews. The first one mentioned was Rebecca McMahon of the Sedgwick County Extension Office:

The other thing is the extension service, they are invaluable. I use them a lot. The first thing I did, I had Rebecca McMahon come out here and she said, "Tell me what we need to do". She's a good person.

The extension office, absolutely. Rebecca McMahon is awesome. They are always very helpful. I've got zero problems with what they are doing.

The other key individuals mentioned were Luke and Amy Snow, who run the Old Town Farmers Market and a small business called the Farm Shop. Take the following quotes as exemplars as sentiments towards the Snow's:

They've just taken, Luke Snow and Amy Snow have taken over. Luke and Amy are creative people. Luke's brought some good energy to it. New creative stuff, improved everything. He's doing a better job, he's doing a good job.

Definitely an asset. He's [Luke Snow] passionate about local food. He's passionate and progressive. He and his Farm Shop team have some pretty exciting ideas on board and where to take the farmer's market.

This theme provided a wide range of information from the microlevel of key individuals to the macrolevel focusing on large organizations or state and county policy. These quotes highlight specific laws like zoning restrictions, provide information on important organizations, and bring to light the complex relationship between producers and policy makers.

**Business Interest.** Producers would often comment on the involvement of private businesses, grocery stores, and restaurants in local food. Different than bureaucracy or nonprofit organizations, this theme included mention of entities that are trying to make a profit, or that are publicly funded but still run like a business, such as hospitals. Businesses were seen as both assets and barriers. First, producers would mention private and public institutions like large businesses and corporations:

Institutional sales [...] other institutions like our state ran prison system, state hospitals. Why don't they seek out local suppliers?

Wichita has so many aircraft and Koch. It would be great to see some of those places, you know, they have cafeterias and in-house restaurants to use local. Like Garmin in Kansas City, they do an employee CSA. I think that would be great.

They [Fidelity Bank] have someone come in and talk about local foods and cooking demos and things like that. I think it would be great if more companies would do things like that for their employees.

Producers also brought up restaurants as a key asset to local food as well as having room for growth. Take this quote as an example:

There are a handful of restaurants here and the surrounding community that like to utilize local food. I'd like to see the restaurants buy more natural food and more homegrown food. It'd

be nice if the restaurants bought more from your local producers. It all comes down to money again cause they'll buy cheaper sources.

In many cases the producers felt like large chain grocery stores should incorporate more local food:

Ideally, I don't think we will ever get back to general, mom and pop grocery stores. Ideally the big box stores would support local producers because in reality they supply a lot of jobs for local families. They're a paycheck for a lot of people. It would be great if they could be a paycheck to local producers as well.

**Climate.** A theme that arose from the data was the idea that the climate, such as seasonal shifts and frequency and intensity of types of weather, can be a barrier or an asset. For the most part it was seen as a barrier but in some cases some producers saw it as an asset. Many producers framed Wichita's climate relative to other regions of the country. Take the following quotes of producers discussing the climate as a barrier:

There's about 3 weeks during the summer that you can get a good peach. For instance in Wichita at 3 in the afternoon in July it's 95 degrees. You don't want to plan to be anyplace outside at that time. Whereas in Portland at 3 P.M. in July, it's going to be really nice, same with New York, Bay Area, always pleasant. These places that have strong local food industries have nicer weather so it's more reasonable to want to spend time at the farmers market. There's a weather thing. It's also a hard place to grow things. Weather is hard. Today it's fifty, a week ago it was zero. That kills things. Or Michigan, in Michigan it's zero everyday for two months. That's easy on things but up and down and up and down is hard on things.

Yeah, the climate in Kansas. It can be harsh. It gets cold and then it gets windy and then it can get hot. So the growing seasons are shorter and I think the heat and the wind in the summer time will definitely limit what can be grown. Yeah, and its just, it makes for a more seasonal growing periods for certain crops.

Some of the producers saw the climate of Kansas as an asset:

I'm glad we don't live in Minnesota. I just don't know how we could. I'm not a cold weather person. I do appreciate having

enough cool weather that we can do cool weather crops, but in the heat of summer that we can grow tomatoes. Cause when we lived in Seattle you couldn't grow a tomato for anything unless you grew it in your green house, just never got hot enough.

I think the weather is strength really. Cause its not, obviously there's bad days but for the most part. April is kind of hit or miss but for the most part May through October is pretty nice. You'll get some rainy days but I'd say its overall nice.

**Definition.** Though not a primary research question, problems with defining the term “local” arose enough in the literature review to justify it being a question in the interview. The question asked how the producer defines or understands the term local. Related is the idea of defining and understanding what “organic”, “grass-fed”, or “natural” mean (see Knowledge, Education, and Awareness theme).

When asked what local means, some producers mentioned that local food had to be both produced and consumed locally. Others stated that local has to have a face-to-face connection between the producer and consumer or similarly, a relational aspect. The most common sentiment that arose from producers was that the term local was ambiguous and difficult to define, as well as a misleading term that many companies use as a marketing technique.

Many producers gave an area range of what local was, e.g., within 50 miles, but would state that the area range may vary depending on product. For instance, some producers said that the closest blueberries one could get were 150 miles away but that they would still be considered local whereas one would expect to find tomatoes within a closer area range. Here, participants struggle with the ambiguity of the definition:

But also to me it, local is probably best described as a radius you know. A radius that's flexible because ultimately some things are going to be closer and some things are going to be farther right? There's much more specific, there's not a closer ring of blueberry producers here, so you have to go further, right? So to me it's like, sometimes the closest you can get is Kansas City. But I think there

is a limit to that, like, if the closest I can get almonds is California then it ceases to be local at some point.

Well local in terms of a mileage range is hard to define. I was reading something recently, [...] it was saying anywhere in the State of Kansas is local. [...], you know, it takes seven hours to drive across the state. That's not, I don't think I would consider that local.

Though ambiguity was a common theme, a majority of the producers still tried to make an educated guess in defining local as an area range. Five of the 12 producers said that the area range of local depends on the product. Four producers said local is anywhere from 50 - 200 miles, one farmer said within 10 miles, while another said within city limits. Two producers said local was within the state of Kansas, while another one said a 2 - 3 hr drive.

## CHAPTER IV

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study was exploratory in nature and was to understand local and alternative food systems in the Sedgwick County area through the perspectives of producers who contribute to and participate in such systems. A major goal of the study was to better understand these systems through the lived experiences of those who participate in them, to increase such systems, empower and give voice to key stakeholders, guide policy, reframe debates, and link assets. It was also important to allow citizens and producers to better understand the nuances and strengths of local food systems in Sedgwick County.

The study was framed around the Asset Based Community Development model (ABCD) (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), which focuses on connecting assets in the community by mobilizing, linking, and empowering individuals, institutions, and associations. The primary research questions were to specifically understand the assets and barriers to local and alternative food systems in Sedgwick County, the motivations to participate in these systems, and what Wichita's potential is for these systems in the future. Producers, as compared to consumers, were the primary focus of the study as many studies have already examined the motivations and perceived benefits of consumers for local food systems, but less so for the producers.

**Analysis of Research Questions: Mapping on Major Themes**

In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted to gather rich subjective descriptions from the key informants. Coded information gathered from the transcribed interviews provided subthemes that led to major themes relating to the research questions. These major themes were



analyzed for how they relate to the primary research questions as well as how they are informed by relevant academic and scholarly literature.

The next sections will further examine the major themes and how they fit onto the research questions of understanding the (a) assets and (b) barriers to local and alternative agriculture in Sedgwick County, the (c) motivations of producers to participate in such systems, and (d) what food systems in the Sedgwick County area have the potential to look like in 10 years.

### **Assets and Barriers to Local and Alternative Agriculture**

The following section will specifically examine how the major themes gathered from the interviews relate to the specific research questions of assessing the (a) assets and (b) barriers for local and alternative food systems in the Sedgwick County area. Table 3 shows specific assets and barriers that related to each theme.

Table 3

*Assets and Barriers Related to Each Major Theme*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Assets</b>	<b>Barriers</b>
Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
Knowledge, Education, & Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small Group of Knowledgeable Consumers and Producers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of Consumers Unaware and Uneducated</li> <li>• Misleading Product Labels</li> </ul>
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Old Town Farmers Market</li> <li>• Kansas Grown Farmers Market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need More <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Farmers Markets</li> <li>○ Cooperative Grocery Stores</li> <li>○ Permanent Aggregating Facilities (Food Hubs)</li> <li>○ Urban Farms</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Need Better Use of Technology</li> <li>• Start Up Costs to Access Infrastructure</li> </ul>
Triple Bottom Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
Desire and Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small Group of Motivated Consumers and Producers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of Consumers Lack Motivation and Desire</li> <li>• Need a Cultural shift in Kansas and Midwest Towards Food</li> <li>• Not Enough Young People Involved</li> </ul>
Bureaucracy and Organizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sedgwick County Extension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rebecca McMahon</li> </ul> </li> <li>• ICT Food Circle</li> <li>• YMCA Health and Wellness Coalition</li> <li>• Luke and Amy Snow (Old Town)</li> <li>• Some Policy is Easy to Follow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complicated and Outdated Zoning Laws</li> <li>• ICT Food Circle</li> <li>• Agricultural Policy Out of Touch with Producers</li> <li>• Excessive and Complicated Agricultural Policy</li> </ul>
Business Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Few Select Supportive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Restaurants</li> <li>○ Corporations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private Business Involvement Lacking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Larger Grocery Chains</li> <li>○ Restaurants</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Public Business Involvement Lacking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hospitals</li> <li>○ Prisons</li> <li>○ Schools</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively Long Growing and Selling Season</li> <li>• Does not get Extremely Cold</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too Hot During Summer Months <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To Produce Certain Crops</li> <li>○ Wilts Produce at Farmers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Table 3 (continued)

Climate continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Markets</li> <li>○ To Be Outside at a Farmers Market or an Agritourism Operation</li> <li>• Extreme Weather Fluctuations</li> <li>• Springtime Freezes Damage Crops</li> </ul>
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### Infrastructure

The theme of Infrastructure included notions relating to anytime participants mentioned a physical or structural space or place that is a part of local and alternative agriculture. Such structural spaces included farmers markets, community gardens, urban farms, small-scale agricultural productions, cooperative grocery stores, and facilities that can store food for long periods of time. In addition to physical spaces, technological infrastructure was also incorporated into this theme such as the use of phone applications and websites.

**Assets.** When it came to assets to local and alternative food systems in Sedgwick County area, the most cited physical infrastructures were the two major farmers markets in Wichita, the Kansas Grown Farmers Market and the Old Town Farmers Market. The qualities that participants mentioned that made these locations beneficial fit remarkably well with the literature on the assets of farmers markets. Specifically, participants reported that they provide a stable and inexpensive selling venue for producers (Feenstra et al., 2003), offer good and inexpensive marketing and advertisement (Hilchey et al., 1995), provide a high frequency of customer traffic, and offer a supportive environment with like-minded producers and consumers (Feenstra et al., 2003). Many of the producers indicated that beyond just the Kansas Grown and Old Town farmers markets, well-run farmers markets are one of the most important things for local and alternative food movements, which is consistent with researchers calling farmers markets the

“flagships” (Brown & Miller, 2008) and “keystones” (Gillespie et al., 2007) of local food systems.

**Barriers.** Types of infrastructures that manifested as barriers were cooperative grocery stores or facilities that aggregate and store local food (food hubs) appeared to be lacking or insufficient in the Wichita area. Food hubs are increasingly being seen as powerful innovations in local food supply networks (Matosn & Thayer, 2013). As intermediary organizational forms they have the potential to improve smaller-scale farms by creating networking opportunities, year-round accessibility, and aggregated processing and wholesale facilities that help increase economies of scale (Horst, Ringstrom, Tyman, Ward, Werner, & Born, 2011). Nationally, the amount of food hubs has increased 68% from 2008 - 2013 (USDA, 2013). Though there is an observed increase, research has found that on a larger scale there is still a lack of distribution systems for moving local foods into mainstream markets, especially with increasing demand for local food (Jablonski, Schmit, & Kay, 2016). It appears that the current producers are catching on to this trend and see food hubs as integral infrastructure to Sedgwick County’s food system moving forward.

Another type of infrastructure that the participants noted to be lacking or insufficient in number were urban farms. This sentiment was also expressed in the light of knowing that if there were to be more motivated and knowledgeable consumers in Wichita there would need to be an equal increase in production to meet such demand. Though Sedgwick County was perceived to have a lack of urban farms, other areas of the country have been found to have thriving urban gardening and urban farming scenes, most notably including large cities on the West Coast, Upper Midwest, and the Northeast (Renner, 2016).

Participants also mentioned that startup costs to access or have certain types of infrastructure were barriers. Specifically, this included things like having the financial backing to buy the materials to make an urban farm, have the money to get a booth location at a farmers market, or buy the necessary equipment to sell food like a certified scale. This reported barrier was also mentioned in the extensive study reported by the Sedgwick County Extension Office (Health & Wellness Coalition, 2014), which noted that startup costs and access to land and infrastructure were common assets reported to be lacking in the Sedgwick County area.

Related to technological infrastructure, the idea of a phone application that connects consumers to local food producers was cited. Producers saw the application as a place in which local producers could post their products and consumers could then select and buy the products directly from the phone application. There are phone applications on the market that do what the producers describe. One such application is called Locavore, which helps consumers find out what local foods are in season and find the closest farmers markets selling them (Nierenberg, 2013). The application also has information about producers and provides seasonal recipes using local ingredients. In addition to Locavore, there are other similar applications such as Farmstand, Food Community, and Harvest Mark Tracability (Nierenberg, 2013). It is possible then, that the participants' sentiment towards the use of phone applications could be reframed. It is not that the phone applications are not available, but that the applications are not yet a part of the culture of the local food system of Sedgwick County.

Also related to technological infrastructure, producers noted that the currently available online local food directories are out of date and do not represent the produce that farmers currently have. Producers noted that they would like to see the online food directories updated on a monthly or weekly basis, rather than the yearly to biyearly basis that the directories currently

update. Researchers have found the Puget Sound Food Network in Washington State to be an exemplar for local food directories (Horst et al., 2011). A web-based platform, the network has real-time communication and assists online transactions between food producers, consumers, and other participants in the regional food system. It also enables communication between farmers, buyers, processing, distribution, and storage facilities, and coordinates with other regional producers with similar needs (Horst et al., 2011). Moving forward, this network could be a beneficial blueprint for Sedgwick County food advocates to follow and understand better.

### **Bureaucracy and Organizational**

The theme of Bureaucracy and Organizational included topics related to anytime a participant mentioned bureaucratic institutions (e.g., governmental institutions, county commissions, city councils, food and drug administration), policies that these institutions create and enforce (e.g., food handling laws, agricultural regulations, zoning laws), and nonprofit or publicly funded organizations that influence policy and support agriculture (e.g., coalitions, nonprofits, clubs, farmers market organizations). Also included in this theme were key individuals that play a major role in these organizations.

**Assets.** The organizations that were mentioned the most were the Sedgwick County Extension Office, The YMCA Health and Wellness Coalition, and the ICT Food Circle. These organizations were seen as assets as they provide support, resources, education, information, and a platform for alternative and local food producers and consumers. Of these organizations, the Sedgwick County Extension Office was perceived as the most beneficial to food systems in the Sedgwick County area. Research has found that Extension Offices, sometimes referred to as boundary organizations, easily integrate the domains of science and policy, being instrumental in

maintaining an integrated system of assessment and decision making for addressing agricultural needs (Cash, 2001). The participants saw the Extension as a major support network that has a large amount of educational and financial resources, as well as being helpful in that it is the organization that maintains and runs the Kansas Grown Farmers Market.

The YMCA Health and Wellness Coalition was mentioned less, but was seen as a key organization in that it provides information, support, and is a voice in the local food movement. The ICT Food Circle was also mentioned as a key organization in that it provides a platform and is an organizing body that brings local producers and information about local food together. Though the ICT Food Circle was often mentioned, there was a sentiment amongst some participants of ambiguity and confusion as to the overall helpfulness and function of the Food Circle. These participants reported that they were unsure of the overall nature of the Food Circle and mentioned that the online inventory of local producers and products was outdated and not regularly updated enough to be beneficial. Though the efficacy of food circles and food coalitions have been difficult to assess, they are nonetheless seen as important aspects of local food in that they identify local problems, create a united vision, and formulate food policies responsive to local needs (Webb, Pelletier, Maretzki, & Wilkins, 1998). Food policy committees have also been found to bring together stakeholders who ordinarily would neither collaborate nor interact (Hassanein 2003), which the ICT Food Circle has accomplished.

In addition to the organization as a whole, participants often mentioned key individuals who are a part of these organizations. Key individuals that when mentioned the most were Rebecca McMahon as well as Luke and Amy Snow. Rebecca McMahon was seen as a key player in her role with the Sedgwick County Extension Office and with her involvement in the ICT Food Circle and the Kansas Grown Farmers Market, and as someone who is knowledgeable

of the local food scene in Wichita and agriculture in general. Luke and Amy Snow were seen as assets in that they run the Old Town Farmers Markets as well as a business related to small-scale agriculture called the Farm Shop. The participants mentioned characteristics that researchers of leadership have also found. Specifically, key individuals and leaders are seen as critical to social movements in that they inspire commitment, mobilize resources, create and recognize opportunities, devise strategies, frame demands, and influence outcomes (Morris & Staggenborg, 2004). Moving forward, these individuals should be seen as people to follow and rely upon, but there should also be more individuals stepping up into these types of leadership roles.

Though the majority of producers saw policies created by bureaucratic institutions and organizations surrounding local and alternative food as barriers, a few producers mentioned that some of the policies were relatively easy to follow and not a hindrance. The few mentions of policies being beneficial, specifically related to the health and safety codes and regulations that are in place. Participants reported understanding why such regulations are there in the first place and that such regulations are relatively easy to follow.

**Barriers.** The main aspect of this theme that was seen as a barrier was policies surrounding local and alternative food. Two producers framed policies as the primary barrier to local food. One aspect of policy surrounded issues pertaining to zoning laws that dictate the legality of what one can grow and sell on their property. These participants' thoughts were not surprising, as literature on planning and policy has found that urban agriculture policy has either been inhibited by insufficient government support (Cohen and Reynolds, 2014), confined through restrictive zoning (Brown and Bailkey 2002), or neglected by city planners who do not have the technical training or incentives to focus on urban food systems (Pothukuchi, 2009). Though these barriers in urban farming policy still exist in many cities, food systems planning



and policy making has been found to evolve quite significantly over the past 10 years (Cohen, 2012).

Campbell (2004) suggests that development of local food systems could be better facilitated by policy that removes regulatory barriers to community gardens and entrepreneurial urban agriculture and adds community food security to comprehensive city planning goals.

Kaufman and Bailkey (2000) recommend similar local government actions that include comprehensive land use plans, specific use for vacant parcels, amending zoning ordinances, and urban open-space management strategies.

Though the participants reported policy issues, there have been other cities and regions of the country that Wichita can follow. Berkeley, California adopted one of the first municipal food and nutrition policies in the county in 2001 (Campbell, 2004); which promoted the local economy and fostered a sustainable food system. Other cities have been noted to have innovative policy towards urban gardening and farming such as Detroit, Michigan; Portland, Oregon; Austin, Texas; Boston, Massachusetts; and Cleveland, Ohio (Popovitch, 2014). For instance, in 2013, Detroit adopted a comprehensive urban agricultural zoning ordinance that gave urban agriculture an official legal status for land use, which made it easier for urban farms to grow and sell produce (Ignaczak, 2013).

Another aspect of policy that was seen as a barrier was that it was out of touch with the everyday experiences of the producers. Specifically, it was seen that the entities that create the policy towards local and alternative agriculture are not aware of what goes into producing food at the local level. In this sense, the policy makers and enforcers are not the same as the people who have to abide by such policies. Because the policy was out of touch with the producers, it was seen as difficult to abide by and unnecessarily complex and tedious. One producer also

mentioned that a lot of the policy and grants towards agriculture are directed at large agribusiness and large-scale farming operations rather than small-scale enterprises, which is in line with Myers & Kent's (1998) research reporting that four-fifths of farming subsidies go to the top 30% of farms.

### **Knowledge, Education, Awareness**

The theme of Knowledge, Education, and Awareness is related to anytime participants mentioned the consumers', producers', and society at large knowledge and understanding of local and alternative food. Such knowledge and understanding could manifest as consumers being educated on what goes into producing local food, why local food is priced the way that it is, where to find local food, understanding the ethics behind local and alternative food, as well as knowledge around how to prepare and cook products that are commonly a part of alternative and local food.

**Assets.** Though this theme appeared to relate more to barriers, there were certain aspects of it that manifested as assets. The majority of the participants noted there are a small group of knowledgeable and educated consumers and producers who understand issues relating to local agriculture in the Sedgwick County area such as where to find it and the ethics behind it. The reason this was not perceived as more of a major asset from the perspective of the producers is that they often noted that this group, though beneficial to a degree, is too small in number.

The current participants of this study would be considered part of this small group of knowledgeable and educated producers. Because a large portion of the sample was gathered from the snowball technique of gathering participants, many of the participants' names were

commonly cited as people who would be good for being interviewed, as other participants viewed them as knowledgeable about local agriculture.

**Barriers.** The theme of Knowledge, Education, and Awareness mostly manifested as barriers. Participants' sentiment indicated that a large portion of the population in the Sedgwick County area are unaware of local food movements. This manifests as consumers not knowing the nature of local and alternative food movements, the ethics involved in them, and where to find local food. This sentiment is supported by the Sedgwick County Extension Office report (Health & Wellness Coalition, 2014), which found that consumers indicated that they lacked knowledge and education around issues surrounding local food systems.

Some producers felt strongly towards consumers' lack of knowledge with regards to how to prepare and cook local food. Such knowledge included not knowing how to prepare food that is commonly found at farmers markets and gardens, which is often raw and needs more intensive preparation. Research has highlighted the importance of one's cooking competence, showing that it allows a consumer to be more self-reliant, maintain a healthy diet, create less stressful home food production processes, and influences attitudes towards pre-prepared convenience foods (Ternier, 2010). The absence of cooking competence has also been shown to result in reliance on and trust in the convenience food industry (Ternier, 2010). This loss of cooking knowledge has been hypothesized to be due to shifting away from culinary education in educational systems to a focus on technology or replaced with more general classes such as "Health Education" (Frobisher, Jepson, & Maxwell, 2005).

Many participants also mentioned that definitions and terms that are commonly associated with agriculture can be misleading, leading to confusion and misinformation amongst consumers. Participants mentioned that commonly mislabeled or false terms include local,

organic, natural, and grass fed. Some also commented that these labels are often influenced and defined by larger interest groups who want their products to be seen as local, organic, or natural, when they really are not. This sentiment is not far from the truth, as it has been understood that food manufacturers have lobbied for the right to use health claims in marketing, as they demonstrably promote sales (Nestle & Ludwig, 2010). Scholars tracing the history of food labeling found it to be full of instances of ongoing legal disputes between food companies and federal regulators (Nestle & Ludwig, 2010). Research has also found that consumers believe front-of-package claims, perceive them to be government-endorsed, and use them to ignore the Nutrition Facts Panel (Wansink, 2003). One producer brought up ideas related to consumers believing packaging by indirectly referencing the local trap (Born & Purcell, 2006; Hinrichs, 2003), which refers to the phenomenon in which local is automatically assumed to equal good. The producer mentioned that his costumers commonly conflate the terms local, organic, and good, indicating that though his products are local, they are sprayed with pesticides and not organic.

Other producers mentioned that there needs to be more enforcement surrounding such labels because a lot of work goes into gaining the privilege to have their products acquire labels, such as being certified organic. Though there are federal regulations for food labeling (Caswell & Padberg, 1992), most of what appears on food packaging is consistent with participants thoughts in that it is loosely regulated, arduous to verify, and misleading (Nestle & Ludwig, 2010).

### **Desire and Demand**

The theme of Desire and Demand related to consumers', producers', and society at large want and motivation to consume and produce local and alternative food, beyond simply having knowledge or awareness. The desire and demand is seen as physically going out to buy local food, produce local food, and be a part of and active in organizations that support it. In this sense a consumer may be knowledgeable of local food, yet not have the desire to actually go and support such enterprises.

**Assets.** A small group of knowledgeable and understanding consumers and producers was seen as being beneficial to the local food movement. The same group of people was also seen as having the motivation and desire to participate in these food movements. Participants mentioned that this small group of consumers and producers are people that go to farmers markets every weekend, are a part of organizations that support local agriculture, run and support community gardens, have urban farms, and are well connected to other producers and consumers. They also eat at restaurants that source local food and are passionate, committed, and supportive of the local food movement.

**Barriers.** Like the knowledge and education theme, the small group of consumers and producers was seen as an asset but the overwhelming feeling from the participants was that the majority of the consumer base in the Sedgwick County area do not seek out and support local food. In addition to the consumer base, participants thought that there could be much more of a desire for people to want to produce food, whether it is starting a home garden, an urban farm, or putting a greenhouse in their backyard. In this sense, consumers may have the knowledge of local food systems, but no desire or actual behaviors relating to their knowledge and attitudes. In studies on consumers' attitudes and knowledge towards sustainable food, researchers found that

participants' attitudes did not strongly correlate with actual behavior of purchasing such food (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006), which reflects a portion of the consumer base in Sedgwick County.

Young people were seen as the demographic that needed more involvement and desire, as participants saw them as an important group to innovate and to make the movement grow. Participants noted that those who frequent farmers markets are on average older in age, which is supported by research on the demographic characteristics of farmers market consumers (Alkon & McCullen, 2011). Studies have found that younger and more educated farmers tend to be more willing to adopt new technologies and join conservation schemes, which fits well with the ethos of alternative agriculture (Gould, Saupe, & Klemme, 1989; Jacobsen, Goreham, Watt, Dahl, Sell, & Stearns, 1991).

Some participants couched this issue of desire and demand in a regional and cultural context, stating that the culture and mindset of Kansas and the Midwest is not conducive to local and alternative agriculture. Specifically, it was seen that the tastes and attitudes towards alternative and local food in Kansas and the Midwest were more conservative as well as lagging behind other regions like the West Coast and the Northeast. The producers' beliefs have some merit as research has shown that the majority of community-supported agricultural operations, as well as policy towards urban agriculture are located and being developed in the Northeast, West Coast, and Upper Midwest (Flora & Bregendahl, 2012; Popovitch, 2014). Additionally, a report using 23 metrics for rating a states' eco-friendliness found the highest scoring states were located in the Northeast, West Coast, and Upper Midwest, with Kansas being ranked 38th (Kiernan, 2018).

The report produced by the Sedgwick County Extension Office supported the participants' views in that it found that consumers reported they would rather go to Dillons for

groceries, as it was perceived as easier and more convenient (Health & Wellness Coalition, 2014). Specifically, participants noted that the culture around food in the Midwest tends to prefer fast food, prepackaged food, and conventional food, which may be reflected of a lack of cooking knowledge (Ternier, 2010). On a national level the percentage of home prepared meal expenditures in America has decreased from 70% in 1965 to 53% in 2000, while food consumed away from home has increased from 30% to 47% within the same timeframe (Friddle, Mangaraj, & Kinsey, 2001). For Sedgwick County, the percentage of food consumed away from home was found to be 38% in 2011 (Health and Wellness Coalition, 2014), though much of the 62% of food eaten at home could still be pre-packed and convenience food. Though the participants felt that the local food culture in Kansas may be lagging, they felt that it would change in the near future, just that it takes more time.

### **Climate**

The theme of Climate appeared to be seen as both an asset and a barrier depending on the participant. Though participants that saw the climate as a barrier tended to be more vocal about it, there were a few participants who mentioned the climate and weather as an asset. This theme was composed of anything related to participants mentioning weather and climate patterns, both micro and macro, such as daily weather and rapid temperature fluctuations to seasonal weather patterns.

**Assets.** Aspects of the weather and climate that were perceived as being beneficial were having a long growing and selling season for market (e.g., one can grow and sell produce effectively from approximately May through October) that was also reported in the Sedgwick County Health and Wellness Coalition study (2014). Because comparisons are always relative,

participants also compared Kansas to other regions of the country, noting that areas further north like Minnesota or Michigan get too cold to grow things in the winter and areas to the south such as Texas or Florida are too hot for certain types of produce, or too hot in the summer to make selling produce outside viable. In this sense the climate of Kansas was seen as being conducive to small-scale food production.

**Barriers.** Some producers had strong feelings towards the climate of the Wichita area and Kansas. Relative to other regions, Wichita was seen as too hot in the summer to sell things as well as have an agritourism business. Producers noted that the summer heat makes it difficult to sell produce as it tends to wilt later in the afternoon, and most farmers markets in the summer need to start very early in the morning to be ahead of the heat of the day. Related to agritourism, simply being physically outside in the middle of July at an orchard or you-pick business can be exhausting and uncomfortable, and even harmful for at risk populations such as the elderly.

Another aspect of the climate that was seen as a barrier was the extreme temperature fluctuations that are common to Kansas. Participants noted that places that are more consistently cold like Minnesota or Michigan may actually be beneficial because at least the weather there is more consistent and predictable, whereas Kansas may get winter-like cold fronts in the late spring that can wipe out crops or put stress on trees and animals. Research does support the notion of rapid weather fluctuations influence on livestock and crops, noting the concept of “heat-stress”, showing that excessive heat can be problematic for dairy production in cows (West, 2003) and that certain plants’ seeds can be affected by episodes of hot temperatures (Wheeler, Craufurd, Ellis, Porter, & Prasad, 2000).



**Business Interest**

The theme Business Interest included anytime participants mentioned private businesses such as restaurants, grocery stores, and large corporations as well as larger institutions like hospitals and prisons and how they are related to and support local food systems.

**Assets.** Participants mentioned that with regards to business assets, there were a few key restaurants in the Wichita area that source from and support local food. In a few cases, participants mentioned that business from restaurants composes a major part of their operation and income, stating that they could solely sell to restaurants and still be able to have a profit. These restaurants are seen as beneficial as they provide economic support for the local producers as well as provide marketing and advertising for their farming operations (e.g., specifically stating on the menu that they source from a local producer). Like the small group of motivated and knowledgeable consumers and producers, restaurants were seen as an asset, but they are only a small and select few.

Though seen as mostly a barrier, or part of large conventional agriculture, a few producers mentioned that large agribusinesses and corporations can be beneficial for the local food movement in that they donate and give grants to things related to local and alternative food.

**Barriers.** Participants noted that there could be more business interest that is supportive and involved in local food. Such business interest included having more restaurants source and promote local food, especially grocery stores. Not only did participants want grocery stores to source locally more, but also noted that the current large chain grocery stores make it difficult to sell to them or partner with them. Specifically, participants stated that grocery chains require a consistent quality and quantity of product that local producers have difficulty maintaining compared to large-scale agricultural operations. This sentiment is supported by research, which

also highlights that in addition to quantity and quality, large-scale retail operations demand qualities that meet increasingly strict safety standards (Richards & Pofahl, 2010). Other issues found to be barriers to accessing, purchasing, and serving local food to institutions has been difficulty locating suppliers and delivery and distribution mechanisms (Feenstra, Allen, Hardesty, Ohmart, & Perez, 2016). In a study on obstacles to institutions purchasing local food in four Midwestern states (Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and Minnesota), researchers found that the lack of obtaining foods year-round and the ability to obtain an adequate amount of food supply were perceived as the greatest obstacles (Gregoire & Strohbehn, 2002), all of which were seen in the sentiments of some of the producers.

Also mentioned was that there could be more involvement from state run or private institutions that have large cafeterias such as prisons, hospitals, schools, and universities. National and local food champions have called farm-to-institution sales the “sleeping giant” of the local food movement and represent considerable purchasing power (Clark, 2016; Harris, Lott, Lakins, Bowden, & Kimmons, 2012). Given that large institutions have large food budgets, researchers have suggested that even a few percentage points of those food budgets going to local food could have major benefits for local food economies (Clark, 2016). Farm-to-institution programs and policies in place facilitate easier access to produce and products from regional farms to a wide variety of institutions such as schools, worksites, universities, hospitals, prisons, parks and museums, and faith-based organizations (Harris, Lott, Lakins, Bowden, & Kimmons, 2012). These institutions were seen as obvious options that have the potential to source more locally, but presently do not. Like selling to large chain grocery stores, these institutions require a consistent quantity and quality of product that is more difficult to maintain for small-scale operations.

Though Sedgwick County was perceived to be lacking this institutional involvement, other areas of the country have been found to have such institutional interest and policies. Hospitals in San Francisco have made initiatives to use local food (Sachs & Feenstra, 2008) and Boston General Hospital has a rooftop garden that is used for cafeteria food (Toy, 2017). The percentage of hospitals nationwide with farms or gardens has doubled since 2008, from 13% to 26% in 2016 (Toy, 2017). In Philadelphia, the Good Food, Healthy Hospitals initiative along with the Department of Public Health and a nonprofit regional food distributor developed a system to award and recognize hospitals that implement voluntary health standards such as sourcing from local farmers (Taylor, 2017).

Prison systems have also followed, with farm-to-prison programs including San Diego's Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility that incorporates a prison garden that produces food on site for prisoners, and the Vermont Department of Corrections has made initiatives to incorporate more local food (Bulger, 2015). Universities are also important institutions supporting local agriculture, with American University in Washington D.C. and Boston University having on-campus gardens as well as sourcing a high percentage of on-campus food from local sources (EcoWatch, 2015). Oregon passed a bill that allocates \$19.6 million in state funds to reimburse schools that purchase from local farmers and gives an additional \$3 million in grants to support food, garden, and agriculture activities in school teaching gardens (Harris, Lott, Lakins, Bowden, & Kimmons, 2012).

## **Motivations**

The next primary research question addresses what motivates the producers in the study to participate in and support local and alternative agriculture. The two previous research

questions relating to the assets and barriers asked producers to look outwardly as to what the Sedgwick County area has to offer in relation to local and alternative food systems. The research question of motivation asks the participants to reflect more inwardly, at their own motivations, values, and behaviors. The nature of the question produced content that was full of emotionality and phenomenological experience, rather than simply stating assets and barriers. The themes that were most related to motivations were Connection and Triple Bottom Line, and in a few cases, the theme of Knowledge, Education, and Awareness. Table 4 shows specific aspects of the related themes that are seen as motivations.

Table 4

*Motivations Related to Each Major Theme*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Motivations</b>
Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection to               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Nature</li> <li>○ Spirituality/Higher Power</li> <li>○ The Land and Region</li> <li>○ People                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community</li> <li>▪ Consumers</li> <li>▪ Other Producers</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Knowledge, Education, & Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to Educate Consumers</li> </ul>
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
Triple Bottom Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Emphasis</li> <li>• Social Emphasis</li> <li>• Nutrition/Health Emphasis</li> <li>• Juxtaposition to Conventional Agriculture</li> </ul>
Desire and Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
Bureaucracy and Organizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
Business Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>

**Connection.** With regards to motivations for why producers want to participate in local and alternative food, the most cited theme was related to the idea of connection. The theme of Connection includes a wide range of subthemes that on some level all relate to a connection to a “something”. That something can be a felt connection to nature, to the process of growing, to consumers, to producers, to the community, to the land, and to a God or a sense of spirituality. This theme appears to capture a part of the essence of alternative and local agriculture, in that alternative and local agriculture, by its very nature and definition, requires a connection to something greater.

A common sentiment amongst the producers was that participating in alternative agriculture, especially with its more hands-on approach, creates a connection with nature by being in physical proximity and contact with plants, animals, and the outdoors. This ability to be out in nature as well as interacting with it proved to be an important and motivating value for participants. A valued aspect of being in contact with nature was being part of the process of growth, from seed or fertilization through harvesting or slaughter.

Related to the connection to nature was a connection to “the land”. This sentiment towards the cultural meaning of food and its relationship to the land is supported by Munn (1986) and Sutton’s ideas (2001) that food is a way in which one can create meaning, both symbolically and through rituals. In this sense, one comes to appreciate the nuances and unique aspects of the region of Wichita and Kansas and that being amongst the outdoors and nature creates a more felt connection to the land and the history of the region. Participants reported that the unique seasonality and variations of the climate and land individualize it and make the land something to appreciate and identify with. Two participants indicated that seasonal festivals

surrounding food create a sense of connection to the land and that they hoped to see more events that celebrate the bounty of the land in the future.

Related to the theme of Connection was the idea that participating in local and alternative agriculture produces a strong connection to people. This connection to people can be a connection to consumers, other producers, and one's community at large. Often cited as a major motivator was that producers valued the face-to-face interaction they have with their customers. This face-to-face interaction produces a felt sense of connection to the people buying one's food by creating opportunity to socialize and educate consumers, which has been found as a primary reason and benefit why people participate in farmers markets and community gardens (Feagan et al., 2004; Griffin & Frongillo, 2003; Szmigin, Maddock, & Carrigan, 2003).

Participating in local and alternative agriculture also appeared to build a sense of connection not only to consumers, but to other producers as well. This manifested as seeing the same producers on a weekly basis at farmers markets and seeing them at other places like meetings of organizations that support local agriculture. Participants noted that this connection to other producers was enhanced by the supportive and communal environment that the producers have created with each other, such as seeing each other as colleagues rather than competitors or rivals.

Participants reported that this heightened connection to consumers and producers creates a sense of community, which was seen as an important value and motivator. One participant mentioned that going to the farmers market every weekend felt like going to a family reunion and that she missed seeing patrons and fellow producers during the off-season. One producer mentioned that his previous community garden operation brought his neighborhood together, and was a spot of socialization. This reported sense of community is not a surprising result, as

research has shown that community gardens have been found to build community, increase community engagement, and build social connections (Armstrong, 2000; Cohen, Finch, Bower, & Sastry, 2006; Twiss et al., 2003). Additionally farmers markets have been found to provide a sense of community and face-to-face social interaction (Feagan et al., 2004; Griffin & Frongillo, 2003; Szmigin, Maddock, & Carrigan, 2003).

Another subtheme of Connection was a connection with God and embodied characteristics of spirituality and the sacred. Participants who mentioned a connection with the sacred, cited a sense of stewardship, and that by being stewards to the land they were serving God. This connection with the sacred was in a sense related to a connection with nature, in that some of the producers viewed nature through a spiritual lens. This connection to spirituality appeared to make the producers who valued it also emphasize that it made them appreciate life more, and created a better respect for the cycle of life, death, and the food-chain. A major critic of conventional agriculture, Wendell Berry (1977), states that stewardship is one of the most important aspects of agriculture, especially amongst pioneers of early American agriculture in the Midwest, who imbued their work as farmers with a sense of stewardship. Berry sees stewardship as a way to reconnect with the land through spiritual means. Though stewardship can be tough to define and conceptualize, with Finnish farmers reporting the land is to be “cultivated and shaped”, while farmers in New Zealand expressed that it is being in tune with and coexisting with nature (Ahnström, et al., 2009), it nonetheless shows that there is an important relationship and connection to the land.

It does not come as a surprise that Connection was a theme and major motivator for the participants. Because globalization and industrialization have been found to lead to identity-confusion and loss of spatio-cultural identity (Pascual-de-Sans, 2004; Windsor & McVey, 2005),

one can see many of the above notions of connection as a reaction to such losses. Farmers specifically, have been found to have shrinking social networks with the rise of industrialized agriculture (Raine, 1999). This connection to people, community, and culture also appeared to lead to feelings of meaning and purpose, which have been found to be increased through gardening experiences and working with and being amongst nature (Comstock et al., 2010; Hale et al., 2011; Milligan, Gatrell, & Bingley, 2004).

The theme of Connection is well supported by research and can be looked at through many bodies of literature. What many of the participants appeared to be getting at was related to the concepts of embeddedness (Thorne, 1996; Hinrichs, 2000), belongingness (Cockshaw, Shochet, & Obst, 2013), place identity (Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003; Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983) and rootedness (Vitek & Jackson, 1996), in that they all are pointing to notions of a felt relationship to a place (Manzo & Perkins, 2006).

This place attachment that the participants feel has been found to have many positive outcomes, including positive bonds and a sense of self-identity with these social and physical settings (Brown, Perkins, & Brown, 2003). Research has found that place attachments can be fostered by friendly encounters with neighbors, the environment, and seasonal celebrations (Brown & Werner, 1985; Sampson, 1989; Werner, Altman, Brown, & Ginat, 1993), all of which were reported by the participants in this study. Stronger place attachments amongst farmers have also been found to lead to reduced depressive symptoms (Choenarom, Williams, & Hagerty, 2005; McCallum & McLaren, 2010; McLaren & Challis, 2009) and to be related to more conservation attitudes towards the land (Ryan, Erickson, & De Young, 2003).

This notion of connection is also important in moving the local food scene forward as place attachment is linked to one's level of community engagement, with more attachment



leading to more civic engagement (Cuba & Hummon 1993; Perkins, Brown, & Taylor, 1996; Saegert, 1989; Schorr, 1997), which then leads to higher community confidence (Varady, 1986) and collective efficacy (Brown et al., 2003).

Overall the theme of Connection provided rich descriptions from participants and showed the importance that participants placed on having relationships and connections to people, places, nature, and the sacred. This connection is a major motivator as well as a part of the essence of alternative and local food. One cannot participate in local and alternative food, or define it, without having some sort of relational element.

**Triple Bottom Line.** The theme of Triple Bottom Line was seen as a major motivator for the participants. The triple bottom line is often used as a reference to other values and goals of a business beyond simply economic profit. The triple bottom line includes concerns relating to economic profitability, but also values and emphasizes environmental and social concerns. These other two concerns, environmental and social, are weighed as equally important to money (Elkington & Rowlands, 1999).

Some participants saw alternative and local agriculture as an enterprise that embraces the triple bottom line. Many of the participants mentioned the importance of maintaining an environmentally conscious operation (e.g., reducing pollution, using reusable resources, being aware of the effects of common agricultural chemicals) as well as one that is conscious of social issues relating to agriculture (e.g., paying fair wages, fair labor laws, being transparent with consumers, developing relationships and sense of community with consumers, charging fair prices, and treating animals ethically). A few participants viewed these values on ethical grounds, which some scholars have attributed as essential to alternative agriculture (Sage, 2003).

Some producers framed making a nutritious product as a social issue, as well as a major motivator and value. They saw eating nutritiously as what first got them started in alternative agriculture, as well as a main motivator in participating in the local food system. Research supports this sentiment, finding that the benefits for urban agriculture are related to access to nutrient rich food, food security, and physical health (Bellows, Brown, & Smit, 2003; Vitiello & Wolf-Powers, 2008).

A subtheme of the Triple Bottom Line was that in emphasizing the environmental and social aspects of agriculture, participants were also juxtaposing themselves to conventional agriculture. In this sense, they would commonly highlight, not just the importance of environmental and social issues involved in agriculture, but how conventional agriculture often fails to have such values. This juxtaposition is not just a creation of the participants in the study, but scholars have found that it is a common way to frame the issue amongst food advocates and researchers (Beus & Dunlap, 1990). The reported common dangers of conventional agriculture by participants are also noted in research, such as environmental degradation, public health issues, and oligarchical decision making structures that serve the interest of few (Magdoff, Foster, & Buttel, 2000; Shiva, 2000). Some researchers even see alternative food movements as questioning the very epistemological groundings of agriculture, and as representing a paradigm shift in the way one thinks about food systems (Callicott, 1990).

An interesting aspect of this juxtaposition was the differences amongst participants on how they feel towards conventional agriculture's place within the food system. Some indicated that conventional agriculture is necessary while others felt that it should go away entirely. Some scholars have suggested that for alternative agriculture to really have a deep and sweeping impact, it must challenge conventional agriculture rather than simply provide a small alternative

niche market for consumers (Allen 2004; Buttel, 1997). In this sense the sentiment appeared divided, as some regarded their operations as alternative niche markets while others saw their operations as radically opposing conventional agriculture.

These values that participants saw in their operations have also been documented elsewhere, with research noting that alternative agriculture emphasizes civic issues and values over purely economic ones (DeLind, 2002). Scholars have also noted that alternative agriculture focuses on community and social values like stewardship, self-reliance (Ruttan, 1997), tradition, trust, localization, regionalism (Goodman, 2003), organic produce, fair trade products, sustainability (Agyeman & Evans, 2004), and awareness and concern for environmental issues (McCann, Sullivan, Erickson, & De Young, 1997), many of which were highlighted by participants as motivators.

The concept of environmental concern (Sjoberg, 1989; Takala, 1991; Weigel, 1983) can help one better understand some of this motivation. Environmental concern is an attitude towards one's own and others' behaviors that are related to ecological issues. Environmental concern does not directly correlate with one's behavior, but is mediated by variables such as knowledge of environmental issues, internal locus of control, threats to personal health, and personal responsibility (Franson & Garling, 1999), as well as how attached one is to the location involved (Vorkinn & Riese, 2001).

**Knowledge, Education, Awareness.** Though the theme of Knowledge, Education, and Awareness was manifested more as an asset or barrier, some participants often offered that the opportunity to educate the consumers was a major motivator. Producers elaborated that a large percentage of consumers may be unaware of what goes into making their product, such as what it means to actually be grass-fed or organic. In this sense, the producers saw this lack of

knowledge as a perfect opportunity to educate their customers about what goes into the making of their product and the values and ethics behind it. Some even reported a felt sense of responsibility or duty towards educating the consumer, and that education is a major part of the role of being a local food producer. A study on farmers in Virginia and Montana with agritourism businesses found that one of the major motivations for running an agritourism business was to educate consumers (McGehee and Kim, 2004).

### **Wichita's Potential**

The last research question asked what the participants thought the local and alternative food system in the Sedgwick County area has the possibility to look like in 10 years. The participants indicated that this depended upon making assets stronger and getting rid of barriers. In this sense one could summarize the sentiment as, “more of the same assets, less barriers”. Table 5 shows the major themes and the 10 year potential growth that the participants would like to see.

Table 5

*Sedgwick County's 10 Year Potential Related to Each Major Theme*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Ten Year Potential</b>
Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
Knowledge, Education, & Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More Knowledgeable Consumers and Producers</li> </ul>
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Farmers Markets</li> <li>○ Cooperative Grocery Stores</li> <li>○ Permanent Aggregating Facilities (Food Hubs)</li> <li>○ Urban Farms</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Better Use of Technology</li> <li>• Easier Access to Start Up Funds for Infrastructure</li> </ul>
Triple Bottom Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More Emphasis on Environmental and Social Impacts of Agriculture</li> </ul>
Desire and Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More Motivated Consumers and Producers</li> <li>• Culture Change of Kansas and the Midwest Towards Alternative Agriculture</li> <li>• More Involvement from Young People</li> </ul>
Bureaucracy and Organizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More Key Individuals and Leaders</li> <li>• Updated Zoning Laws</li> <li>• Easy to Follow and Realistic Policy</li> </ul>
Business Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More Supportive and Involved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Grocery Chains</li> <li>○ Restaurants</li> <li>○ Corporations</li> <li>○ Hospitals</li> <li>○ Prisons</li> <li>○ Schools</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>

In 10 years, the participants would want the local food scene in Wichita to have more knowledgeable and motivated consumers and producers, especially pertaining to the younger demographic. Wichita would have more infrastructure relating to alternative food such as more robust farmers markets, cooperative grocery stores, urban farms, and community gardens. There would be better usage of helpful technology that easily connects consumers and producers such as up-to-date websites and phone applications to buy local food. There would be a culture

surrounding food that emphasizes environmental and social issues while still maintaining economic sensibilities. Policy would be updated and things like zoning laws would be more inclusive and aware of alternative agriculture. Agricultural policy would be easy to follow and implement, as well as give the producers support to implement such policy. Restaurants, schools, businesses, prisons, hospitals, and other institutions that serve food or have large cafeterias would have more desire to source their food locally.

This picture of Wichita and the Sedgwick County area in 10 years appears to be both idealistic and realistic, optimistic and grounded, containing aspects of imaginative utopianism as well as realistic needs and demands. The participants' speculations appear to be both cultural (e.g., changing the mindsets of consumers and the narrative around food systems) and material (e.g., physically building infrastructure, writing policy, etc.). Many producers reported that certain areas of the country are "ahead" of Wichita with regards to local and alternative food systems. As stated in previous sections, other areas of the country have updated policy towards urban agriculture (Campbell, 2004; Ignaczak, 2013; Popovitch, 2014), thriving community and urban garden scenes (Renner, 2016), and hospitals, prisons, and schools that incorporate local food (Bulger, 2015; EcoWatch, 2015; Harris, Lott, Lakins, Bowden, & Kimmons, 2012; Sachs & Feenstra, 2008; Taylor, 2017; Toy, 2017). In this sense one can use these regions as blueprints or guideposts to help Wichita reach the potential that the participants think it can.

### **Definition**

Participants were asked how they define and understand local food, which related to the idea of the labels and definitions of things like organic, grass-fed, and natural being socially constructed or misleading. Considerable research and much local debate in both academia and

society warrant it being an important issue (Born & Purcell, 2006; Hinrichs, 2003; Ostrom, 2006). Participants produced a wide variety of responses. The most common sentiment amongst participants was that the definition of local is ambiguous and difficult to define. Some responses stated that if something is to be considered local, it must be both produced and sold locally. Others highlighted that something that is local usually involves a face-to-face or relational component. Like the definitions of organic or natural, many producers said that the term can be used as a marketing technique and that companies may implement the term dishonestly.

These findings on how the participants view the term local fit well with research on the topic, as researchers have noted that there has been a failure to successfully define the term, or that definitions are often inconsistent (Ostrom, 2006). Researchers have also suggested that the term local is relational, socially constructed, and continually open to change (Hinrichs, 2003). The participants recognized that in some cases, the term may serve the agenda of those who define it (Born & Purcell, 2006).

Most of the participants gave responses involving a distance for what can be considered local, from within city limits to 200 miles away, or within the entire state of Kansas. Some used driving time, saying anything within a 3-hr drive is local. More than simply a mile range, some participants noted that the localness of an item may vary depending on what product one is discussing. For instance, something that is commonly grown in the Wichita area, such as tomatoes, has a narrower range to be considered local whereas something like sugar, bananas, or blueberries may have a wider radius, as they are not commonly produced near Wichita. The participants' responses also fit well with what previous research has found, in that studies have found local to be defined from a 12 (Pretty, Ball, Lang, & Morison, 2005) to a 200 mile radius (Nabhan, 2002), and another study finding a day's round trip (Devine, 2004).

## **Implications**

This study provides valuable data on the current landscape of the local and alternative food scene in the Sedgwick County area, from the perspective of local producers who participate in the system, a population that is not commonly researched. Because the current study is framed in the Asset Based Community Development model (ABCD) (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), the hope is that these data will be used to connect stakeholders and inform future development and policy.

Specifically, by understanding the assets and barriers, this study can be used to target assets and improve on them, and target barriers and remove them or get them to a higher level of functioning. In addition to knowing the assets and barriers, understanding the motivations to participate in such systems helps one understand the values of those that are a part of such systems. The participants in the present study are currently a part of a key group of people that will be instrumental in the growth of local and alternative food moving forward, and giving voice to their perspectives greatly adds to the understanding of the food system. Rather than quantitative data, the present study provides in-depth qualitative data that provided rich descriptive experiences from this population, which were imbued with emotionality and values behind their opinions and ideas.

The themes gathered from the interviews also allow one to see what is important to local food systems and local producers. This information is intended to, and will be shared with the participants of this study, key individuals such as Rebecca McMahon and Luke Snow, and with organizations involved in local food such as Kansas Grown and Old Town farmers markets. Given that food circles and food coalitions are important in connecting stakeholders, identifying local problems, and formulating food policies (Hassanein 2003; Webb, Pelletier, Maretzki, &



Wilkins, 1998), this study will also be shared with the ICT Food Circle and YMCA Health and Wellness Coalition with the hope that it helps advance their missions.

Given that the current agriculture food system has been criticized for its economic, social, and environmental consequences (Altieri, 1998), such as loss in profits for farmers (Pretty, 1999), heightened rates of obesity (Kraak, Gootman, & McGinnis, 2006), loss of control over decisions relating to food production (Magdoff, Foster, & Buttel, 2000), environmental deterioration (Turner, 1999), and the breakdown of rural communities (Berry, 1977), it makes sense that alternative and local food systems have been seen as solutions to the current agricultural food system (O'Hara & Stagl, 2001). In a way one could argue that alternative and local food systems are the future of food, or at least will play a role in it, and therefore should be studied and understood more, from the perspectives of all those involved in such systems.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

The current study focused on 12 small-scale agriculture operations in the Sedgwick County area with the goal of gathering qualitative data that were exploratory in nature. Though 12 operations were part of the study, there were 17 participants in the study, as some of the agricultural operations were operated by two people (e.g., a married couple). The study cannot be used to predict behavior of the participants or food systems as the focus was on more in-depth understanding with the hope that such understanding can lead to a better general understanding of local food system and be a catalyst for future qualitative and quantitative research.

A limitation of this study is that some of the participants came from adjacent counties to the Sedgwick County area and were asked questions relating to the Sedgwick County area. One could argue that the results do not capture other counties that primarily produce food for

Sedgwick County, which is the most populated in the state. For instance, data for the asset and barrier research questions are especially specific to Sedgwick County, though the question about what motivates participants may be different if less bound by this geographical region. For instance, an urban farmer in Wichita may have similar values and motivations similar to a farmer in Reno County, but may encounter different assets and barriers even if Wichita's market is an important one.

A strength of the study was the study sample, though there are some minor limitations within it as well. The sample was homogeneous with regards to age and race, as 15 of the 17 participants fell in the 40 - 64 year old age range; the remaining two participants fell in the higher end of the 18 - 39 year old age range. All of the participants of the study were Caucasian. When it came to the gender of participants, the study was relatively balanced with 58% of the sample being male. The age of this sample is not surprising as, research has noted that people of older age tend to participate in local and alternative food (Alkon & McCullen, 2011), and fits with the participants' sentiment of needing more young people involved. Since the present study is focusing solely on the Sedgwick County area, the homogeneous could be seen as a strength in that it is capturing the primary demographic of local food producers in Sedgwick County.

The study also explicitly interviewed producers. A strength of the study was the wide variety of produce, meats, and goods that the producers sold, in that it provided a comprehensive sample of food producers. In addition, some participants were only involved with one type of product (e.g., beef ranchers and nothing else). This can be a limitation in that the experience of a beef rancher compared to a tomato gardener may have very different experiences of the local food system, though they both may sell at the same farmers market. Since the sample was comprehensive, the study was more of a general overview and did not capture smaller food

producers, focus in on one type of product, or interviewee people involved in the local food system who are not producers. In this sense one is seeing the food system through the eyes of the producers at large, and not others involved like restaurant owners, grocery store managers, and others who have knowledge of the local food system. Additionally, the comprehensive sample does not allow one to focus on specific types of farming operations such as just interviewing urban gardeners or ranchers.

The present study was fortunate to have almost a majority of participants having lived in Kansas for more than 25 years, which provides one with people who can truly understand the region. This was a limitation in that some producers had a difficult time comparing Sedgwick County to others areas because they were unfamiliar with alternative and local agriculture in other areas.

The snowball method (Johnson & Weller, 2002) to gather the participant sample for the present study also has its own limitations. The snowball method involves a participant suggesting names of potential interviewees for the researcher. This process produced many participants for the present study but may be subject to selection bias processes, in that participants may be willing to suggest certain participants based on factors beyond how good of a fit they are with the study, such as friendship or being business colleagues.

### **Future Directions**

Discussions surrounding future studies are informed by the present study's limitations. Firstly, future studies' participant samples should be more heterogeneous with regards to the racial and age makeup of the participants. For instance, Zepeda & Leviten-Reid (2004) found that how one defines and understands the term local varied by race, in that Blacks tended to

define local as a much larger geographical region than Whites did, though this was only for consumers and not producers. Future studies also should try to incorporate the views of different age ranges of participants, as this study was primarily participants over the age of 40.

Depending on the research question, future research could have a more specific focus on the type of product that the participant sample sells. For instance, one could solely focus on beef ranchers, or poultry producers, or tomato producers. In addition to type of product, future research could focus on type of operation, such as solely focusing on urban gardeners, or community gardeners, or agritourism businesses, or suburban greenhouse producers, etc.

The present study focused on those who produce and sell food locally. Though consumers are a population that has been researched a lot, future studies could incorporate the perspectives of those that do not necessarily fall into the producer or consumer categories, but are nonetheless involved in the local and alternative food system and have beneficial knowledge of such systems. Such people would include key individuals that run organizations and food circles, community garden organizers, farmers market coordinators, and restaurant owners that value and source from local food producers.

As discussed in the limitations, many participants were from Kansas and unfamiliar with other regions. Future studies could incorporate participants who have participated in local food systems in other regions prior to participating in the Sedgwick County food system. This could lead to better comparisons between regions, as many assumptions about the health of one's food system are based on relative judgments to other regions.

Because the study showed how important social and environmental concerns were, future research could also incorporate the concepts that informed this research like environmental concern (Bamberg, 2003) and place attachment (Brown & Perkins, 1992). Such studies could

measures quantitative aspects of these domains to better understand how these constructs influence and inform local agriculture, as well as help one make more predictive claims towards consumer and producer behavior.

## **Conclusion**

The aims of the study were to better understand local and alternative food systems in Wichita and the greater Sedgwick County area. The current study wanted to understand these food systems through the perspective of a population that is not often studied, the local and alternative food producers. The primary research questions assessed the assets and barriers to local and alternative agriculture, the motivations of participants to participate in such systems, and what these systems in the Sedgwick County area have the potential to look like in 10 years. Another aim of the study was that by understanding these systems, such information could spur new developments in Sedgwick County by connecting and informing stakeholders, informing policy, and highlighting the strengths and weakness of the food system.

The study provided information regarding the assets of the Sedgwick County area. Major assets found included: having two well-run and supportive farmers markets, a small group of knowledgeable and motivated consumers and producers, a select few restaurants and businesses in the Wichita area that support local food producers, and helpful organizations such as the Sedgwick County Extension Office, The YMCA Health and Wellness Coalition, the ICT Food Circle, and key leaders involved in these organizations. Not seen as major assets, but still beneficial, some producers mentioned that certain policy around agriculture is easy to follow and that the weather climate of the Wichita area is conducive to growing and selling food.

Major barriers found from the study included: having a majority of the consumers in the Sedgwick County area being perceived as lacking the knowledge and motivation to support and participate in local agriculture, especially younger people, and aspects of the culture and attitude surrounding alternative food in Kansas and the Midwest being seen as more traditional and lagging behind other regions. Also seen as barriers were misleading and inaccurate labels and definitions of food products, lack of cooperative grocery stores and food hubs, lack of urban and residential farms and gardens, and a lack of institutions and businesses supporting local farmers like restaurants, grocery stores, schools, hospitals, and prisons. Some participants saw the climate and weather of Wichita being a barrier, such as extreme heat in the summer as well as rapid fluctuations in weather that can harm crops and livestock. The ICT Food Circle was seen as both an asset and a barrier as some producers' sentiment towards it was of confusion and ambiguity.

The research question regarding motivations led to two major insightful themes, Connection and Triple Bottom Line. It was found that a major motivator to participate in local food systems was that it creates feelings of connection and relationships. Such relationships included feeling connected to other people, the larger community, the land and region, and in some cases, a higher power. Participants also reported being motivated by social and environmental issues, which they see alternative and local agriculture being conscious of. These domains were seen as motivations as well as appeared to capture a part of the essence of local and alternative food movements.

Given these reported motivations, one can better understand how to motivate, inspire, and educate others with regards to developing a more robust local and alternative food system. Things like fostering a connection to the land, one's community, and nature, or showing the

importance of social and environmental values with relation to food production and consumption, or the benefits of knowing producers on a first name basis can be used as motivators.

Scholars like Dobson (2003) promote the idea of “ecological citizenship” as a shared personal commitment to sustainability, which argues that ecological citizens will feel a sense of environmental responsibility on a planetary scale, and will take action in their daily lives to reduce unjust impacts on others. Though individual responsibility is important, one must not forget the ideas put forth by DeLind (2002), stating that deep entrenched social problems need change beyond simple individual consumer choices, focusing more on making changes at higher levels such as policy, and having larger entities at play such as agribusinesses take responsibility for externalities (Carroll, 1999). Given the importance of policy, alternative agriculture and local food systems can become more robust and more accessible by focusing on policy wide changes. Given that other areas of the country already have thriving local food systems and updated policy, food systems in Sedgwick county need not to reinvent the wheel, but look to other cities and regions for inspiration and models of successful local food systems.

Though local and alternative food systems have their benefits, they do have critics and issues and should always be reflective and critical to be most efficacious (Dupuis & Goodman, 2005). Such issues include racial and ethnic barriers (Alkon & McCullen, 2011); advocating change through consumerism (DeLind, 2002); conflating the term local with good (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Hinrichs, 2003); fostering elitism (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005); being defensive and reactionary (Hinrichs, 2003); exploiting, romanticizing, and appropriating rural culture (Alkon & McCullen, 2011; Park & Coppack, 1994); and failing to notice more sustainable alternatives (Weber & Matthews, 2008). Though these criticisms state that local food movements

have issues, they do not leave out the prospect that such systems can also be places of great social change and entry points for more collective food policies and the circulation and trading of ideas (Alkon & McCullen, 2011). DuPuis and Goodman (2003) also suggest that one should make food systems more democratic and socially just, rather than simply making them more local.

Given that industrial and conventional agriculture had been documented to have major social and environmental impacts, alternative and local food appears to be becoming a larger player in the food system. This research should give one a sense of what's at stake and what motivates people to participate in such systems. With regards to what is at stake in agriculture, Welsh and MacRae (1998) note that few other systems influence people's lives on a daily basis in such an intimate way, as well as provide a strong motivation and opportunity for citizenship and that food, like no other commodity, nurtures authentic relationships and has the potential to generate active citizenship.

Food systems are extremely complex and interconnected and driven by a multitude of other issues such as difficult social, public policy, and environmental issues, some of which are seemingly intractable, involving numerous stakeholder parties, complex technical and scientific issues, incompatible stakeholder views, and deeply held values about how things should be done (Campbell, 2004). It is the hope that this study makes the complexity of issues involved in food systems slightly less so and gives one a better understanding of issues in food systems, especially at the level of Sedgwick County. More specifically, this study gives helpful information to spur the local and alternative food movement forward in the greater Sedgwick County area. Given that Kansas has a history of being an agricultural state, it appears to be ripe for new innovations and changes in agriculture, especially with the motivated and passionate producers from this



study having their voices and ideas heard, and being leaders and innovators of the local food system in Sedgwick County.

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APPENDIX A

## APPENDIX A

## INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

Wichita Local and Alternative Agriculture Asset and Needs Assessment  
Key Informant Interview

Key Informant's name:

Date and Time:

Location of Interview:

Introduce key informant to the nature of the interview and study and why they are being interviewed.

1. What has been your involvement in local food systems in Wichita?

2. How would you define or describe local or alternative food systems?

a. Anything else in this definition?

(Prod to include key aspects of local food systems if they do not cover them in definition, "What do you think of \_\_\_\_\_ as part of local food systems?")

APPENDIX A (continued)

Key Informant's name:

Date and Time:

Location of Interview:

3. What motivates or motivated you to participate or become interested in local food systems?

(Prods: Did anything or anyone inspire you? Were there key experiences? Have motivations changed or stayed constant?)

APPENDIX A (continued)

Key Informant's name:

Date and Time:

Location of Interview:

4. What do you see as strengths in Wichita's ability to support local food producers?

a. What strengths in the Wichita area make it possible for **you** to distribute your product?

APPENDIX A (continued)

Key Informant's name:

Date and Time:

Location of Interview:

5. What organizations are involved in developing and promoting local food systems in Wichita?

a. What do these organizations do to develop and promote local food systems?

b. Would you like these organizations to change or do anything new moving forward?

APPENDIX A (continued)

Key Informant's name:

Date and Time:

Location of Interview:

6. What do you see as the larger barriers to local food systems in Wichita?

a. What are the barriers that you face in producing and selling your products?

APPENDIX A (continued)

Key Informant's name:

Date and Time:

Location of Interview:

7. If the Wichita area really got it right, what would a thriving local food system look like in 10 years?



APPENDIX A (continued)

Key Informant's name:

Date and Time:

Location of Interview:

8. What local food producers do you think I should consult about local food systems in Wichita?

NAME:

NAME:

NAME OF FARM/BUSINESS:

NAME OF FARM/BUSINESS:

TYPE OF PRODUCT(S):

TYPE OF PRODUCT(S):

CONTACT INFORMATION:  
(if possible)

CONTACT INFORMATION:  
(if possible)

EMAIL:

EMAIL:

PHONE:

PHONE:

OTHER INFORMATION:

OTHER INFORMATION:

NAME:

NAME:

NAME OF FARM/BUSINESS:

NAME OF FARM/BUSINESS:

TYPE OF PRODUCT(S):

TYPE OF PRODUCT(S):

CONTACT INFORMATION:  
(if possible)

CONTACT INFORMATION:  
(if possible)

EMAIL:

EMAIL:

PHONE:

PHONE:

OTHER INFORMATION:

OTHER INFORMATION:

## APPENDIX A (continued)

Key Informant's name:

Date and Time:

Location of Interview:

Demographics

Please answer or mark the following;

**Age:**     \_\_\_\_\_ 18 - 39           \_\_\_\_\_ 40 - 64           \_\_\_\_\_ 65+

**Gender:**   \_\_\_\_\_ Male       \_\_\_\_\_ Female       \_\_\_\_\_ Other

**Race:**     \_\_\_\_\_

**Income:**   \_\_\_\_\_ <\$25,000       \_\_\_\_\_ \$25,000 – \$50,000       \_\_\_\_\_ \$50,000 - \$75,000  
                  \_\_\_\_\_ \$75,000 - \$100,000       \_\_\_\_\_ \$100,000+

**How long have you lived in the Wichita/Sedgwick County area?**

\_\_\_\_\_ <5 years     \_\_\_\_\_ 5 – 15 years     \_\_\_\_\_ 15 – 25 years     \_\_\_\_\_ 25+ years

APPENDIX A (continued)

Key Informant's name:

Date and Time:

Location of Interview:

9. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about local food systems in Wichita?