Headed for Greener Pastures: Motivations and Ideologies Underlying Palouse Farmer Participation in Sustainable Agriculture

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AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT THESIS

This thesis of Alleah Schweitzer, submitted for the degree of Master of Arts with a Major in Anthropology and titled “Headed for Greener Pastures: Motivations and Ideologies Underlying Palouse Farmer Participation in Sustainable Agriculture,” has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates below, is now granted to submit final copies to the College of Graduate Studies for approval.

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ABSTRACT

The Palouse, a bioregion that incorporates parts of eastern Washington and northern Idaho, is synonymous with farming and agriculture. Small farms are far and few between this vast, undulating prairie because the history of Palouse agriculture has encouraged large scale crop production. Historical factors including government intervention, mechanization, and a railroad boom helped support larger farms over homesteads (Duffin 2007). This project examines the Palouse farmers who choose sustainable agriculture over conventional farming. The definition of sustainable agriculture is ambiguous but often combines small-scale agriculture and organic methods with a set of varying ideologies that oppose conventional practices (like chemical use, monocropping, and tillage) (Pilgeram 2013). Consequently, the sustainable food movement accommodates a diverse range of ideologies, with farmers from the far left and the far right able to justify their participation in sustainable practices.

The Palouse farmers that generously contributed their perspectives to this study were politically conservative, economically libertarian, religious, and pro-environment. Through qualitative methods, I propose that three motivations constitute their unique ideological configuration: nostalgia, Christian fundamentalism, and libertarianism. Farmers in this study, referred to as Christian conservative sustainable farmers, navigate pro-environmental stances by justifying them through these core values. The beliefs and stances of prominent Christian conservative authors Wendell Berry and Joel Salatin are juxtaposed to Palouse farmers' responses to better articulate how their unique positions are justified.

The mainstream sustainable food movement is perceived as liberal, secular, and pro-environment. These farmers strayed from mainstream ideation, raising questions about why the sustainable food movement is so strongly associated with the political Left. In this thesis, I address the ideological diversity of the sustainable food movement and the greater societal impacts of an ideologically inclusive sustainable food system. Hegemonic forces are identified and connected to society's perceptions of who can and cannot participate in sustainable agriculture.

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BACKGROUND

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters" (Book of Psalms, Psalm 23 1877).

The 21st century American citizen may intuitively regard the sustainable food movement as a monolithic force of liberal, environmentalist, back-to-the-land farmers. This impression is understandable given the visibility of the Democratic Party's environmental platform and the Republican Party's blunt "antienvironmental orientation," having originated from Reagan era initiatives (Dunlap and McCright 2008). As Dunlap and McCright have observed, the threat of government intervention on behalf of environmental protection has intensified the divide between Democrats and Republicans (Dunlap and McCright 2008:26). Politicians on the Left advocate for increased regulation, government spending, and social solutions in the wake of devastating climate change. Politicians on the Right respond to environmental emergencies, like climate change, often with denial and skepticism. However, this "growing divide" between America's political parties is relegated mostly to society's elites; partisan difference among voters tend to be more complex and less radical than reflected by elected officials (Dunlap and McCright 2008:27). As we learn about the people who produce sustainably-grown fruits, vegetables, eggs, meat, and value-added goods, it becomes evident that the ideologies and motivations that inform participation in sustainable practices are more complex, and more collaborative, than assumed.

This thesis will examine the factors, namely motivations and ideologies, that compel a faction of traditionally-valued farmers to engage in the Palouse's sustainable food movement. The Palouse bioregion includes parts of Eastern Washington and North-Central Idaho (see Figure 1.1). The farmers that participated in this project were based exclusively in this area and self-identified as Christian conservative sustainable Palouse

farmers. This identity involves a few caveats. First, the ideologies of Christian conservative sustainable farmers introduced in this thesis are not representative of all Palouse sustainable farmers, therefore the ideological analysis in this research is not generalizable to all sustainable farmers. Rather, this is a population of farmers with a unique ideological configuration that differentiates them from their mainstream sustainable counterparts. Second, these farmers are beholden to Christian values, vehemently oppose government regulation, and express a moral concern for the surrounding natural environment. The combination of these identities may indicate a form of cognitive dissonance, whereby their value system may appear inconsistent or conflicting at times. Partially, the focus of this thesis will examine how the consistency of these ideologies are negotiated and expressed to outsiders (like me). In order to understand the psychological aspects of Christian conservative sustainable farming, I have also needed to examine the historical origins of these beliefs, revisiting the Palouse's rich agricultural history for answers. In addition to historical and social factors, institutional forces like politics, religion, and economics warrant consideration in this pursuit.

Throughout this project, I will refer to the actions of these Christian conservative farmers as "sustainable." In essence, their farming practices include a combination of organic and humane methods that consider the three pillars of sustainability per the United Nations' definition: "economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection" (The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2019). It is important to note that "sustainability" did not enter development discourse until the 1987 Brundtland Report, but that the notion of sustainability has been articulated as national security concern in the United States since its founding (Thompson 2010:1-2). Furthermore, it should be noted that this study was not restricted to organic producers. The organic agriculture label in Idaho, where this research was most concentrated, is difficult to obtain due its own popularity. According to the Idaho Farm Bureau, the demand for organic agriculture has expanded tremendously in recent years, experiencing a 42 percent increase in farms certified between 2014 and 2017. State certifiers work beyond their capacity to certify farms as organic. The rapid growth of the organic industry has

therefore prompted the Idaho State Department of Agriculture to cap the number of farms that it can certify in a year (Ellis 2018). While the farmers I worked with on this project practiced organic methods, they were not certified organic (due to cap restrictions), proving that the organic label would severely limit the scope of research. Instead, the focus of this project shifted to the intentions of farmers. For instance, the farmers I collaborated with adhere to and promote sustainable practices that include some combination of organic, local, or small-scale production. Consequently, the label "sustainable" is a closer fit and one embraced by the farmers themselves to describe their intentions and livelihood.

The purpose of conducting this research is to illuminate the ideological diversity of the sustainable food movement in the United States. Two research interests will aid in this pursuit. First, this population's seemingly conflicting ideologies, or cognitive dissonance as it is known in psychology, provides an avenue for investigating the greater role these farmers play in the burgeoning sustainable food movement. In this thesis, I explore how traditionally-oriented food producers reconcile what appears to be an ideologically contradictory stance: subscribing to the philosophies of stewardship and sustainability while also embracing the social and political relationships that have traditionally spurned support for environmental causes. A common rebuttal rationalizes that organic agriculture is the product of humanity's domestication of plants and animals and that it was not until the Industrial Revolution and the rise of agribusiness that industrial practices were assumed as standard. In other words, that these farmers might just be subscribing to traditional ideologies not Green ones. But to wave-off Christian conservative involvement in the modern sustainable food movement does not contextually consider the significance and scope of America's Green movement. Consequently, my second interest considers the extent to which Christian conservative farmers interact within their environmental identity and exert influence upon the environmental movement itself. Both of these considerations reveal an important fact about sustainable agriculture: that the people who populate this movement are ideologically diverse. I hope that this thesis will raise important questions about who participates and why assumptions about who participates exist.

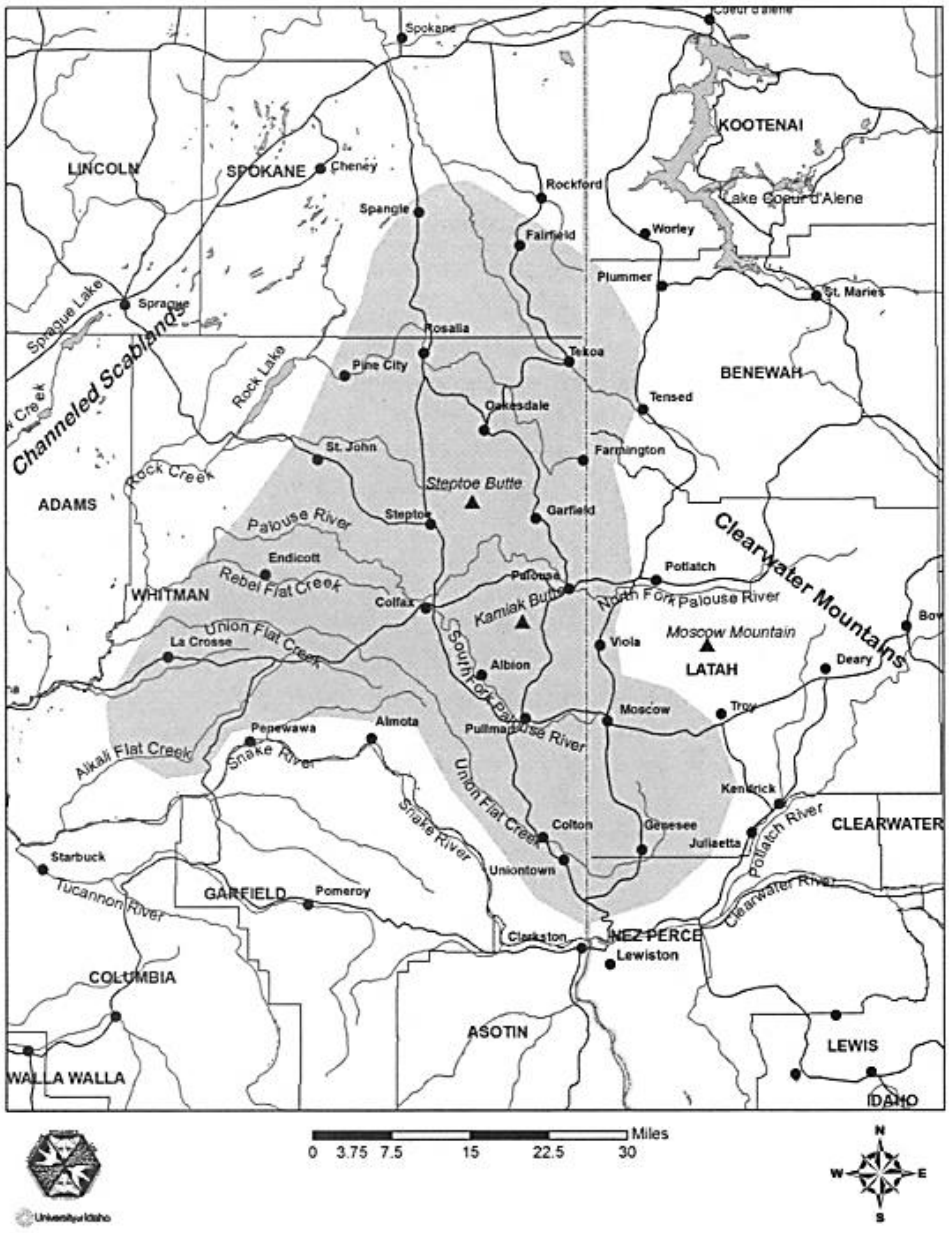

Figure 1.1: Map of the Palouse. Landscape Dynamics Lab, University of Idaho.

PROJECT METHODS

This thesis project consists of three sources of qualitative data. The first component of data collection involved two in-person interviews with farmers in Latah or Whitman County who have either operated farm stands at the Moscow Farmers' Market

or sell local, sustainable products to the wider Palouse community. Given the time constraints of this master's thesis, two interviews were conducted through snowball sampling methods. These interviews were semi-structured in nature and the types of questions asked were open-ended and geared towards elucidating their practices, motivations, and ideologies surrounding sustainable agriculture, local food systems, and organic food. I operated under the assumption that gleaning their religious and political perspectives would help reveal their motivations for small-scale farming. Consequently, these interviews established:

1. Farming practices: the types of products/crops produced, practices and techniques for small-scale industry, why they farm on a small-scale, and whether they feel their farming style is sustainable.

2. Participation in local food markets: Outlets they sell to in Latah or Whitman counties, what they think about the markets they sell their food at, what they think about the people who purchase their food, how they market their food to consumers, how they feel they compare to similar farms in the same market.

3. Motivations and ideologies that underlie why farmers choose to employ sustainable practices: How they got into farming, whether there are particular explanations for how they run their farm the way they do, motivations for continuing in this farming style, asking about religious, political, social and economic motivations if any, how they choose their markets, how they feel their motivations compare to other farmers, and how they feel their ideologies compare to their patrons.

The second source of project data involved participant observation. This included analyzing multiple local farmers' websites, advertisements, social media profiles, and articles. The purpose of this component involved generally observing the ways farmers in this region present themselves publicly. Farms were selected by their proximity to Latah County or Whitman County. In addition, participant observation took place at two (open

to the public) farming workshops or events in Latah County. During these events, I was attuned to how, again, farmers presented themselves publicly and the language, histories, and images they used to market their commitment to sustainability. The observations occurred between January 2018 and February 2019 and utilized strictly publicly available information.

The last data set utilized was supplemented by Latah County Historical Society's comprehensive database of unstructured interviews with Palouse settlers. These interviews, amassed in the Latah County Oral History Collection, were conducted in the 1970s by Samuel Schrager. In general, these interviewed participants provided insight into the lives and experiences of Latah County residents during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Schrager 2015). Just like in the in-person interviews I conducted, farmer responses were organized and coded by motivating factors.

PROJECT LIMITATIONS

Several limiting factors restrict how generalizable the results of my research are. First, the sample size of Christian conservative sustainable farmers interviewed for this project (n=2) is low and therefore not representative of the larger population of Palouse farmers or Christian conservative sustainable farmers. Second, my method of recruiting interview participants through snowball sampling limits how generalizable my results are. Snowball sampling and inclusion bias omits the perspectives of other Christian conservative sustainable farmers that could have been recruited from other, more randomly selected samples. As previously indicated, the small sample size and the use of the snowball sampling method was linked to time and funding constraints. Participant observation in the public realm was intended to supplement these responses. Finally, as will be further articulated in Chapter 2, the Latah County Oral History Collection is a vast and rich source of qualitative data. The questions asked in the 1970s interviews were limited to the concerns and interests of the time. Direct evaluations of environmental factors and ideologies were inferred but not always directly stated. Additionally, the

group interviewed were themselves the descendants of settlement families and may not exactly convey the motivations of their parents or grandparents for settling the Palouse.

CHAPTER OVERVIEWS AND PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE

In Chapter 2, I examine the agricultural history of the Palouse and the important contributions that westward expansion, government intervention, industrialization, and nostalgia have had on the collective psyche of sustainable Palouse farmers. Much of this discussion involves historian Andrew Duffin's description of the Palouse farmer identity. In his 2007 book, *Plowed Under: Agriculture and Environment in the Palouse*, he defines the contradictory identities of Palouse farmers in the late 1800s to early 1900s as "agrarian liberals." According to Duffin:

> Farmers used their land to its limits for immediate financial gain and insisted in the 1930s and beyond that the USDA assist in the process. Indeed, farmers welcomed the expansion of twentieth-century government largesse, provided it did not dictate land-use practices in the Palouse. So in another sense, farmers also espoused the virtues of nineteenth century liberalism: economic growth and development, publicly sponsored internal improvements, and a lack of government regulation…however these agrarian liberals were also keen on maintaining a nostalgic link with the past, one that they used to create an image of the Palouse yeoman (Duffin 2007:9).

The strange amalgamation of identities— simultaneously pro-industrial and anti-industrial and simultaneously pro-government regulation and anti-government regulation— influenced the actions, beliefs, and discourses of historic Palouse farmers and the subsequent sustainable Palouse farmers I had the pleasure of working with on this project. Importantly to this section is the industrial reality of historic agricultural operations on the Palouse, especially following the establishment of railroads. In other words, agrarianism never characterized Palouse agriculture. Defined by the online Merriam-Webster dictionary as "a social or political movement designed to bring about land reforms or to improve the economic status of the farmer," agrarianism and the agrarian identity took on a greater moral significance in the minds and actions of Palouse farmers (Thompson 2010). Agrarianism, combined with President Thomas Jefferson's

lofty ideals of a yeoman-centric, peasant American society, created the "Jeffersonian" vision. As I will introduce in the second chapter, certain mythologies about the past, like the "garden" and "pioneer" mythos helped historic, "old timer," farmers balance their acceptance of the conflicting "old" and "new" ways of life. I argue that it also helped reconcile a conflicting "agrarian" and "liberal" identity. The agricultural history of the Palouse is significant to my analysis of modern sustainable farmers as well. My conversations with Christian conservative sustainable farmers revealed an alternative understanding of historical events, likely passed down from the "old timers" they revered, generating a sense of nostalgia that perpetuates the mythologies that motivate these farmers to employ small-scale, sustainable practices. The imagined past characterizes only one component of this complex ideology.

Chapter 3 examines the significance and consequences historical narratives have on the Palouse sustainable food movement. Nostalgia for a mythical agrarian past motivates these Christian conservative farmers to embrace small-scale, organic, and wholesome agriculture. Reading between the lines, however, another motivation involves social and gender dynamics. To delve more specifically into the ideologies and motivations of participating Christian conservative farmers, I explore the writings and language of these farmers' key influencers: Joel Salatin and Wendell Berry. The link between agrarianist rhetoric and traditional gender roles is closely examined. Two forms of masculinity are discussed, the benevolent father and the cowboy masculinities, derived from the mythologies described in Chapter 2. Finally, I will discuss why gender and masculinity in particular offers a lens through which to critique the Palouse's sustainable but agrarianist vision.

Religiosity is another important motivating component underlying the Christian conservative adoption of sustainable farming practices. In Chapter 4, we learn that Christianity, and specifically certain interpretations of biblical text, rationalize sustainable practices within the moral, Christian framework. While historians like Lynn White Jr. have posited that Christianity provides justification for humanity's separation from nature and, by extension, justifies the exploitation of natural areas, Christian

conservative farmers like Wendell Berry offer an alternative interpretation. To Berry and Christian conservative Palouse farmers, Christianity provides the moral framework for the concepts of stewardship, dignified labor, and anti-industrialization beliefs. Consequently, I argue that certain interpretations of Christianity offer an ideological bridge for farmers to reconcile religion with environmental causes. Ultimately, the "apostles of alternative agriculture" like Berry and Joel Salatin provided moral guidance for sustainable Palouse farmers, helping define their actions as both Christian and environmental.

Ultimately, why Christian conservative sustainable agriculture exists with little recognition from major political sources will be addressed in this thesis. In Chapter 5, I demonstrate that Christian conservative farmers are willing to accept labels like "green" or "sustainable" but socially and politically engage with conservatives. I address questions like: why is the sustainable food movement consistently characterized as uniformly liberal? What opportunities do Christian conservative farmers afford the Green movement and efforts to curb anthropogenic carbon emissions that threaten global climate change? Who benefits from concealing the image of an ideologically diverse sustainable food movement? To answer these questions, I delve into the specific political ideologies that characterize these farmers' motivations. Libertarianism and Tom Brass' "'peasant-ness'-as-empowerment" complex are examined carefully as motivations for agrarian, small-scale agriculture. By examining the institutional forces, and the role they may play in dividing Americans over this reality, I hope to articulate the significance of this project: That collaboration, success, and a sense of commonality are possible between the political Left and the political Right. The unique ideological configuration of Christian conservative sustainable farmers help demonstrate the feasibility of that reality.

CHAPTER 2: PROVIDE AND CONQUER: HISTORICAL FARMING IDEOLOGIES IN THE INLAND NORTHWEST

PALOUSE EARLY PEOPLES

In the mid-19th century, a place called the Palouse became acquainted with its newest inhabitants: Euro-American immigrants. The Palouse, a hilly bioregion nestled between the Snake River to the south and the Clearwater Mountains to the east, incorporates Eastern Washington and parts of Northern Idaho. The Inland Empire, as the broader locale has become colloquially known, has a history inconsistent with preconceived "frontier" myths about a cowboy populated, honorably homesteaded American west. I raise this point now in response to the feelings of nostalgia I sensed from the local Palouse farmers I spoke with during this project. Their beliefs in two frontier mythologies, the "pioneer" mythos and the "garden" mythos, presents an important lens through which the ideologies of modern Palouse farmers can be understood. Richard Maxwell Brown has detailed the "pioneer" mythology as one involving "mountain men, cowboys, Indians, prospectors, gunfighters, and outlaws" (Brown 1983). Pioneer mythologies have rather noticeably inflated the contributions of (sometimes violent) Euro-American men while downplaying the significance of women and people of color in Western history. Simultaneously, the "garden" mythology lingers in the collective remembrance of American West. Historian Mark Fiege characterizes the garden myth as the belief that:

> In America…westward-moving pioneers conquered the howling wilderness and transformed it into beautiful productive fields and farms. Triumphing over chaotic wilderness, re-creating the lost Eden, the pioneers redeemed themselves and the land, restored the agricultural base of the Republic, and realized God's plan for earth (Fiege 1999:171).

Both the "garden" and "pioneer" mythologies draw on a romanticized certainty that the American West was an untamed, wild place populated by rough people while simultaneously celebrating how white, Euro-Americans endeavored to "civilize" these

places. These problematic mythologies still inform our collective memory of American history, with traces of these mythologies appearing in the motivations of nostalgic farmers across the United States. For now, I will only examine the contributions of the true actors and institutional forces that have significantly shaped the Palouse's historical reality. Later in this chapter, I will discuss how these mythologies have replaced historical truth for the farmers that participated in this project. Based on my exchanges with the local public, I recognize here the need for more academic and public recognition of the institutional forces that shaped Palouse history. In Chapter 3, I will discuss the reasons why the sustainable farmers I have interacted with largely omit these alternative narratives from their own conceptions of western history, instead selecting certain mythologies to inspire their sustainable endeavors.

For a surprising length of post-contact history, the Palouse was a mysterious and unknown place for Euro-Americans. A shrubby and sparsely-treed prairie, it escaped the attention of early Euro-American surveyors like Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, David Thompson, and Donald McKenzie, each of whom had visited the region in the early to mid-1800s. While their initial judgement deemed the Palouse a place with little settlement potential, Native American groups had inhabited the region for over 12,000 years (Duffin 2007). Palouse, Nez Perce, Coeur d'Alene, and Spokane Indians were longtime Palouse residents before Euro-American settlement drastically altered their landscape. Before the endless neat rows of wheat and roaring combines that many Whitman, Latah, and Spokane county residents are familiar with today, Palouse Indians lived along the Snake River and Palouse River in the historic villages of Almota, Penawawa, and Wawaiwai. The ethnohistorical record indicates that Palouse gathered camas (Camassia quamash) and other life-sustaining ground roots found in the sprawling prairielands. Their subsistence culture also revolved considerably around animals, with hunting and fishing representing essential foodways. The Palouse's territory was shared in places with the Nez Perce and they often joined the Walla Walla and Yakima groups for various food procurement activities. Their collaborative tradition with neighboring tribes lessened their dependence on European agricultural methods, although gardening ground roots was not uncommon (Sprague 1998). Upon Lewis and Clark's arrival to the

region on October 13, 1805, they had recorded that an estimated 2,300 Nez Perce and Palouse people lived along the Snake River. That number would soon be drastically reduced.

The story of Euro-American settlement on the Palouse follows the violent and declensionist narrative typical in American history, with accounts of resistance sprinkled into the mix. Palouse Indian tenancy was grossly interrupted in the mid-1800s when Euro-American pursuits for "land, gold, and business opportunities" resulted in bloodshed (Scheuerman 1994:15). The Treaty of 1855, of which the Palouse and Yakimas signed amidst forced and "questionable negotiations," scattered families of Palouse Indians to the surrounding Nez Perce, Yakima, Umatilla, and Warm Springs reservations (Sprague 1998:355). Conflict followed in 1858 when Euro-American gold miners were killed trespassing onto Palouse lands while travelling to Colville, Washington. Colonel Edward J. Steptoe and an army of one-hundred and fifty were dispatched in response to the murders. As they marched to the North Spokane area, they were ambushed by a unified army of six hundred warriors from numerous Palouse-based tribes including the Palouse, Spokane, and Coeur d'Alene. Steptoe and his less numerous troops were defeated at present-day Rosalia, Washington and narrowly escaped their retreat to Fort Walla Walla. These events eventually incurred a terrible and lethal response from the American army (Scheuerman 1994:16). Fort Taylor was established in 1858, just south of the Almota village, with the sole purpose of emptying the Palouse area of Indian settlement (Sprague 1998). The military effort was effective— the Palouse population declined rapidly in only two years. With the likelihood of a unified indigenous opposition virtually quashed, the Palouse was finally primed for land grabs and government-endorsed Euro-American expansion. Migration to the Palouse was further compounded by the growing scarcity of more appealing, Northwestern homesteading claims. Both provocations brought Euro-Americans to the southern reaches of the Idaho panhandle for the first time in significant force (Duffin 2007).

EURO-AMERICAN SETTLEMENT

In varying capacities, General Isaac I. Stevens helped establish the forces that would ensure Euro-American migration to the Palouse. On March 17, 1853, Stevens accepted his appointment from President Franklin Pierce to serve as the first governor of Washington Territory. This nomination included a role as acting Superintendent of Indian Affairs as well. A methodical man described as "fixed with purpose," Stevens turned his attention to railroads. He surveyed land for the proposed Northern Pacific (NP) transcontinental railroad project during his travels west, emphasizing the urgency of transportation infrastructure for white settlement (Scheuerman 1994:17; Williams 1996:77). This commitment to transcontinental transport preceded changes in farming that would forever shape the socioeconomic and environmental landscape of the Palouse. Stevens, who viewed the land east of the Cascades as a profitable venture rather than inadmissible Indian territory, redefined the Palouse from a little-known "desert" to a fertile farmland brimming with lucrative potential (Duffin 2007). Given his respected status as a presidentially-designated governor and former Major in the Mexican-American War, his proclamation that the Palouse was "an inviting agricultural opportunity" earned serious consideration from the U.S. government, railroad moguls, and Euro-American immigrants (Duffin 2007:37).

In the 1870s, however, Palouse homesteaders and stock-raisers waded into dryland farming with some hesitation. The agricultural economy at that time was still composed of sporadically dispersed ranches and homesteads. Early surveyors had regarded the steep hillsides of the Palouse's massive knolls as unfit for farming. Other factors that inhibited initial migration to the region included technological barriers (i.e. rudimentary plows), the lack of substantial timber, and the considerable upfront transportation expenses to the isolated region (Scheueman 1994). Despite assurances that the volcanic, loessial soil would suit crop production, commercial farms were few and far between (Duffin 2007). The limbo period between ranching-homesteading and commercial farming would prove perilously ephemeral for the few homesteads that were established. A rapid shift to intensive farming, precipitated by the introduction of

railroads and renewed discovery of the land's productive value, had priced out smaller, subsistence style farms (Nesbit and Gates 1946). This had certainly been the case for homesteaders in surrounding Washington counties: "Plainly [Lincoln] county was not fit for homesteaders or subsistence farmers, and many who tried it left in despair"(Nesbit and Gates 1946:285). This was the case for Palouse homesteaders as well. By the 1880s, farming "had become a capitalistic, commercialized business" (Nesbit and Gates 1946:280). Consequently, families on the Palouse lost their homesteads before virtuous, agrarian endeavors could effectively take root.

Farmers who could not or would not conform to market preferences were in danger of losing their property and livelihoods. In 1888, Robert Edward Burns homesteaded at the base of Steptoe Butte, a 3,600-foot-tall bedrock protrusion in Whitman County, Washington. Burns grew wheat and planted orchards in the steep spaces where wheat could not be easily harvested by plough (Truscott 2015). He diversified his orchard with the rare apple varieties that he preferred, like the now nearly extinct Nero type. While his goal may have been to increase his farm's resilience through crop diversification, the unpopularity of certain apple varieties brought about a swift end to his family's tenure in the Palouse. Market preferences in the East demanded that farmers supply only the six or so most popular apple varieties (Truscott 2015). By 1899, and in only an eleven-year timespan, Burns could not compete against wheat farmers and other mass producers of apples and legumes. Producing commodities at the mercy of global pricing had probably taken its toll in this regard as well (Robbins 1994; Schwantes 1987). The efforts of the U.S. government to facilitate agricultural development by establishing railroads had effectively pushed small farmers out of the Palouse— or forced them to adapt to a cash crop economy. Burns' story was a common tale among small Palouse farmers. For the adaptive, business-minded farmers however, the arrival of railroad lines provided ample access to new, distant, and lucrative opportunities.

RAILROADS, RAPID SETTLEMENT, AND AGRIBUSINESS

The story of industrialized agriculture parallels the rise of railroad corporations in America. Beside transporting people and goods, railroads served several other "useful" purposes in the late 1800s. For example, historian Robert Utley summarized that "no single force proved more decisive in the conquest of the Indians than the railroads" (Utley 1988:126-27). "Railroad mania" furthered the racist, economic, and political agenda of Manifest Destiny. It sought to drive out native people while intensifying the rate of white settlement between the 1890s and 1930s (Wyckoff and Hansen 1999). Railroads were expected to secure similar results in Palouse. With regards to agriculture, railroads had justified indigenous land grabs, supported the removal of native peoples, and perpetuated a growing economic reliance upon agricultural commercialization and industrialization. As modes of transportation multiplied and improved, so did it accelerate the import and export of goods. For residents of the Palouse, railroads brought in a selection of previously unattainable merchandise and foodstuffs from the east (Williams 1996). On the production side, cash crops could be sent long distances on newly established transcontinental lines and, as the accessibility of national and global markets improved, so did the development of cropland expand. Farmers began to buy up their neighbor's homesteads to expand their agribusiness ventures. Increasingly, these farmers operated within the framework of global capitalism (Robbins 1994). Therefore, in a feedback manner, Palouse farmers promptly established mechanized and monocropping growing practices. Historian Andrew Duffin remarked that: "The Palouse became inextricably bound to the internal logic of a mostly laissez-faire capitalist system…A fair proportion of Palouse farmers entered their ventures fully aware that they were involved in a competitive business, and they were not interested in fulfilling any sort of cooperative, virtuous, Jeffersonian dream" (Duffin 2007:43). By the time of railroad construction, farmers were cognizant of these capitalistic stipulations— even eager to thrive amidst the competition. These farmers, many of them immigrants, did not arrive to satisfy an agrarian livelihood but to take advantage of government-subsidized programs. Consequently, "the pioneer farmer shortly found himself in a business in which he was the operator of a highly capitalized plant. Only by careful business methods and by

calling upon the growing technical advances which were being offered him, could he hope to succeed" (Nesbit and Gates 1946:295).

Along the way, this history of the Palouse was lost in translation. The "pioneer" mythology (that upholds images of heroic cowboys and prowling outlaws) and the "garden" mythology (that envisions model homesteaders working harmoniously to order and redeem the land) characterized historical beliefs among some past and present Palouse farmers. These mythologies romanticize the realities of western settlement, realities that reveal government-sanctioned imperialism rather than the honest and individual efforts of yeoman farmers. Several western historians support this claim. William Wyckoff and Katherine Hansen best summarized this argument by emphasizing that institutional forces shaped how farmers interacted with the land. The American West was "not the promised land of frontier mythology but instead a region controlled and often abused by an expanding global economy and by imperialistic political and cultural institutions" (Wyckoff and Hansen 1999:336). Additionally, Donald Worster and Susan Neel have expressed that the identity of the American West was closely tied to the interactions between rural producers and global consumers (Wyckoff and Hansen 1999). Evidence that marries the region-specific connection between corporations and farmers can be found through a quick examination of local advertising. Advertisements like those touted by the Spokane & Inland Empire Railroad illustrate the Palouse's agribusiness reality and its inextricable connection to railroads. These advertisements peddled images of the Palouse as endless fields of wheat, dubbing the region as a "natural garden spot" of the Pacific Northwest. One advertisement boasted: "It is only necessary to ride through the Palouse Country in the spring, summer, or fall to view mile upon miles of waving grain fields and luxuriant orchards that cover this natural garden spot of the Pacific Northwest" (Spokane & Inland Empire Railroad Company 1910:1). This "natural garden spot" was populated by, as the advertisement begins to indicate, larger-scale producers of wheat, fruit, legumes, and other agricultural commodities (Robbins 1994). This is further evidenced by the observed spikes in land value (in both Whitman and Latah counties) at the completion of the Northern Pacific railroad's branches in the region. For example, the value of farm property in Latah County (land, buildings, machinery, and domestic

animals) increased 212% between 1900 and 1910 (Thirteenth Census of the United States 1913:391).

Ultimately, the Northern Pacific and Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company railroad companies played an incontrovertible role in transforming the Palouse into an "agricultural empire" (Duffin 2007). Henry Villard, the president of both companies, established routes throughout the northwest and across the continental United States. In the Palouse, his Northern Pacific rails followed the markers set by Isaac Stevens in his initial surveys of the region, officially extending cross country by 1883 (Duffin 2007:43). By 1901, W.H. Lever reported that the Northern Pacific railroad:

> has sprouted with branches in all directions. The most important of these to Whitman county is the Spokane and Palouse branch. It leaves the mainline at Marshall and extends in a southerly direction, touching the towns of Spangle and Plaza in Spokane county, and Rosalia, Oakesdale, Garfield, Palouse, Pullman, Staley, Johnson, Colton and Uniontown in Whitman county, and Genesee in Idaho. Within recent years another branch has been completed from Pullman to Lewiston, touching Moscow, Kendrick, Julietta, Potlach and other Idaho points and connecting the Clearwater branch. The value of this road to the rich agricultural country through which it passes is almost beyond computation (Lever 1901:172).

Establishing rail lines throughout rural Palouse increased farmer dependence on global markets, mixing both the initial values of older agrarianism with classical liberalism (Duffin 2007:33). The U.S. government subsidized this development, as indicated through Isaac Steven's actions, revealing the control public and private partnerships had over individual actors, especially with regards to their enthusiastic embrace of industrial agriculture. When rails connected Colfax to Moscow in 1885, local newspapers reported that a throng of townsfolk had assembled on Main Street the day the track was completed to celebrate the new service. Local resident At'y Sweet announced: "We have waited long and patiently for the shrill whistle which today gladdens our ears…We are [today] a part and parcel of the world of commerce, politics and social life, connected by rail and wire" (Moscow Mirror 1885). Historians Robert Nesbit and Charles Gates remarked that the addition of transportation and market access allowed for accelerated agricultural progress "and by 1910 specialized commercial farming was well-advanced. This was

particularly true in the case of wheat" (Nesbit and Gates 1946). Gone was the short, transitory period of Palouse homesteading, replaced instead by capitalist endeavors. This rationale would soon enough signify the ideological shift of the newly restructured Palouse. Consequently, the initial success of these commercial farmers had implications for the mindset, motivations, and ideologies of Inland Empire residents.

FARM OR BUSINESS? THE IDEOLOGICAL PARADOX

The demographic makeup of early Palouse immigrants was surprisingly diverse. They streamed into the region from Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, England, Ireland, Russian-Germany, China, Japan, and eventually Eastern Europe in the late 1800s (Scheueman 1994). They migrated to the Inland Northwest following the acquisition of cheap land allotments, pursuing any affordable opportunity to start anew. Others had escaped the lack of opportunity in their homelands. According to Henry Brammer, the son of German immigrants, there was no future left for his father's family in the German Empire. Since the oldest son inherited the family farm, younger sons were left to carve out a livelihood independent of their parents, often never to see their homeland or families again (Brammer 1973). Other children of immigrants, like Carl Olson whose parents were Dutch, described land shortages and few farming opportunities in Europe (Olson 1974). First and second-generation immigrants established communities throughout the Palouse during its early resettlement period.

The economic effort that preceded World War I exacerbated turmoil between the two core values that reinforced Palouse farmers' identity. Despite the widespread industrialization of agriculture, Palouse farmers (as will become more evident later in this chapter) held onto the "innate peasant-ness" of farming, or the belief in agrarianism in other words (Brass 1997:PE29). This side of the Palouse farmer identity was characterized by prioritizing family, honest workmanship, and the divine right to farm the Palouse. On the other hand, trends in agribusiness had encouraged a "practical," profit-driven identity (Duffin 2007:54; Successful Farming 1918). As the war effort became increasingly dependent on farmers to feed the United States military and workers on the

home front, calls for shrewd investments in mechanization (in the face of labor shortages) created an ideological paradox. Andrew Duffin remarked that "Palouse farming in the early twentieth century was similarly torn between the desire to maintain old habits and the urge to follow new trends" (Duffin 2007:54). In the end, the agribusiness philosophy would win out. An article in a 1918 issue of *Successful Farming* underscored the importance of expert farming over agrarianism; progress, and winning the war effort, would not be possible by adhering to Old World values. Instead, the authors summoned farmers to wholly shift their motivations away from self-sufficiency to patriotic, profit-driven goals:

> The problem of distribution is one of the important subjects affecting the prosperity of the people for the year of 1918. If every person did everything for himself, there would be no problem of distribution. But there would be no progress, because we would have no experts. No man can be an expert unless he concentrates on some one thing or group of activities (Successful Farming 1918:3).

Immigrants from Germany and German-allied countries called the Palouse home. These citizens were eager to prove their allegiance to America during the World Wars, having experienced various sources of prejudice from their fellow American-born citizens. Many early Palouse German-speaking families recall the blatant acts of intimidation and assimilation measures forced upon them by their own neighbors during the war years (Brammer 1973). School children were particularly vulnerable to assimilation strategies and violence from peers. Brammer, for example, recalls being bullied during the war years for his German heritage. Homeland languages were suppressed in schools, an attempt to systematically erase cultural diversity and reorganize people under a monolithic American identity. President Theodore Roosevelt was notorious in his attempts to "Americanize" immigrant groups, especially German-Americans, who he felt were central to the mythic American and frontier identity. He simultaneously feared the hyphen they used in "German-American" to maintain a threatening connection to Old World heritage during the war years (Dorsey 2007:117-18). The desire to assimilate quickly and quietly was at the forefront of many Palouse residents' objectives. Consequently, the paradox between the old and new manifested in another form. Internal

conflict was expressed in their agricultural practices but ultimately a monolithic (and mythic-based) American identity was forced upon its citizens, forging a nation of capitalist, mechanized, patriotic farmers.

ORAL HISTORIES: THE PARADOX EXEMPLIFIED

To fundamentally understand the impact of new and entrenched farmer values on the Palouse's agricultural history (ranging from resettlement to today), I consulted a local collection of oral histories conducted with the elderly citizens of Latah County in the mid-1970s. The Latah County Oral History Collection, as it is labeled, explores a range of historical themes that follow the expansion of railroads in Latah County including Palouse resettlement, economic depressions, and both World Wars. The townsfolk interviewed for this project discuss their own ideological positions amidst the social, economic, and political transformations occurring within this broad, but historically formative timeframe. The project was spearheaded by Samuel Schrager, a local historian and now professor of American studies and folklore at Evergreen State College. His interviews were conducted with over 200 Idahoans throughout the mid to late 1970s (Schrager 2015). While firsthand accounts cannot always be accepted as absolute historical truth, they do provide some insight into people's perspectives and ideologies, particularly when supported by historical context.

After hearing from several Latah County elders, the internal conflict between the old and new became apparent. I learned about the upbringings and values of the farmers and self-labeled homesteaders that populated the Palouse, from both the perspectives of men and women alike. It should be noted that this group existed as the remnant voices of their generation; many of residents were in their 80s at the time that the interviews took place. As such, their cultural values and beliefs may not accurately reflect the sentiments of all immigrant Palouse families. Similarly, it is true that many of them lacked any complete memories of their parents' or family's arrival to the Palouse region. A majority out of this group (born between 1890 and 1910) were too young to recall those events, bringing into question the accuracy of their own values as a reflection of their parents'

generation during the time of Palouse resettlement. Nevertheless, they were knowledgeable of many events and stories prior to their existence and had had opportunities to discuss with their parents' and/or grandparents' their motivations for farming the Palouse while they were still alive. Subsequently, their insights may represent the most comprehensive connection we have to the people that populate their memories of a bygone time and place. Accepting this link, and its limitations, I have pored over many of these oral histories in the hopes of connecting the ideologies of Euro-American settlers to today's agrarian-inspired sustainable food movement. I intended to focus on how these ideologies might have preceded today's sustainable farmers' adherence to certain cultural and religious values while employing green farming strategies.

The positions of "old timer" farmers generally aligned with the analysis Andrew Duffin had constructed of Palouse farmer ideologies. Duffin used examples from *The Washington Farmer*, a weekly newspaper for Palouse farmers, to demonstrate that agrarian liberalism was the predominant ideology of Palouse farmers between 1914 and the 1930s, exemplifying a "split personality" that incorporated agrarian and capitalist values alike (Duffin 2007:54-56). According to Duffin, the contradictory nature of their identity was compounded even further by their support of expanded government when it served their needs (ie. during the Great Depression). The children of these earliest Euro-American settlers seemed to support an adherence to agrarian liberal ideology around the time of resettlement. Listening to these farm families, I was reminded more of certain expressions of agrarianism than agribusiness. While woes about the fluctuation of crop prices and stories involving well-made machinery lingered in their retellings, themes of farm, family, community, and religion shone through most prominently. This may indicate a desire to remember the agrarian-like aspects of their lives in their retellings of local history. Explanations for this result may include a desire to remember select details that distinguish themselves from the highly-industrialized agribusiness ideology of the Palouse today. Still, certain themes of agrarianism were constant within the discourse.

At its core, agrarianism is a predominantly Western concept marked by the image of a subsistence system farm, run by a hardworking and traditionally-valued family. The farm, family, and surrounding natural environment are always at the focus of the agrarian vision. The American introduction to agrarianism was promoted by its most famous proponent, Thomas Jefferson. In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson presents his vision for an agrarian American society declaring that: "those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue" (Jefferson 1853:176). His interpretation of agrarianism includes a critique of Europe's policy on industrialization, rejecting America's role in manufacturing on the basis that it creates dependency and subservience in the individual. Dependence on products from distant markets would diminish the farmer's ability to be self-sufficient, a characteristic he upheld as virtuous (Jefferson 1853). Consequently, the desire to preserve rural livelihoods is steeped in the critique of "industrialization." Not only does industrialization create dependence but agrarian rhetoric opposes any values that threaten to undermine rural livelihoods. In the binary construction of agrarianism, urbanism and industrialization exists as its antonym. In examining California's organic movement, Julie Guthman clarified agrarianist rhetoric as countering the commercialization of agriculture, and in later expressions of "new agrarianism," the rejection of "big science" and its cozy relationship with commercial agriculture. Fears that the commercialization of food production can only exist "at the expense of the family farm" differentiates the agrarian epistemology from a general critique of industrialization (Guthman 2004:10). Consider American author William Kittredge's assessment of his own family's principles. In evaluating the narrative his father cultivated homesteading near Silver Lake, Oregon, Kittredge reflects in his essay, "Owning It All," that property ownership is at the core of family farming. To the Kittredge family, "land" and the social organization essential for its curation provided the surest defense against worldly threats. Consequently, the perception that they operated as "honest yeomen" agreeably suited Kittredge and his family's values:

> We live in a real family, a work-centered society, and we like to see ourselves as people with the good luck and sense to live in a place where some vestige of the natural world still exists in working order. Many of us hold that natural

> world as sacred to some degree, just as it is our myth. Lately, more and more of us are coming to understand our society in the American West as an exploited colony, threatened by greedy outsiders who want to take our sacred place away from us, or at least strip and degrade it. In short, we see ourselves as a society of mostly decent people who live with some connection to a holy wilderness, threatened by those who lust for power and property (Kittredge 1987).

As Kittredge examines the true toll of his family's farming and their attempts to own the natural world, he recognizes the greatest contradiction of their agrarian values: how they failed to see the parallels between their distrust of "greedy outsiders" and of their own ruthless, destructive conquest of Native American land during the resettlement era. His contemplations also foreshadow some of the belief systems I have encountered from modern-day sustainable farmers, providing some connection between the past and the present. Nevertheless, he writes earnestly about how his family feared any circumstance that threatened their established mythology of the West, agrarian identity, and right to own land. Threats to their perceived agrarian routine were the most apparent manifestations of agrarian ideology expressed by the farmers and townsfolk featured in the Latah County Oral History collection. However, as I pieced together the agricultural past of this region, few instances of true agrarian agriculture were practiced among Euro-American settlers. How did they reconcile their seemingly contradictory agrarian liberal identity?

Based on my historical explorations of the Palouse, "honest yeoman" principled expressions of agriculture, if they existed at all, were all but relegated to margins of agricultural history. Despite pure agrarian-style agriculture on the Palouse existing as little more than a western myth, persistent tropes among Palouse "old timers" indicated some adherence to agrarian ideology. As discussed, agrarianism can exist in a dichotomous relationship with urbanization and globalization as its menacing adversaries. Turn of the century Palouse farmers seemed to uphold the garden mythology they were taught growing up— that they tamed the wilderness and brought order and bounty to the area through dignified work. Fears of encroaching urban values represented threats to their good, rural principles. These concerns mirrored the increasingly available number of wage labor opportunities in nearby rural areas like Potlach, Idaho and in cities like

Spokane, Washington. Wageworkers, as often temporary, family-less community fixtures, represented a contradiction to domesticity and pioneer mythologies. Instead they embodied the threatening concepts of urbanization and technological development (Schwantes 1987; Brown 1983). This concern cropped up amongst several farmers across the settlement and post-settlement generations on the Palouse. Glen Gilder, whose father migrated to Harvard, Idaho with the intention of establishing a wheat farm in 1890, described the thought process behind a farmer's transition to wage labor:

> But it would get tough, and they'd think, 'Oh, God, I can make four dollars a day, five dollars a day working in the woods, or three and a half working in a sawmill.' And they'd get discouraged and pull out [of farming] and go and do it. Well, if they had of stuck tight to their farm, eventually wound up on the right side of the ledger, I'm sure. There's one class of people that likes to work for a boss and another class of people that don't want to work for a boss. Sometimes they don't have the ability to manage their own without a boss, but, they've still got it in their heart to go that route anyway (Gilder 1975).

Struggling farmers had begun to transition into industrial work, something that may have marked the symbolic dawn of an era for many farming families. Gilder himself, despite growing up on a farm, had explored work opportunities in Spokane as a young man. In the same interview, Gilder discussed his issues with city life including poverty, the sporadic nature of work, and the crippling dependence one had on companies, rather than oneself, to earn one's livelihood. After working for the Oliver Plow Company in Spokane for six months, Glen had declared himself incompatible with city life and longed to return to his rural roots. Gilder's prejudice against city living spawned a blanket belief that city-born children were idle and poorer workers than country-raised children, having never needed to adjust to changing natural conditions, like seasons, in their work. He concluded that this had made country-born workers more adaptable and thus better workers, even in industrial settings (Gilder 1975). Biases against industrialization and urbanization were noticeable throughout his interview.

Carol Ryrie Brink (Figure 2.1), who grew up with her grandmother on a homestead, celebrated the virtues of farming communities because of their inclusive nature. She remarked how "homesteading" signified a rare economic opportunity for

women: “so many of the homesteaders were women who went in on this venture. They expected to make some money out of it, and it wasn't so easy for women to make money in those days, and this was a chance they took” (Brink 1975). Already in this description, we are confronted with a paradoxical definition of homesteading. As Brink seems to imply, “homesteading” offered some financial incentive for women. While homesteading may have had a lenient definition that included subsistence and cash crop activities, word choice like “venture” and the expectation of a financial compensation suggests a more capitalistic view of farming than agrarian. Nevertheless, Brink reminisced about her lonely but pleasant childhood in a rural town, painting nostalgic images of herself riding “her pony” through Idaho’s wild countryside and the excitement of meeting farmers from around the world. In the end, she concludes that: “Cities are too one-sided and diffuse. The section in which you live in a city may represent only one phase of life or activity. But the child who has grown up with open eyes in a little town has inherited the earth” (Brink 1975). While not a farmer herself (she had gone on to author several books loosely based around her childhood), Brink idealizes the pioneer and garden mythologies in her sentimental recollection. Much of her childhood was colored by her grandmother’s stories of prairie life and survival. Subsequently, she was moved to retell them through a life devoted to literature.

Figure 2.1: Carol Ryrie Brink, Latah County Oral History Collection, University of Idaho.

Farmers who had participated in the mass movement to conquer the American West perceived their efforts as humble, especially when granted the advantage of hindsight and the ability to compare their livelihoods to the farms they saw later in life.

These farmers sought to distinguish their efforts from that of 1970s agribusiness, failing to recognize the connection between the patterns they established and their modern outcomes. Roy Glenn's family farmed legumes near Potlach. He proudly talked of bean threshing and how the intensity of planting and harvesting labor necessitated the use of many Palouse youths and farm animals (Glenn 1976). Many of those procedures are carried out solely by machine today, he lamented. While his family participated in monocropping, their old ways of farming with little machinery were viewed as more wholesome and virtuous. Consequently, most farmers were unaware of their connection to environmental degradation.

Carl Olson, born 1895, grew up on a poor Dutch farmstead with eleven other siblings. His family homesteaded nine miles outside of Moscow, Idaho. In his interview, he discusses the transformations in agriculture he observed over time as a farmhand in the region. His opinion of agribusiness was uncommon among the Palouse farmers interviewed. For example, Olson recognized how wheat monocropping had led to poor soil conditions and erosion problems across the Palouse. He equally bemoaned the profit-driven farming ideology that would soon consume farming practices of the region. Sensitivity to environmental impacts was rare among those interviewed. Still, blame for these environmental problems, he argued, ought to be directed towards generations beyond his own. In his interview, Olson blames farmers after his time for the problems exemplified in 1973, failing to see the connection between his generation's role in laying the groundwork for such issues:

> You can imagine that [farming] this country isn't a hundred years old yet. And you go out and look and see what's happening to it. Go out in the fields in the spring, there'd be ditches this deep all over. Mud, topsoil is goin' away. That's somethin' they have to stop too; 'course they're workin' on that quite a bit now. I tell you they should change the way of farming. You take a steep side hill, y'know, you should plant grass on that, and hay. Don't put wheat on it, y'know. They put wheat on everything, the easiest way to farm, y'know. Well, we get a lot of rain, and, why heck, ditches this deep, and a foot apart maybe, just like the hill over here now, heck. All of it goes down in the creek. And it's only a hundred years old, so you know how fast it's deteriorating (Olson 1973).

"Old timers" from this area helped romanticize rural living by distancing themselves from urban values, urban problems, and industrialization, even if agrarianism was never fully realized or sustained in this region. It is interesting to note that they referred to their family farms as homesteads when total subsistence farming was rare. Categorizing farms as homesteads may represent a mythical nostalgia, longing for acceptance into the American frontier mythology, or a connection to the often overly-emphasized importance of white settlement history. Additionally, it may act to separate their contributions from those of later generations in establishing highly-industrialized commercial agriculture. Farmers today seem to adopt the perspective of Glen Gilder, Carol Brink, Roy Glenn, and Carl Olson. To them, it was not the fault of early settlers that the land later experienced substantial erosion problems. Rather, it was the subsequent, greedier generations of mechanized farmers that were to blame for a resource-exhausted, polluted, and biologically reduced ag-wasteland. How could they have degraded this once holy garden to infertility when they declared their divine right to the land, their appreciation for small-scale agriculture, and devotion to family? In order to navigate that cognitive dissonance, blame must be placed elsewhere. Carl Olson points out that somewhere along the way, someone is responsible for diminishing the land, air, and water.

CHAPTER 3: MYTHOLOGICAL FOREFATHERS OF THE FRONTIER: GENDERED AND NOSTALGIC CONSTRUCTIONS OF BACK-TO-THE-LAND

NOSTALGIA FOR THE "OLD DAYS"

"Old timers," the kitschy, folksy expression I encountered throughout the span of this project is a phrase suggestive of nostalgic themes. When the expression "old timers" emerged in conversation or surfaced during presentations from modern farmers, it was employed to signify their appreciation of a symbolic Euro-American farming heritage. More specifically, a nod to the perceived "older and slower" way of life occurring in the late 19th to early 20th centuries. Moreover, "old timer" was an identity adopted by the elderly citizens of Latah County to refer to themselves and the others in the cohort of individuals that were interviewed in the Latah County Oral History Collection. Among modern farmers, a familiar story emerged when asked to describe their farm. Often, they began their timeline not when they had acquired the land but rather in the late 1800s or early 1900s, when early "pioneer" families first homesteaded their parcel. At the 2019 Food Summit in Moscow, one local farmer proudly stated that an: "incredible legacy [was] given to us by original colonial settlers of the Palouse." I observed similar admiration expressed by the two farmers I interviewed, Greg and Robert. Reverence for the pioneer past, it appeared, was a common trait among famers of the Palouse, both sustainable and conventional.

Both Greg and Robert admired these older generations of Palouse farmers. Interestingly, neither of these men were local to the region, having moved to the Palouse later in their adult years. I mention this fact to underscore the significance of "pioneer history" to the ideological configuration of these farmers. As such, I will not extensively explore in this thesis the constructive impact of the Palouse's most recent back-to-the land movement, occurring in the 1960s and 1970s, a period significant in introducing modern and secular environmentalist motivations to many other small-scale agriculturists

in this region. While this movement bore the formation of a cooperatively owned grocery store and community farmers market, arguably the most significant undertakings made to improve regional food and economic measures of security, the positive outcomes of these community devices factored minimally into Christian-conservative motivations for agrarian farming. Instead, I argue that their motivations are ideologically reinforced through several "historical" factors. One being an admiration of "pioneer" farmers and an adherence to garden, agrarian, and pioneer mythologies. This will be supported by qualitative data retrieved from participant interviews conducted in 2018 and participant observations of the community conducted between 2018 and 2019. The results that emerged from this data will be developed to answer: how does the veneration of "old time" farming (and its implications that perpetuate historical mythologies, patriarchal models of domesticity, religious environmentalism, and anti-globalization and anti-materialism sentiments) motivate participation in an environmental movement? In this chapter, I will discuss more specifically the broader implications of these mythologies: how they have masculinized "new agrarianism" (of which famous names like Wendell Berry and Joel Salatin are party), how gendered agrarianism has motivated conservative farmers' involvement in this movement, and why this is significant in examining the environmental movement at the macro scale.

As clarified in Chapter 2, "old time" Palouse farmers were not wholly independent agrarians, but rather a mix of "liberal agrarians" who tended to downplay the capitalistic achievements, and government dependence, of their agribusiness lifestyle. Propelled by this identity paradox, these families arguably contributed to the most formative years in modern American history. They endured poverty and survived long voyages across vast oceans and continents to fulfil the dream of establishing a lucrative family farm. In the process, they were culpable in violently evicting indigenous people from their native homelands and perpetuating pioneer mythologies through an adherence to Jeffersonian agrarianism. These pioneers did not, however, responsibly steward the land upon which they were so deeply dependent, instead seeing fit to exploit the fertile loessial soils for large-scale cereal, fruit, and pulse production. Despite subsidies from the American government and the overwhelming forces of industrialization, these immigrant

farmers were not willing to abandon the "innate peasant-ness" that "agrarian mythology" afforded them (Brass 1997:PE29). Mark Fiege remarked: "By bringing the factory into the garden, Idahoans evinced a desire to reconstitute an agrarian existence in a modern context" (Fiege 1999:172). Subsequent generations would seek to improve the efficiency of their model by embracing mechanization and the global transformation of modern agriculture, still holding fast to an agrarian identity. They insisted that their honest family values, inextricable from owning and ordering the land, would constitute virtuous agrarian principles. Ultimately, their ideological adherence to this unattainable ideal concealed a history of systematic racism, overshadowed the contributions of women and people of color in American history, and ushered in the age of globalization, industrialization, and materialism as a result.

This alternative framework for considering the past was not absorbed by the Christian conservative farmers I interacted with. "Old timers" are, instead, remembered as the wise keepers of bygone times and morals. This may have been accelerated by the influential words of some of the sustainable food movements well-known activists. The Baptist "mad farmer," Wendell Berry found success in demanding the revival of traditional farming practices and morals, leading historians like Mark Stoll to declare: "His is an environmentalism of nostalgia" (Stoll 2015). Like Berry, Joel Salatin, a Christian conservative farmer I will introduce more formally later in this chapter, romanticizes bygone morals by emphasizing modern day threats: "The bucolic meadow romps of yesteryear have been replaced with 'No Trespassing: Biosecurity' signs at farmgates all across the fruited plain" (Salatin 2004:16). The underlying theme of morality will crop up time and again across the various venerations of "old timers," whether they believe it to manifest in their traditional gender roles, their devotion to God, or their proclaimed commitment to the land. Therefore, harking back to the times of westward expansion, an era in American history fondly associated with pioneer and garden mythologies, was a common theme expressed between the two farmers I interviewed. I posit this as being spurred in part by inaccurate historical depictions in the media that uphold residual frontier myths, but other explanations will be elucidated later in this thesis. Here, I will discuss how the intrinsic patriarchal structures of these

mythologies injects a worryingly gendered element into the sustainable farming movement. Glamorized conceptions of family farming "take perfectly unproblematic patriarchal exploitation of women's and children's labor" and fails to recognize white privilege "by ignoring the racial history of U.S. land policy" (Guthman 2004:174). As the implications of the mythical origin of these motivations becomes evident, I will juxtapose this result to Joel Salatin's efforts as supreme motivator of Palouse conservation farming.

PIONEER MYTHOLOGIES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR BENEVOLENT PATERNALISM

The garden and agrarian mythologies live in one corner of the liberal agrarian paradox. Throughout American history, attempts were made by westward headed immigrants to transform the wilderness into a productive, Eden-like garden (Fiege 1999). Agrarianism as a Jeffersonian vision, interacts with this mythology as it hinges on a man's virtuous duty to own, order, and improve his environment (Jefferson 1853). The implications of ownership and order extend beyond establishing neatly gridded partitions, containing livestock, or judging desirable from undesirable vegetation. Family is at the core of the agrarian vision. Therefore, agrarian ideology encompasses man's desire to provide a safe and orderly environment for his wife and children to subsist. Wendell Berry embodies this same paternalistic view of nature when he wrote of the differences between *exploitation* and *nurture*. Consider his argument for a moment:

> The exploiter wishes to earn as much as possible by as little work as possible; the nurturer expects, certainly, to have a decent living from his work, but his characteristic wish is to work as well as possible. The competence of the exploiter is in organization; that of the nurturer is in order— a human order, that is, that accommodates itself both to other order and to mystery. The exploiter typically serves an institution or organization; the nurturer serves land, household, community, place (Wendell Berry 2015:9-10).

Now consider the response of a participant farmer named Greg. Greg agreed to meet me in town on a cold January afternoon in 2018. He spoke candidly about his passion for mentoring young and experienced farmers in sustainable practices, endeavors I

wholeheartedly support. Apart from the provoking "Christian speak" and opinions on domestic order, I found there was a fair bit of common ground between my secular environmentalist views and his Christian conservative perspective. He was an eloquent and sincere type who never shied from the opportunity to tell his story, not unlike the other farmers I had the pleasure of meeting throughout this project. During our interview, I asked him if stewardship had ever entered his impetus to farm sustainably. Without skipping a beat, he responded:

> We are charged in the bible to do what? Take dominion over the animals and the land, right? What does dominion mean if you look it up in the bible? It is the same as stewardship. You're responsible for making the decisions that maintain the land and the animals so they're healthy and productive. And you have a moral responsibility that you have to accept to take care of them…In the bible before they ever did a sacrifice they find a perfect unblemished lamb and take it into the house for three days. Did you realize that? Why did they have to take it into their house for three days? Because they wanted you to have a bond with that animal before you just slit its throat. Understand why it was you were doing that and what it is you're sacrificing.

Greg conflated having dominion over the natural world as stewardship. Dominion, like Berry's definition of a "nurturer" implies order and ownership and is not entirely equivalent to the (arguably moral) concept of stewardship, which implies the eternal facilitation of care. That is not to say there is not overlap in their definitions; I see maintenance as a central tenet in both. In the Judeo-Christian sense, dominion permits a man to order his world to the rules he sees fit, not necessarily by the rules that nature determines. Lynn White Jr. examined the Creation story in describing western society's relationship to nature, observing that: "Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purpose" (White 1967). This analysis suggests that dominion is inherently anthropocentric, while stewardship exists beyond the benefit and enjoyment of humans. The origin and implications of this paradox will be examined more thoroughly in Chapter 4. For now, I have chosen to highlight dominion to demonstrate that conceptually, dominion is not limited to the land or livestock, especially when conceptions of farm and family are inextricable. In patriarchal Christian society, like the society these farmers wistfully desire, dominion

extended into the domestic realm. Historian Peter Boag argued that Thomas Jefferson, in his vision for an agrarian future, found it essential to establish domestic order with women and children subservient to "the yeoman" (Boag 2003:45). This creates an opportunity to interpret Greg's statement through the lens and critique of gender. Consequently, dominion can be construed as an extended form of benevolent paternalism; portrayed by a fatherly figure who presides over all aspects of order, care, and control on his family farm. Providing humane conditions for livestock fell within men's rigid sphere of responsibility in a paternalistic society (although historically this was not always the case in the expansionist American west, see Garceau-Hagen (2001)). By the same logic, Greg feels compelled to provide a healthy and safe environment for his family— an obligation that falls under men's purview as well.

Greg stressed time and again the importance of his family's health in motivating him to farm sustainably, without industrial-chemical inputs. According to Greg, assuming a benevolent patriarchal role, paired with a nostalgia for dated agrarian visions, provides fertile grounds for raising "clean" and "natural" food. His concern for health and community well-being parallels a prominent Kentucky poet and farmer's worldview. Wendell Berry expressed grave concern over industrialization's impact on human and environmental health. To Berry, healthy living is conflated with "whole" or "holy" living (Shuman and Owens 2009). As a paternal caregiver, Greg offers his family protection from selective herbicides like Glyphosate. Glyphosate, a harmful chemical product found in Monsanto's signature product, Roundup, is subject to debate as an endocrine disrupter but still used in various conventional practices (Darbre 2015). Reducing his family's contact with this potentially harmful substance was at the forefront of his priorities as a father and sustainable farmer:

> That's one of the things about Roundup that we just talked about. Glyphosates; I mean the whole reason it works is because it blocks the nutrient uptake of whatever it is that it's trying to kill. Well guess what. We eat it. So what do you think is happening to us? Same thing. It's blocking nutrient intake to our bodies. So we raise strictly pasture, nothing that has any kind of those chemicals on it, all raw, right from farm to plate. No middle man.

The relationship between wholesome food, nostalgia for yeoman farming, and benevolent paternalism are prominent characteristics of one of Greg's personal farming heroes and private mentors, Joel Salatin. Salatin, a self-proclaimed "Christian libertarian environmentalist capitalist," is among the most prominent voices in the modern organic and sustainable food movement, forever memorialized in Michael Pollan's *The Ominvore's Dilemma*. Greg himself had participated in several of Salatin's Polyface Farm workshops in bucolic Swoope, Virginia. He especially appreciated Salatin's principled refusal to teach at the universities, summarizing Salatin's philosophy as: "if you want to learn, you come to me [at Polyface Farm]. You read my books, you show up, you become an intern or you go someplace and let somebody teach you. And that's how you do it and you learn." Greg then admitted: "And that's what happened with me." In his films and books, Salatin is often portrayed as the wise expert of new agrarianism, surrounding himself with students eager to absorb his lessons, further cementing his portrayal as a "paternal community leader" (Pilgeram and Meeuf 2014). Salatin takes a firm stance against the use of chemical inputs in agriculture, instead resolving to grow wholesome food by working alongside nature's timeless ecological laws, rather than against them. This is exemplified in his egg-mobile contraption, an invention of his own design immortalized in *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (2006). The purpose of this device is to shuttle his chickens around his pasture at different intervals, allowing them to accelerate the rate of manure and nutrient absorption into the soil, while facilitating a healthy, meaningful, natural existence for his chickens (Pollan 2006). Quirky, fatherly ingenuity is part of his charm.

Salatin's status and visibility in the sustainable agriculture movement has brought into question the impacts his ideologies have on environmentalism vis-à-vis topics in gender and social inclusivity. He acknowledges that husbandry and care of his livestock does not equally elicit the masculine image that conventional practices do in asserting man's domination over nature (Salatin 2006). An analysis led by Ryanne Pilgeram and Russell Meeuf determined that Salatin has detected an alternate method for emphasizing men's "natural authority" in sustainable agriculture. Such a task is only possible, it appears, by alienating himself from the "feminine associations of sustainability and

environmentalism" (Pilgeram and Meeuf 2014). The manners through which this is implemented occurs via the persona he projects to the wider environmental community. The image he showcases as a yeoman farmer, for example, is one of the means through which he asserts his "reoriented" heteronormative, white, and paternalistic dimension of masculinity. Pilgeram and Meeuf observed that he is depicted in films surrounded by natural beauty and engaged in nostalgic tasks such as "riding vintage tractors or guiding cows down small country roads" (Pilgeram and Meeuf 2014). The wider implications for his "internalized masculine ideals" alludes to pre-industrial (and anti-industrial) notions of masculine success, or as Kimmel labels it, "honest toil" (Kimmel 1996; Barlett and Conger 2004). And just as Wendell Berry envisioned, honest toil is conflated with wholesome, natural food. Salatin's commitment to utilizing benevolent paternalism as a tool for sustainability commands wider implications for the whole movement down to the workers on his own farm. General acknowledgement of Salatin's masculine image has led the organic farmers Laura Sayre interviewed in her research to remark: "You don't want to be a woman on [Polyface] farm" (Sayre 2011:46).

Images of agrarianism and benevolent paternalism in the sustainable farming movement may catalyze outcomes that limit certain groups' participation in sustainable agriculture. At its worst, the implications of this imagery nurture a movement in which the contributions of white, heterosexual, male farmers (and their hegemony over historical depictions of American farmers) are highly visible, even celebrated. Consequences may be extended to reveal a sustainable farming movement that excludes women and people of color from its influence and involvement. Greg envisioned himself as having dominion over God's sacred creation. "Maintaining" the land harks back to biblical and Jeffersonian notions of controlling the land and may represent a way for Greg to himself maintain a semblance of traditional masculinity. Historically, agrarian agriculture on the Palouse did not sustain Euro-American conceptions of order to a semi-arid region of the country. Innovations in mechanization and irrigation introduced "industry to the garden," resulting in an identity that drew in "complex, sometimes contradictory [cultural] images that rested on combinations of organic and mechanical, female and male, secular and divine metaphors" (Fiege 1999:172). If man's domination

over nature, often metaphorically depicted as female, was viewed as masculine, then conflating dominion and stewardship represents a way for this farmer to combine both traditional measures of American masculinity with the desire to be portrayed as a paternalistic caregiver.

Agrarianism upholds the sanctity of the farmstead, emphasizing family-centricity and a reserved sacredness for the natural world. Within agrarianism we can identify underlying assumptions of benevolent paternalism, Christian fundamentalism, and western notions of kinship structures, property ownership, and farming practices. Agrarianism is not just the literal practice of small-scale agriculture, but a lifestyle that hinges on the wholesomeness of small-scale farming. The correlation between labor conditions and "compromised" food first entered the American psyche from Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1904)— more recent exposés and documentaries (like those featuring Joel Salatin, no less) have since helped solidify the assumption that wholesome practices produce wholesome food (Guthman 2004:5). Salatin's influence on white, Christian-conservative sustainable farmers embodies the amalgamation of dominance and stewardship, therefore projecting how that marriage has redefined masculinity. Male farmers on the Palouse are concerned with their own portrayal, looking to Salatin to redefine their participation in the anti-industrial economy in a way conjures impressions of paternalistic masculinity. In Chapter 3 we will explore the religious origins of this phenomenon. For now, we will delve into the implications of other frontier mythologies on masculinity in the sustainable food movement.

THE COWBOY MYTHOLOGY AND PATRIOTISM

Pioneer narratives represent another way frontier mythology has infiltrated the motivations of some Palouse sustainable farmers. While the agrarian model symbolizes an "old man's" paternalistic entry point for masculinity in sustainable agriculture, envisioning the American farmer as a rugged, youthful outdoorsman embraces another quintessentially American form of masculinity, one tied up in youth and patriotism. It is in many ways an ode to Manifest Destiney and to Horace Greely's famous urging: "Go

West young man." Or perhaps originating from President Theodore Roosevelt's legacy of masculinity denoted by his famous "the doctrine of the strenuous life" speech in 1899. Regardless of exactly where these masculine ideals arise, Peggy Barlett and Katherine Conger observed that even today, the farming lifestyle "has many dimensions associated with the masculine, such as working out-of-doors, performing strenuous physical labor, handling large animals and heavy machinery" (Barlett and Conger 2004). While they juxtapose this "accessible" dimension of masculinity to the romantic and equally unrealistic "Marlboro man, the lone cowboy in the wilderness" image, I experienced an amalgam of these supposed accessible and inaccessible forms of masculinity from a Palouse farmer named Robert. A kind, welcoming, and gleeful individual, Robert paraded his family's efforts at habitat restoration and livestock welfare with pride upon my arrival. Robert embraced both the lone cowboy mythology and Jeffersonian agrarianism, intrinsic, it appeared, in his motivations for small-scale agriculture. While we have already clarified that the Palouse's settlement story was not characterized by Brown's mythical depiction of "mountain men, cowboys, Indians, prospectors, gunfighters, and outlaws," this fact did not delude Robert's connection to a cowboy identity.

Robert, having moved to the Palouse region as an adult, labored in livestock production and in a non-farming related career long before shifting to sustainable agriculture. Financial hurdles prevented Robert and his wife, Anne, from securing their dream homestead until financial backing from his retirement savings was feasible. Like Greg, Robert is a Christian conservative sustainable famer who prized, throughout his interview, the "old style of farming." Simultaneously, Robert accentuates the parallels between his line of work and that of a cowboy. He admits that after a long day of "roping spring calves…rather like in a rodeo, getting pretty muddy" that watching *True Grit*, a 1969 John Wayne film, is the finest way to unwind. Robert yearns for a simpler life, peppered with the youthful thrills of expertly roping cattle and employing other "manly," physical skills. The boyish, even caricaturized concepts of livestock management does not align with anything remotely similar to the interviewed "old timers." Still, he

broadcasts this image to me and his customers perhaps as both an ode to pioneer narratives and a fraught understanding of the historical west.

Eloquent and well-educated, Robert aspires to learn the epistemologies he regards as old-fashioned and nearing extinction: "Each year brings us some new acquaintance with homesteading skills. Just think of what our grandparents knew from growing up almost by intuition. Both of Anne's grandmothers were first generation born in the U.S. of immigrants of Norway…They could probably even make homemade cheeses!" His environmental ideology echoes Henry David Thoreau's pursuit of "Simplicity! Simplicity! Simplicity!" (Thoreau 2008:20). Like Thoreau, a blend of simplicity and nostalgia defined his motivations for a life led outdoors, one marked by the pursuit of self-reliance skills and respect for nature— a virtuous quest that complements both the paternal and cowboy dimensions of masculinity. Consequently, well-roundedness, dignified work, and innovation in the face of confrontation, not specialism, defines a man's worth on a farm. Like the Palouse "old timers" interviewed in the Latah County Oral History collection, Robert wanted to lead a lifestyle defined by dignified work and craft:

> I believe that if we are not building good soil and a locally sustainable farming community, then we are slowly winding down our food system. That includes losing the people with the skills and knowledge to take a piece of land, even a poor piece, and make it a productive and…desirable place to live for themselves and their neighbors.

Greg echoed similar sentiments in his interview, even adding disdain for the idleness he perceives today's generations enjoying:

> There's nothing keeping people busy. There's nothing giving them anything greater to do than yourselves. And they have free time and what do they do? Let's all meet over at the local spot, drink a beer, and chill out. Because there's nothing else going on. Real sad kind of.

Both farmers are utterly passionate about sustainable agriculture. Day after day, their families live out their homesteading dreams by producing premium food products like grass-fed beef, humanely-raised chickens, local honey, fruits, and vegetables for family,

friends, and the network of local individuals who typically comprise their customer base. The Jeffersonian ideals of independence, labor, and self-sufficiency overlap with the cowboy mythology, which, as Joel Salatin insinuates, makes it acceptable to venture into lesser masculine ventures like environmentalism and sustainability.

Alongside venerating "old timers," Robert invested in impressive "eco-friendly" fixtures on his property like ponds for water fowl and solar panels. Additionally, he is committed to effective forest and grassland restoration. Finding religion and a connection to God and Jesus in his youth inspired him to pursue this agrarian, self-sufficient lifestyle for himself and his family, of which he frankly labels "sustainable farming." Beyond the religious aspects of this motivation exists a secular adherence to another dogma. Robert's ideologies are characterized by the Jeffersonian vision of a self-sufficient workforce of independent, American farmers. I will discuss in Chapter 5 more specifically how Jeffersonian agrarianism opens some Palouse sustainable farmers to the principles of agrarian populism. Robert, for example, installed solar panels on his farm not, he clarified, to offset his carbon footprint but rather to liberate himself from a dependence on utility companies, consequently merging Jefferson's self-reliance ideals with the lone cowboy myth. An amalgamation of these principles creates a masculine worldview of sustainability that integrates well within Robert's framework of what farming ought to be. Robert connected with the independent, solitary work ethic of cowboys, something he felt he could relate to as he toiled away on his farm aided only by the company of his plow horses. His farm, far off the grid and beaten path, is symbolic of an independent, isolated fixture in their community. Although solitary, the farm produces wholesome food through wholesome values, therefore earning respectable status. Historian Dee Garceau argued that the arrival of the lone cowboy myth, one that arose from the popularity of dime novels and traveling Wild West shows, muddled the history of cowboys with cowboy mythology and helped conceive notions of cowboys as both outcast individuals and do-gooders, earning, as she articulates it: "the freedoms of marginality and…the rewards of respectability" (Garceau-Hagen 2001). His farm, like many other Jeffersonian-modeled farms, balance both marginality and respectability in American society, from both ends of the political spectrum even. Cowboy mythologies

constitute the fabric of Americana; threats to those ideals and masculinities are inherently un-American.

As early as the late 1800s, cowboys had come to represent ideals of white, middle-class masculinity (Garceau-Hagen 2001). Cowboys were imagined as protectors, providers, and producers, traits that seemingly compliment the paternalistic values characteristic of agrarianism. The cowboy represents an uninhibited, resourceful hero who embodies self-sufficiency, masculinity, and American individualism. On the other hand, agrarianism represents the responsible and fatherly stewardship of natural resources—a natural embodiment of wholesome rural values. While Barlett and Conger had separated out the agrarian and lone cowboy dimensions of masculinity, I observed that on the Palouse, sustainable farmers merged these forms through their admiration of (what they believed) personified "old time" farming. This stems from their need to connect themselves with a perceived past that valued family, order, humility, innovation, and wholesome food while distancing themselves from the threatening, "wimpy" urban lifestyle associated with sinful fast food and dependence-building office jobs. The Christian conservative ideology is defined by dichotomies like rurality versus urbanization, masculine versus feminine, independent versus dependent, wholesome versus unnatural, and, as I will discuss in later chapters, pious versus secular, moral versus immoral, and liberty versus suppression. Consequently, Palouse sustainable farmers conflate notions of farming in the west with frontier mythologies to inflate an identity that is oppositional to the forces of urbanization, industrialization and global capitalism. This piecemeal identity serves to connect sustainable farmers to "old timer" aversions to industrialization and modernization and other thematic threats identified by the farmers interviewed in the Latah County Oral History Collection, like dependence on others, laziness, and city living. Employing dichotomies to direct their moral compass, their ideology is reconfigured to counter modern adversaries like Monsanto, McDonalds, and agribusiness.

Ryanne Pilgeram defines modern-day sustainable agriculture as being "deeply tied to a range of ideological positions challenging the assumptions of capitalism,

industrialization, and one's relationship to 'nature'"(Pilgeram 2013:124). Julie Guthman reiterates that the agrarianist rhetoric that often permeates sustainable food movements is founded on the populist principles of individualism and anti-corporation (Guthman 2004:174). By connecting to the mythological frontier past and reorienting masculinity accordingly, these sustainable farmers assert their opposition to dependence and industrialization, much as Thomas Jefferson had envisioned in his agrarian dream. Traditional ways are conflated with righteous living. Therefore, any food produced in that virtuous process must be impregnated with wholesome, healthful qualities. The romantic language interlaced in the nostalgia for family farming is problematic for neglecting race and gender. Not only do these nostalgias for the agrarian myth serve to safeguard white privilege but are irrelevant to the history of Palouse agriculture. They present an additional strategy for maintaining a semblance of masculinity in the wake of opposing industrial practices. For example, should a farmer need to assert their opposition to industrial agriculture and still maintain an outwardly masculine façade (for socio-political purposes), they would need to prove their adherence to two conservative morals: Christianity and patriotism. The benevolent paternalism approach appeals to conservative sensitivities towards Christian morals, as I will discuss further in Chapter 4. Redefining the human-nature dynamic, maintaining traditional domestic structures, and placing an emphasis on the Jeffersonian notions of orderliness symbolize masculinity in the fatherly sense. Similarly, cowboy mythologies represent another way to maintain a decidedly masculine status among conservative neighbors. Harking back to a frontier past, exhibiting a mastery of "old timer" skills, and appreciating the lonesomeness of outdoor work are masculine qualities that lay the foundation for discussions of populist principles in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4: THE APOSTLES OF ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURE

CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTALISM: AN OXYMORON OR A "MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN?"

A recurring theme winding through Palouse farmer responses may challenge readers' assumptions of who, specifically, endorses and personifies sustainable ideology. Religiosity was, I found, a striking motivator for sustainable agriculture, both among the farmers participating in this study and across America. This corroborates with similar literature on the subject. Journalist Laura Sayre, for example, was impressed by the diversity of ideologies within the sustainable food movement after interviewing farmers at organic farming conventions nationwide. She observed that organic farmers were not just motivated by environmental concerns or profitable ventures, but through religious motivations as well: "It's become a cliché to point out that 'organic farming is not just hippies in Birkenstocks,' but this doesn't convey the half of it. Organic farming is hippies in Birkenstocks, hippies in business suits, born-again Christians in Birkenstocks, everything in between, and a whole lot more besides" (Sayre 2011:39). Katherine Yarbrough substantiated this observation when she examined Vermont's local, organic food scene through the perspectives and worldviews of sustainable farmers. Yarbrough determined that organic farmers, of whom the majority were politically right-leaning, depended on Christian teachings to support environmentalist philosophy. Her dissertation identified farmers' values as organized under three theological branches: Calvinists, Mennonites, and fundamentalist Christians. Much in the same way that this thesis is modeled after participating Palouse farmers, Yarbrough's dissertation was specific to the ideologies of Vermont farmers (Yarbrough 2014). Nevertheless, both groups of interviewed farmers demonstrate that religion plays a more important role in motivating sustainable habits than it receives credit for. In broader terms, sustainable food production is not always the result of (the presumably) secular motivations and ideologies that inform society's perceptions of a monolithic farm-to-fork movement.

Yarbrough proposed that Christian-conservative farmers in Vermont embrace organic growing practices and scorn chemical inputs because these philosophies can be rationalized via a Christian-environmentalist framework. Philip Conford illuminates the integral role of religion in agrarianism. Conford recognizes that the clean food movements tend to hark backward before looking forward, a fact consistent across traditional and progressive farmers (Conford 2001). Modern proponents of this idea include Wendell Berry, Joel Salatin and other Christian-environmentalist activists who inspire Jeffersonian ideals, "religious agrarianism," and environmentalism in their post-war readership. By probing Christian teachings to single out the specific principles that support the organic, back-to-the-land philosophy, we can unearth how Christian sustainable farmers navigate between the seemingly contradictory stances of Christianity and environmentalism. That is not to say Christianity is a monolithic religion. For much of human history, differing biblical interpretations have inspired contradictory recourses. In this chapter, I will identify how Christian sustainable farmers defied history, the values that guided their dissent, the factors that prompted them to approach agriculture differently, and how these "apostles of alternative agriculture" have inspired modern Palouse farmers. Understanding the religious morals that inform and inspire environmentalism will provide insight into how applicable these ideas are to a more substantial population of Palouse farmers— conventional wheat and legume farmers.

The paradox between religion and environmentalism has been discussed in scholarly circles since Lynn White Jr. published his essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" in 1967. Historian Evan Berry described White's celebrated piece as a crucial starting point for understanding the historical origin of anthropocentrism (Evan Berry 2015). White examined the disconnect between humans and nature as promulgated in Christian teachings, asserting that "Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen… Man shares, in great measure, God's transcendence of nature." In the bible, humans and nature exist separately from one another, a blatant departure from the animistic, idolatry ideology embraced by other ancient Western religions (paganism and Greco-Roman mythology) (White 1967). Moreover, humanity is not just separate from nature, but God clarifies in the beginning of Genesis (New International Version) that

humans were always destined to transcend nature. Nature and the creation of life, as intended by God, existed for the exclusive benefit of humanity:

> Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. (Genesis 1:29-30)

The ethereal pleasures of Eden's paradise were promptly dissolved following Adam and Eve's misguided choice to taste the forbidden fruit, resulting in the Fall of Man. In judging the act of the "original sin," God delivers Adam's verdict by commanding:

> Cursed is the ground because of you;
> through painful toil you will eat food from it
> all the days of your life.
> It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
> and you will eat the plants of the field.
> By the sweat of your brow
> you will eat your food
> until you return to the ground,
> since from it you were taken;
> for dust you are
> and to dust you will return (Genesis 3:17-19).

Evan Berry interprets this moment as man's ultimate alienation from nature, impregnating Western society with notions of materialism (Evan Berry 2015:22). The symbolic separation of man from nature boded conveniently well for America's working-class and aspiring industrialists during the rise of American industrialization. One could simply turn to the bible to justify their actions in altering landscapes. In the American west, a growing dependence on resource extraction and technology led human land-use patterns to transform rapidly. This formative time marked the economic shift from plant regeneration and solar radiation dependence ("organic economy") to an economy fixed on mechanization and fossil fuels ("mineral-based"). This became particularly true during Euro-Americans' expansion into western territories following the organic construction of a transcontinental railroad that gave rise to a modern, mineral-based economy (Fiege 2012:254). Thus, cultural norms in Western civilization, and particularly in American

society, are inextricable from the authority of Christian theology. White wrote: "We continue to live today, as we have lived for about 1700 years, very largely in a context of Christian axioms" (White 1967). For a Euro-American Christian to interpret man's relation to nature as anything different symbolizes theological, historical, and cultural divergence. The growing support for economic progress, mechanization, specialization, monoculture, and chemical inputs in the 1930s through 1960s were ways in which these Christian axioms, touting human domination over nature, manifested themselves in Palouse agriculture. By the middle of the 20th century, a renaissance of sorts, shepherded by modern Christian agrarians, would invert conventional expectations.

DOMINION OR STEWARDSHIP?

It is no secret that the Palouse has become known as a highly productive agricultural area, sporting nicknames like "the garden spot of the Northwest" or "vast northwestern desert of wheat" (Grey 1919). In a region heavily dominated by profit-driven commercial farms, why do pockets of Christian sustainable farms exist? According to agrarian farmers themselves, agrarian dreams begin at church. Greg and Robert are devout Christians who see farming as a labor of love and the labor of God. When asked about their core values and prime motivations for farming, both responded that Christianity was the foremost driver. To Greg, being a Christian farmer means building a healthy, neighborly community:

> To start off I am a Christian. I've been a Christian all of my life. Uh, so that means so I pretty much uphold to the bible-ly values— you know, don't lie or steal or tolerate anybody who does. I want people to be not only physically healthy but spiritually healthy. And I want to operate a farm to promote good farming techniques and methodologies that make people healthy. Uh, and if they need a rest or some place to come in, I always invite people to come to the farm. Farm is always open. You want to come out to the farm and spend the whole day with me running around on a four-wheeler moving cows and doing stuff, you're always welcome. It's always open to the community.

Robert's motivations were similarly influenced. After Robert finished explaining how his troubled upbringing had brought him closer to trusting God, I asked him how that

relationship factored into his decision to responsibly farm his land. For Robert, being a Christian farmer was about finding his life's purpose and learning, throughout that process, that stewardship is key:

> Well, part of it is a sense that we're where were supposed to be. When you know you're doing what you're supposed to be doing, there's a contentment and a peace that allows you to get through the rough times. And a part of it is that it is a sense of stewardship; I don't really own this. So, I don't have the final say on what's done with it. I have to leave a lot of things in the Lord's hands… So, to let go of all that and trust God on some issues is really challenging at first. It's getting kind of to be part of my daily life now. But it wasn't that way at first. Um and to learn the rhythm of the seasons and to go through the ups and downs of climate change. Yes, I do believe in climate change.

Greg values building a healthy community while Robert views sustainable farming and stewarding God's creation as his life's purpose. Both motivations translate into a critique of industrial agriculture. While the sample size of conservative farmers I interviewed is small and therefore impossible to deem their worldviews as representative of farmers on the Palouse as a whole. Nevertheless, it is worth asking, why are these strong and Christian-based responses to industrial agriculture observed on the Palouse?

Following the Second World War, farm chemicals were employed to maintain high yields. Fertilizers like nitrogen, fungicides like copper sulfate, pesticides/insecticides like DDT, and herbicides like sodium chlorates integrated widely into farm practices nationwide. Palouse farmers initially welcomed the prospect of controlling pests and increasing yields through chemical application as land maintenance became increasingly difficult for single families. Farms acreage increased during the World Wars and erosive practices (leaving land fallow, monoculture, tractor usage, etc.) continued to degrade soil fertility at alarming rates (Duffin 2005). Not only did chemical application address labor and financial shortcuts, but utilized the chemical and technological discoveries made during wartimes and applied them to domestic endeavors. Much like in wartimes, these chemicals were used as weapons— farmers were in essence declaring war against nature and insects (Lytle 2007). Between 1953 and 1962, the production of DDT, a known endocrine disrupter, escalated to 50% nationwide. In 1959, almost 79,000 pounds of DDT

were used in a single year (*Pesticide Production Since 1953* 1963:56-58). The trend of chemical application was eagerly embraced on the Palouse. Wheat crop profited the most from farm chemical application, with yields rising a remarkable 85 percent between 1949 and 1959 (Duffin 2007:107). The national objective to dominate insects, unwanted vegetation, and increase yields (even at the expense of people and the environment) was is an example of a lingering "Christian axiom," as Lynn White would argue. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) is indivisible today from the history of alternative agriculture (even if she had attempted to distance herself from organic food efforts) (Guthman 2004:7). Her critique of unchecked chemical use in agricultural practices questioned the moral choice only a few decided in poisoning land and people for economic benefit. With help from Carson, Americans, together, were awoken to both the harmful realities of DDT use and the value of preserving nature for future generations. Both Greg and Robert expressed their desire to be good land stewards, demonstrating that the moral issue of chemical use is heeded by some Christian farmers as well. Consequently, Rachel Carson's ponderings prove still as relevant as ever:

> Who has decided—who has the *right* to decide—for the countless legions of people who were not consulted that the supreme value is a world without insects, even though it be also a sterile world ungraced by the curving wing of a bird in flight? The decision is that of the authoritarian temporarily entrusted with power; he has made it during a moment of inattention by millions to whom beauty and the ordered world of nature still have meaning that is deep and imperative (Carson 1962:127).

Contrary to White's assertion that Christian teaching has historically pitted humans against nature, several midcentury Christian agrarian visionaries voiced their support for sustainable farming as originating from a mutualistic relationship with God's creation. Rather than interpreting God's proclamation to "make mankind…so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" as humanity's authority over Creation, these apostles of sustainable farming interpret God's command as human's symbiotic relationship with nature (Genesis 1:26). Recall in Chapter 3 that Greg, one of the participating Christian conservative Palouse farmers, interpreted human's dominion over God's plants and animals as more closely resembling

stewardship than governance. Robert also adds that his motivations stem from a desire to steward his land: “Absolutely. Yeah. That’s what dominion means. I mean I grew up in the dominion of [redacted location]. The government didn’t own me. But it was a dominion.” This worldview challenges the conventional dichotomy of man versus nature. Predecessors of Greg and Robert’s ideology, like the farmers they cite as personal influencers (Wendell Berry, Joel Salatin, and Alan Savory) all share the ability to straddle opposing perspectives.

While I personally question whether dominion and stewardship are interchangeable concepts as these “apostles of alternative agriculture” do, they envision dominion as a fundamental “philosophy of nature.” That is to say, they regard humankind as inextricable from environmental problems and solutions (Foss 2008:8-9). This marks an important deviation from historical approaches to “land ethics.” Aldo Leopold is notable in environmental history for first articulating environmental morality, or land ethics, which “simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land” (Leopold and Schwartz 1949). Wendell Berry and Joel Salatin have incorporated land ethics morality into their own writings and farming motivations. Berry remarked that: “Once we see our place, our part of the world as *surrounding* us, we have already made a profound division between it and ourselves (Wendell Berry 2015:24). Salatin issued a similar statement in introducing his book *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs*, his effort to brand environmentalism to conservative Christians: “I do not see any conflict between the physical and the spiritual. In fact, I see symbiosis between the two” (Salatin 2016:xv). They are among some of the notable forefathers of the new agrarianism movement and through their leadership, conservative justifications for sustainable agriculture have surfaced in the motivations of sustainable Palouse farmers, warranting further exploration into these influencers’ philosophies.

SACRED CREATION, HUMILITY, RESPECT, AND SKILL

As academics like Evan Berry, Lynn White Jr., and others have indicated, Creation is the starting point for examining the estrangement of humanity from nature.

But for agrarian activists like Wendell Berry and Joel Salatin, God's Creation is owed appreciation and respect rather than exploitative intentions. According to their vision, God is in Creation— to disrespect Creation is to disrespect God himself. On the official site for Salatin's book *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs*, the reviewer writes that the premise is based on the idea that "all physical creation is an object lesson of spiritual truth." In the first chapter Salatin famously states: "If we can't appreciate the pigness of the pig, we cannot appreciate the Godness of God" (Salatin 2016:19). Respect for Creation became a justification for hosting environmentalist ideology; Berry and Salatin knowingly deviate from the historical Christian narratives of "subduing" nature. In general, Berry finds the exploitation of Creation as being tied intimately to the rise of industrialization:

> Once, the governing human metaphor was pastoral or agricultural, and it clarified, and so preserved in human care, the natural cycles of birth, growth, death, and decay. But modern humanity's governing metaphor is that of a machine. Having placed ourselves in charge of Creation, we began to mechanize both the Creation itself and our conception of it. We began to see the whole Creation merely as raw material, to be transformed by machines into a manufactured Paradise (Wendell Berry 2015:60).

Berry, as perhaps the most influential of modern agrarians, helped legitimize a "cottage" movement among environmentalists through anti-industrialism rhetoric. This is likely due to the fact, Guthman notes, that anti-industrialism rhetoric is intrinsic to all, even the mainstream materializations of the organic food movement (Guthman 2004:8). With anti-industrialism on the common agenda for both movements, it is easy to understand why the religious and non-religious strains have been amalgamated in perceptions of American sustainability. Many believe that sustainable food is the result of a monolithically liberal and secular green food movement (Sayre 2011:42).

Despite industrialization signifying Christian anthropocentrism, this has not deterred Berry from criticizing fellow Christians and openly denouncing the industrialization and specialization processes as connected to a crisis of orderly character: "What happens under the rule of specialization is that, though society becomes more and more intricate, it has less and less structure. It becomes more and more organized but less

and less orderly" (Wendell Berry 2015). To Berry, agriculture that is dependent on destructive mechanical and chemical inputs is just as much a question of character as it is a sin against Creation. Christians, he feels, are supposed to be hardworking, humble, and respectful. Respect for natural resources is a common theme within Salatin's writings as well. For example, policies that encourage people to patronize cheap food pose as a general "disrespect" to both family farms and the environment (Salatin 2004:97). Furthermore, industrial agriculture requires farmers to take disgraceful shortcuts, a challenge to Christian honor and humility. The ecologically destructive practices of industrial agriculture therefore demonstrate farmers' symbolic disrespect to Creation itself. In the *Unsettling of America*, Berry learns that locating a model Christian farm in America is no easy task. The case is not so if you were to look in an Amish community. Berry writes extensively about the Amish and their notable guiding principles. He reveres their community centeredness and how they have not "secularized their earthly life" (Wendell Berry 2015:216). Astonished to discover no indications of soil erosion upon visiting one Amish farm, Berry declared:

> It is possible, I think, to say that this is Christian agriculture, formed upon the understanding that it is sinful for people to misuse or destroy what they did not make. The Creation is a unique, irreplaceable gift, therefore to be used with humility, respect, and skill (Wendell Berry 2015:218).

In *Bringing It to the Table*, Berry lists the Amish principles he hopes will be replicated in farming families across America. One of the notable Amish principles he relishes includes the labor principle: "They have limited their use of technology so as not to displace or alienate available human labor or available sources of free power (the sun, wind, water, and so on)" (Berry 2009:47). In other words, he finds that the Amish have employed all people in their community towards the common goal of constructing a "human being" friendly society. Idleness is a consequence of modern "improvements." Busy people and animals exist at the heart of an Amish community. Rather than judging unspectacular but necessary farm tasks as "drudgery," a modern construal according to Berry, the Amish find dignity and honor in the system they have created for themselves (Wendell Berry 2015:218). Dignified labor, consistent and socially-oriented, is believed

by Berry to be a form of social stewardship. The Amish are therefore able to reconcile what other historical strains of Christianity have not: people and the environment.

Unsurprisingly, a reverence for dignified labor shone through in my discussions with sustainable Palouse farmers. As I noted in Chapter 3, honorable farm work is tied to a nostalgia for times preceding the luxuries of modern technology and is linked to traditional notions masculine success. In another sense, it is associated with the Christian values of honesty and respect, coveted by Salatin, Berry, Greg, and Robert alike. While neither Greg nor Robert were raised in the Baptist or Amish tradition, they both valued these ideals. Robert found Amish farming practices to represent the highest standard of stewardship, explaining in extensive detail the projects he had read the Amish carrying out. The factoids he related to me were from several *National Geographic* articles about the state of modern soil. While I was unable to find the articles in question, Robert recounts that:

> The only people whose soil was improving was the Amish. Everybody else, their soil level was going down. The depth of top soils is going down and the fertility was going down. There was another [article] in the eighties and the last one I read was 1996… And again, every time, the Amish are the only people whose soil was improving. Everybody else was going downhill. And they have been farming some of their farms for three-hundred years. And yet their fertility is higher than when they started.

The Amish, and their ability to steward both the land and people within their communities, appeals as much to Berry and Salatin as it does to some sustainable Palouse farmers. Here, again, in Robert's response we notice the theme of nostalgia creeping into the motivations of agrarian farmers, but additional values like the dignified work rooted in Christian teaching play a role in his reverence. Parsing Christianity from the motivations of sustainable Palouse agrarians is a lofty task; Christian values lie at the heart of dominion/stewardship and the responsibility to protect God's Creation. If practiced in accordance with Berry, Salatin, and the Amish's biblical interpretations, it even inspires a society built on dignified labor. Using a Christian framework to validate sustainable agriculture and mount a campaign against industrialization, agrarian farmers

share some common ground with other, more secular, strains of the American sustainable food movement. This could either represent a point of contention between religious and non-religious sustainable farmers or an avenue for commonality. I believe it to mean both.

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

While many scholars have observed the link between Christian fundamentalism and sustainable agriculture, I ask, why do Christian conservative sustainable farmers need to justify sustainability through religion? Why add an extra layer to the edicts of sustainability which accordingly advice that a food system should balance economic profitably, social equality, and environmental protection? Agrarianist rhetoric exudes values of virtuosity, family farming, and rurality, but most importantly it identifies industrial agricultural processes as threats to these visions. However efficient and economical they are, industrial practices ultimately challenge the sanctity of family farms. So how does one appeal to their neighbors, in a respectful manner, when facing the very real consequences of industrial agriculture including: water pollution, erosion and desertification, habitat and ecosystem degradation, and harmful chemical inputs that jeopardize human health? What grounds of authority does the average citizen have in regulating their neighbor's activities? The "Book of Books" offers some direction. Redefining dominion to mean stewardship, thereby warranting a newfound respect for God's Creation, provides an effective social strategy and convincing argument for discussing these matters with likeminded neighbors.

Imploring your neighbors to change their practices by appealing to metaphors and concepts they are familiar with has been the strategy of conservationists on the Palouse since at least the 1940s, when pastors were urged by local conservation groups to conduct a sermon on soil health once annually (Duffin 2007:123). Appeals to traditionally Christian domestic and societal structures also underpins a convincing argument for land ethics. For some, caring for your (privately owned) family farm in a paternal manner follows in the vein of good Christian values. Not only can a male farmer protect the

sanctity of family and land ownership but maintain a semblance of masculine success. Masculine success became increasingly defined in America by big machinery, entrepreneurship, and large landholdings. Therefore, reconciling religious concepts and traditional masculinities with sustainable agriculture signals to neighboring farming families that while their practices are "different," these farmers are still willing to engage in the principles of conservative "thought" including piety, private property, and prudence (Bliese 2001:7). Neighborly trust is thus retained and restored.

While conventional farmers on the whole tend to be less religious than agrarian sustainable farmers, their values align on topics of politics, government intervention, and shared lived experiences (Bell 2004:159). Specifically, they share common ground vis-à-vis conservative principles. Recall that these sustainable farmers also possess a shared agenda with secular environmental activists including platforms on anti-industrialism and organic growing practices. The agrarian farmers I interviewed represent a single but fluid category of Palouse farmers, unique in their ability to straddle two mythologies: that of the sensitive, secular environmentalist and that of the rugged, patriotic "American Farmer." Ultimately religiosity separates them from other organic and sustainable farmers in the Palouse region and their visible efforts to promote local food security. While the farmers I interviewed may consider themselves environmentalists, they were not socially aligned with the obvious community environmental efforts and were not present at local non-profit or university sponsored events and workshops regarding food security or food resilience in 2018-2019. Both Greg and Robert maintain that their customer bases are made up of people with "similar Christian values" and infrequently interact with people outside their religious and ideological circles.

Industrialization, an anti-Christian process, threatens all the Christian values listed above. The "critique of industrialization" remains the common thread between the agrarian food movement and the more secular iterations of procuring sustainable food like the organic food movement. Consequently, Christian conservative farmers have found common ground with their secular, liberal counter parts by advocating for "clean" or "wholesome" food. Journalist Laura Sayre notes Joel Salatin's famously divergent

principles (among environmentalists) and corroborates: “Religiosity is thus a revealing trait within the politics of organic agriculture, tracing a line perhaps unexpected across typical characterizations of left and right” (Sayre 2011:42). The ideologies of sustainable agriculture extend beyond differences of religion and finally into the divisive politics of sustainability. We will discover in Chapter 5 that these farmers have more in common with conservative conventional farmers than liberal sustainable farmers. This will involve differences regarding the role of the government in sustainable agriculture. Still, these farmers are an important population in the American sustainable food movement, driving community action towards sustainable ends. Among Palouse residents, these farmers are a welcomed asset to the community and source for Christian customers to obtain local, and sustainably raised food. Subsequently, I ask, is there a place for agrarianism in the Palouse’s sustainable food movement?

CHAPTER 5: POLITICAL BI-PARTISANSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE FARMING: HEADED FOR GREENER PASTURES?

THE CONSERVATIVE POLTICS OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Christian conservative (and sustainable) Palouse farmers are ideologically driven to practice sustainable methods and raise organic food. Religiosity provides the doctrine and foundations to support sustainable practices, and in the case of Palouse farmers, overarching Christian teaching inject notions of stewardship and dignified labor into the sustainable farming ideological framework. These Christian teachings put Christian conservative farmers in common space with more secular and socially progressive farmers. Anti-industrialization, as discussed in Chapter 4, is one shared ideology between the two groups. Laura Sayre notes that both "socially progressive" and "socially conservative" farmers cherish practices and goals that complement shared anti-industrial sentiments. In Sayre's observations, their freedom from industrial-capitalist pressures and "sense of humility" nurtured through the efforts of ecologically-minded farming practices encourages constructive dialogues between the distinctly-valued factions (Sayre 2011:43). Despite the common goal of establishing a sustainable, hyperlocal food system, the degree to which Christian fundamentalism is employed as a motivation ultimately exposes a wide political gulf between two strains of American organic farmers. The implications of these differences, and how it affects public perceptions of the sustainable food movement, provides the impetus for philosophical consideration.

Political engagement is another common feature of both progressive and conservative farmers. Albeit paradoxical, it highlights the diversity of ideologies that exist within the sustainable food movement. Sayre encourages "skeptics" of this statement to subscribe to their local organic farm's listserv for a revealing glimpse at the activist nature of farmers' participation (Sayre 2011:45). Despite a wide spectrum of political motivations expressed in the sustainable food movement, Americans perceive it be uniformly left-leaning. The disharmony between the ideologically diverse reality and assumption of a monolithic sustainable food movement is discussed in Sayre's essay. Right leaning consumers have also detected this trend. Conservative writer and editor at

the *National Review*, Rod Dreher, never considered the intrinsic "leftness" of sustainable food until his family began to sponsor a local CSA (Community Supported Agriculture):

> It never occurred to me that eating organic vegetables was a political act, but my colleague's comment got me to thinking about other ways my family's lifestyle is countercultural. Julie is a stay-at-home mom who is beginning to homeschool our young son. We worship at an 'ethnic' Catholic church because we can't take the Wonder Bread liturgy at the Roman parish down the street. We are as suspicious of big business as we are of big government. We rarely watch TV, disdain modern architecture and suburban sprawl, avoid shopping malls, and spend our money on good food we prepare at home. My wife even makes her own granola. And yet we are almost always the most conservative people in the room— granted, not much of a trick if you live in New York City, but we're still pretty far out there (Dreher 2002).

"Crunchy conservatives" (or "crunchy cons") is Dreher's coined term for conservative "earthy types." The "crunchy" here refers to a stereotype that all environmentalists love granola. Nevertheless, Dreher uses this moniker to demonstrate his support for sustainable agriculture as different from social progressiveness.

While not outwardly political in public settings, the two farmers I interviewed expressed their political orientations in private conversation. Greg is a libertarian who finds the political diversity of the movement amusing. He often encounters strangers who mistake him for a socially progressive environmentalist: "As a matter of fact, usually when I talk to people in other areas, away from [home], they think I'm a liberal. 'Oh you support this and you're against laws' and it's like 'Well, yeah, but I have my reasons.' You know, it's not those reasons you're thinking about." This disclosure has prompted me to investigate how, specifically, conservative farmers rationalize their involvement in the sustainable food movement through political motivations. Ultimately, this begs the broader question: why are both Christian right-leaning and progressive left-leaning farmers, with a common end goal of independence and sustainability, branded under a left-leaning movement? In other words, why is the sustainable food movement perceived as homogenous and who benefits from maintaining this perception? Once we have theorized why these perceptions exist, I hope to evaluate the implications of debunking the monolithic liberal sustainable food movement myth. Will revealing the ideological

diversity of the movement reflect positive or negative implications for the general adoption of organic practices? Can alternative narratives potentially convince conservative voters and conventional farmers to amend their negative perceptions of the movement? Does the sustainable food movement represent a microcosm of political bi-partisanship?

Since the philosophical beginnings of the modern organic food movement, commencing (on paper) with Sir Albert Howard's 1943 book *An Agricultural Testament*, sustainable agriculture has witnessed ideological contributions from both right-wing and left-wing theorists. Philip Conford's historical depiction of the sustainable food movement charted the initial contributions of Christian conservative ideology, even making the case that right-wing and "quasi-Fascist," anti-Semitic politics helped give rise to the first organic food movement (Conford 2001). Like Sayre notes, it is difficult to know how much of an impact those initial contributions have had on today's organic movement. What has always remained constant, however, is the healthy participation of conservative sustainable farmers. Sayre, Yarbrough, and others observe that organic farmers tend to be politically conservative while their customer base tends to be left leaning (Sayre 2011; Yarbrough 2014). This may surprise the average American audience. Consumers and producers within the sustainable food movement are often perceived a homogenous liberal entity. The Palouse sustainable farmers I spoke with, however, upheld conservative principles that were characteristically libertarian or "new populist agrarian." Consequently, I will examine the political factors that differentiate conservative farmers from progressive farmers. I ask, what are the ideological and political differences between these progressive and conservative sustainable farmers, excluding social factors, and what do they reveal about the sustainable food movement?

CHRISTIAN LIBERTARIAN ENVIRONMENTAL CAPITALISTS

The sustainable food movement accommodates a wide spectrum of religious and political positions that range from the far left to the far right. Conservative farmers cherry-pick from the spectrum of conservative principles, choosing personal freedom,

private property, and limited government intervention to justify their involvement in sustainable agriculture. The role of the government, and concerns for personal freedom as threated by overregulation, are major topics that help distinguish conservative farmers from progressive farmers. Joel Salatin, the "Christian libertarian environmentalist capitalist" farmer, expresses these concerns in his book *Holy Cows and Hog Heaven*. Consider this statement:

> On our farm, we receive no government payments and require no regulatory oversight. Our food will not make you resistant to antibiotics if you do end up having an infection. Our poultry will not make your daughter reach puberty at age 8 years old. Our farm will not necessitate government officials launching a costly investigation and litigation against us for stinking up or otherwise polluting the groundwater. We won't dump so many non-English speaking workers into the community that the school district loses 30 percent of its classroom space to English as a Second Language (ESL) (Salatin 2004).

We can identify many themes from this single argument, some addressed in previous chapters. For example, Salatin utilizes his paternal status as a strategy to appeal to the fatherly senses of "decent" men who endeavor to protect their families' from threats (industrial, governmental, global, or otherwise), but especially against those that jeopardize the innocence of children. He also raises a point here about the price of chemical agriculture on society's wellbeing and health, an argument I have heard before in my conversation with Greg (and discussed in Chapter 3).

Salatin introduces libertarian justifications here too. To Salatin, big industry and government intervention are identified as concerns for small farmers. Additionally, there are benefits for non-farmers in avoiding government intervention too. Salatin suggests that when private landowners responsibly steward their land, tax payers avoid "footing the bill," so to speak. Therefore, tax money remains with the "hardworking American" while the private landowner is not subject to bothersome government intervention. Aldo Leopold offers a similar argument for the role of private landowners in conservation but emphasizes that this responsibility derive from the individual's moral obligation to ethically preserve private land (Leopold and Schwartz 1949). Salatin offers an entirely different justification in this scenario. Instead, he proposes a strategy for diminishing the

role of the government, maintaining personal freedom, and enhancing the creative and entrepreneurial qualities of farmers— a statement surely intended to charm conservative voters. Consequently, we see libertarian philosophies tinting the arguments for sustainable agriculture.

Finally, Salatin appeals to the modern conservative voter base through the subtle notions of nationalism and xenophobia. Small-scale food production generally requires less outside, wage labor compared to the industrial model and will consequently "keep out" non-English speaking types. He appears to be reacting here to the "threat" of undocumented Central and South Americans immigrating to North American communities, and again, bringing children into the equation as the party at stake. Immigrants' presence (as it is inferred here) is a consequence of large-scale food production and the rising demand for cheap labor. In a single paragraph, Salatin appeals to the touchstones of conservative thought, identified by a fellow "crunchy con," John Bliese, as: freedom of the individual, private property, and faith in the free-market (Bliese 2001:45).

Libertarian justifications for sustainable agriculture have led small farmers to believe they are alienated from mainstream politics. I argue that these feelings of political alienation allow agrarians more political flexibility within the sustainable food movement, and thus more of a willingness to engage with environmentalist ideology. Just as Salatin reveals his concerns and motivations in the paragraph above, I will briefly examine here the responses of the farmers I interviewed. Two apprehensions emerged from their replies: 1) threats to individual liberty and 2) threats from government intervention. Both concerns shape a "peasant" identity that contributes to negative feelings of political alienation and positive feelings of empowerment.

INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY AND GOVERNMENT

Liberal political ideology is defined by Christopher Wolsko as *individualizing*— a moral concern for individual liberties based on "harm/care and fairness/justice." Conservative political ideology is considered *binding* according the same foundations framework, with conservatives prioritizing "ingroup loyalty, respect for authority, and purity/sanctity" (Wolsko 2017:285). An additional dimension proposed by Iyer et al (2012) for conservative ideology incorporates concerns about liberty and the preservation of economic and social freedom. Political libertarians stress this "liberty dimension" in their rhetoric. John Locke's generous definition of property has pushed libertarians to conflate property ownership ("estate") with life and liberty (Locke 1689). Consequently, as consistent with conservative ideology, alternatives to conventional agriculture must be grounded in the principle of property. This is especially true in the case of "new populist agrarians," like Salatin, who view private property as the untapped solution for anthropogenic environmental problems. Just as John Locke helped sow the belief that freedom derives from private ownership, he equally aided in the fear of government expansion by believing that "all government is absolute monarchy" (Locke 1689). In the libertarian model, no solution for the problems of conventional agriculture can rely on government regulation alone, only through private endeavors. Salatin reminds his readers that farmers offer financial, social, and environmental services that save taxpayers money and keep the "encroaching" government at bay:

> Every day thousands of farmers across the land go against their peers, the academic institutions, the farm organizations that receive the media spotlight, and a legion of bureaucrats to produce and process farm friendly food. This food keeps dollars turning in local communities. This food maintains green spaces without government programs and expensive taxpayer-purchased development rights of easements. This food maintains clean water and fresh air for all of us to enjoy. This food protects our watersheds, viewscapes, and natural resources (Salatin 2004:125).

Part of the dissatisfaction with government regulation stems from its perceived tendency to encroach on personal freedoms, whether regulatory actions target individuals (i.e. seat belts), private land holders, or industry. Greg envisions sustainable agriculture as a way

to break free from government dependence, thus earning individual freedom. Ultimately, he believes sustainable agriculture has the potential to be a self-regulating system: "If you can set up these types of systems and not have reliance upon bureaucracies, and let the free market work, then the finances work where everything takes care of its self and you got a free market economy that grows and it regulates itself."

Another aspect, as expressed by Robert, derives from a belief that the government is incapable of solving problems due to the bureaucratic nature of government. Robert, shared a story about his prior life in another occupation, revealing what he felt was a meaningless and time-wasting procedure carried out through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) following a workplace incident: "If you could possibly have been hurt, but weren't, report it anyhow. Oh boy, long meetings followed long meetings about this near miss abrasion…If one of my kids had made this much fuss, I would have given them something to fuss about!"

"PEASANTNESS" AND ALIENATION

Ultimately, and perhaps most importantly, the government is viewed as an impedance to small farmers, like Greg and Robert, who cannot afford to abide by the laws enacted to regulate larger producers. Sustainable farmers are sometimes subjected to the same regulations as larger producers without consideration of size or annual profit. Regulations can potentially "weed out" smaller and less established producers if they favor older and larger institutions. The historical tendency, in many cases, has been for larger institutions to capitalize on the regulatory process, safely absorbing systematic shocks that sink smaller businesses or family farms (Alder 2000:5-6). According to Greg, the standardization of food safety has been difficult for small farmers, creating conflict between small farmers and big government/agriculture:

> So [the university extensions are] heavily teaching things like Food Safety Modernization Act, whereas for a small farmer you got to pay $60 a week to have your water tested, to make sure that it passes. Uh, you can't butcher chickens outside because one of them might flop out and land in the dirt and might get contaminated— even though the next flow process is: get rid of all

> their feathers, scald them…wash them three times, and then their quality is inspected before you put them in. And Joel Salatin has done it for 52 years and hasn't had a single person get sick. But the people here working for the government go: 'well the government says you can't do that.' Even though Tyson and people like that are the ones, the big corporations, that make people sick.

Robert expresses his own concerns for how small farmers struggle to survive amidst a system that benefits corporations. Here, he references the political dominance of corporations like Monsanto and President Obama's "schizophrenic approach to agricultural policy" (as observed by Barry Estabrook (2010)):

> How can [farmers] go up against a 100-billion-dollar company like Monsanto? You can't. Not less the government seriously wants to deal with it. And obviously it is not a party issue. Because 8 years of Obama and the Democrats had no effect on Monsanto except to improve their profit line. So clearly his White House garden was for show, you know, and the Democrats talking about it was for show.

As libertarians have inferred from Lockean theory, private property and personal freedoms are one in the same. The obsession with individual liberty lies at the core of the libertarian ideology, inspiring its followers to reject party loyalties and challenge core principles, like respecting the established authority, if need be (Iyer et al. 2012:2). Consequently, a crucial narrative within the libertarian ideology is that agrarian farmers represent "the small guy." Both Greg and Robert sense the burden of their one-sided relationship with big government/big industry. They express concerns with losing in the current system and have constructed an identity around this reality. Tom Brass refers to this identity-building practice as the "'peasant-ness'-as-empowerment" complex (Brass 1997). He writes that the pessimism associated with a "peasant" reality has steered populist discourse and caused it to generate optimism that is not forward looking but rather nostalgic (Brass 1997:PE-28). This appears to be true of the Palouse farmers I partnered with in this project. Consequently, "new populist agrarians" feel "antagonism towards the large-scale, and more especially towards politics, class, capitalism, socialism and the state" while simultaneously supporting "the innate 'peasant-ness' of the agrarian myth, the small-scale" (Brass 1997:PE-28).

The peasant identity is a badge of marginality, or "otherness." Small farmers mobilize under notions of "otherness," endorsing neither pro-capitalist nor pro-socialist organization. They view themselves as freedom fighters first and foremost, willing to neglect two-party politics to realize the agrarian vision. Salatin embraces this "'peasant-ness'-as-empowerment" complex, stating that his intentions are not political but instead centered around freedom (Salatin 2004:123). The march towards freedom has alienated these farmers from the established two-party system. Small farmers believe that they represent the minority, political other. Salatin writes:

> The liberals can't bear to think that free enterprise just might have the answer and businesses— even small farm businesses—can be trusted. The conservatives can't bear to see the Wall Street power base eroded. But you and I walk to the beat of a different drummer. We don't have to be beholden to anybody's agenda except the agenda of truth and righteousness. We can choose wisely. Let's choose farm friendly food (Salatin 2004:122-23).

The rigid pursuit of freedom fighting or "agenda of truth and righteousness," as Salatin sees it, is an empowering identity. It also makes libertarians strange bedfellows with both progressive farmers (who support environmental regulations but have a common vision) and conventional farmers (who support industrial practices but share a similar reverence for the free market). Bruce Yandle characterizes this phenomenon like the theoretical, symbiotic relationship of bootleggers and Baptists. According to Yandle: "Both bootleggers and Baptists favor statutes that shut down liquor stores on Sunday. The Baptists because of their religious preferences. The bootleggers because it expands their market" (Brimelow and Spencer 1992). Consequently, we find that Christian conservative farmers are willing to march with environmentalists (and accept labels like "green" or "sustainable") but socially and politically align with conservatives. Some of the most influential voices in the sustainable food movement stem from populist rhetoric/libertarian ideologies. So why is the sustainable food movement consistently characterized as uniformly liberal? What opportunities do Christian conservative farmers afford the Green movement and its efforts to curb anthropogenic carbon emissions that threaten global climate change?

WHO BENEFITS?

To answer these questions, we must examine the institutional forces that may play a role in shaping perceptions and beliefs. Scholars have long noted that the 1980s Reagan era marked the integration of religious morals with the political Right to advance the agenda of capitalism and free-market solutions. This movement, known as the "Moral Majority," was "central to both Reagan's political coalition as well as the broader culture wars" (Vogel 2016:30). The Republican party targeted white evangelical Christian support to elect Ronald Reagan (a divorced Hollywood actor), as evidenced by his famous campaign trip to born-again Christians in Dallas, Texas. Ultimately, the purpose of this alliance would serve not only to elect Reagan but to further the interests of "Reaganomics," a *laissez-faire*, small-government economic approach that enacted policies favoring productivity/supply (Crouse 2013). Through the Reaganomics process, the Republican party absorbed Christian morals into the platform, responding to a culture war that represented "America's social and moral decline" (Vogel 2016:33). The social issues confronted included: homosexuality, abortion, classroom prayer, and gender roles. Consequently, the Republican party enmeshed Christian morality and "Reaganomics." Pro-capitalist and free-market principles, while they have roots in Christian theology (as argued by Eric Crouse), became virtually inextricable from Christian conservative politics during this time.

This poses an ideological dilemma for Christian conservative farmers of the Palouse who subscribe to Christian morals but support neither staunchly capitalist nor socialist rhetoric. "'Peasant-ness'-as-empowerment," however, provides the ultimate justification for participation in sustainable agriculture. With the crux of this issue now identified, I ask, who benefits from maintaining public perceptions of this movement as a monolithically liberal entity? The social theories of Karl Marx and Michel Foucault provide context. Marxism posits that those who control the means of production are positioned to exploit the working classes, and therefore maintain power in society. Capitalism is presented as a source of both human and environmental degradation: "Capitalist production, therefore, only develops the techniques and the degree of

combination of the social process of production by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker" (Marx 1967). According to Marxist theory, Capitalism and its proponent's (the bourgeoisie) advance industrialization measures at the expense of people and the environment. This is relevant to Christian conservative farmers in two ways: (1) by explaining class struggles between small rural farmers and large urban/global industrializers and (2) by highlighting a potential reason for capitalist politicians to want to keep sustainable food a politically divisive topic among conservative voters.

Michel Foucault's examination of "power and knowledge" provides a potential answer to the question, who benefits? Foucault's work underscores themes regarding the "discourses of power" (Erickson and Murphy 2013:393) In similar vein to Marxism, those who control knowledge in society, maintain political, social, and moral power. Labels like "madness," as Foucault theorizes in *Madness and Civilization* (1965), can be used to stigmatize and control "not just the mentally ill but the poor, the sick, the homeless and, indeed, anyone whose expressions of individuality were unwelcome" (Stokes 2003). The authorities who are currently in power, because of an exploitative capitalist economy, control the narratives and information that reach the ears of their voter base. Conservatives like Rod Dreher (the "crunchy con" journalist) were shocked to discover that rigid party lines and ideologies could be redrawn to include support for sustainable agriculture. The bourgeoisie, "Reaganomics" policies, and big agriculture stand to lose social, financial and political power should their conservative voter base expand ideological concerns to a nostalgic past and concern for liberty.

It is not too difficult to imagine a scenario where this is possible. For example, Right-wing climate change denial movements employ similar tactics to perpetuate misinformation in the realm of climate science. Aaron McCright et al. summarize:

> Through mobilizing millions of dollars in financial resources to support its specific marketing tactics and its general strategy of manufacturing controversy about the science of climate change, the Right-wing denial countermovement has become institutionalized within the Republican Party, has manipulated

> journalistic norms to gain more media attention for its claims than their veracity would support, and has shifted public discourse from "How should we deal with climate change?" in the mid-1990s to "Is climate change a real problem?" throughout the 2000s to the present (Mccright et al. 2016).

Consequently, I theorize that the interests of big gas and oil companies and big agriculture drive the misperceptions about who supports the sustainable food movement. Farmers who are not dependent upon gas, oil, and machinery to operate their farm represent one less generation of consumers. Farmers who sell their produce directly to consumers reject industrial pathways for distribution. Farmers who do not raise livestock in concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) offer an attractive alternative for health and ethics-conscious consumers. These farmers exercise a unique independence. In the United States, the agriculture sector is responsible for nine percent of all industrial sources of greenhouse gas emissions (Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2019). This suggests that a substantial sect of American farmers depend on fossil fuels, mechanized equipment, industrial distribution chains, and CAFOs. Therefore, the institutions that risk losing social, financial, and political capital when these established systems are threatened are big oil, big industry, and big agriculture. They are also the institutions that appear to benefit the most from misinformation about the ideologically diverse reality of the sustainable food movement. Politicizing sustainable food, and categorizing it as a liberal, "crunchy" endeavor, excludes conservative producers and consumers. Joel Salatin, Wendell Berry, Greg, and Robert challenge the established norms for what conservative voters "ought" to believe in, which in turn threatens the authority of these industries. Especially dangerous is the fact that conservative voters tend to trust other conservatives and conservative leaders over out-group members (Malka, Krosnick, and Langer 2009:645). When like-minded conservative farmers parade the benefits of sustainable agriculture, someone listens.

DISCUSSION

The sustainable food movement is an ideologically diverse force of producers working towards the common goals of economic profitability, social security, and

environmental protection. Sustainable agriculture, in its Christian conservative and secular progressive sense, threatens the likes of institutions promoting industrialization, globalization, and capitalism. The conservation efforts of Christian conservative farmers on the Palouse signifies an important departure from the pro-capitalist platform of their fellow American conservatives. While, as Greg is concerned, the free-market is still viewed as a potential self-regulating solution, small farmers like Robert recognize their own powerlessness in standing up to politically dominant corporations and industries. Ironically, it is not large government they fear but the pro-capitalist system that has prompted the U.S. government to favor larger, older corporations and provide them more representation in policy and lawmaking. Their decision to challenge conventional, government-supported agricultural practices makes them a population of interest, especially given that they farm in the Palouse.

The Palouse, an agricultural region producing some of the largest yields of wheat and legumes in the United States, stands to lose key ecological and hydrological features should business continue as usual. Agrarian farmers of the Palouse, while outnumbered, articulate a rhetoric of environmental concern that facilitates sustainable practices and supports free market principles. Conventional wheat farmers, while financially motivated in most cases, share a common interest in maintaining the Palouse's mythical agrarian past. Andrew Duffin's description of farmers as "agrarian liberals" of the 1890s through 1930s highlights a normalized and complex ideology among conventional Palouse farmers, one that balances accepting government intervention, embracing technological innovation, and maintaining a crucial social link to a nostalgic agrarian past. Duffin playfully jibes that early Palouse farmers "wanted the support of an expanding federal government when it served their needs *and* they clung to an outdated myth of independence" (Duffin 2007:9). Today's conventional Palouse farmers cling to the same ideology without serious consideration of the ideological contradictions. Cleaving to the myth of independence while accepting government subsidies is so normalized that conventional farmers fail to see the irony of their actions. However, another type of critic, one that does not hail from the liberal left, may provide valued assistance in helping conventional farmers transition to more environmentally considerate practices. According

to Joel Salatin, American farmers of all kinds have been drilled since birth to loathe "city people":

> You would be amazed at the simmering hatred among farming culture toward city folk. While their blood vessels pop out regaling those ignorant city folks for environmental regulations, the thought never occurs to them that their air is wafting over, making the children next door nauseous— or worse (Salatin 2004:81-82)

While this is certainly not true of all farmers, he raises an important point about the isolated and misunderstood nature of a life dedicated to agriculture. Conventional and Christian conservative farmers on the Palouse share many of the same politics, social agendas, and appreciation for a nostalgic past. Despite these shared values, conventional food producers are reluctant to shift to sustainable methods, fearing dramatic profit losses during the transition process and associating with the sustainable food movement's megaphone-wielding "hippie," "un-American," and "communist" champions (USDA 2000, Finan 2007). Greg and Robert navigate shared conservative concerns like ingroup loyalty, respect for authority, and purity/sanctity while simultaneously expressing environmental concerns. I believe that their stories and motivations, should they be made accessible to conventional farmers, would generate interest and potentially shift conservative perceptions about sustainable agriculture.

That is not to say this endeavor would positively alter the food system. Oftentimes, white, Christian conservative agrarians perpetuate dangerous narratives about race and gender. As discussed in Chapter 3, the agrarian and nostalgic lifestyle fails to recognize white privilege, the controversial past of U.S. land policy, and the patriarchal rhetoric used to exploit women and children. The ultimate outcome of this thought exercise is not to encourage white, heteronormative male narratives but to commence the process of community value-building around sustainable motivations: social equity, economic profitability, and environmental health. Creating an equitable, secure, and environmentally-sound food system can begin at the consumer level too. According to Guthman, CSAs and subscription farms offer an opening towards food sovereignty: "In the ideal they represent a substantial decommodification of food, with eaters investing in

the equity of the farm and sharing both its risks and fruits… Accordingly, these farms tend to have the most innovative cropping systems, with complicated rotations, integrated livestock, and tremendous diversity" (Guthman 2004:184). CSAs are the model utilized by many of these smaller Palouse farms. Paired with their ideological similarities, agrarian farmers may act as "trusted messengers" of sustainable agriculture models to conventional farms. Unfortunately, their ideologies will never sustain a food movement inclusive of all people. It will be up to consumers to shop responsibly if changes are to be realized in the American food system.

HEADED FOR GREENER PASTURES?

Ultimately, inaction or stalled action regarding improving ecological outcomes lies with how Americans perceive the sustainable food movement. Perceptions can dictate behavior. When viewed as a monolithic movement tied to the political left, a fraction of American farmers and conservative voters are excluded from participation. As I have suggested earlier, institutional forces may be behind this reality, serving to divide Americans over important issues. This is certainly the case in climate change denial movements, with Conservative Think Tanks (CTTs) like the Heartland Institute funneling money, resources, and divisive discourse into denialist efforts (Jacques, Dunlap, and Freeman 2008). Therefore, I understand it to be a positive sign that Christian conservative farmers are engaging with a supposedly liberal idea and movement.

Sustainable food has the potential to be the rallying point for community rejuvenation— and social changes happen when citizens are mobilized. Whether or not we are headed for greener pastures, I am still uncertain. What is evident is that there are many future questions to consider regarding the role Christian conservative sustainable farmers play in sustainable food. Ultimately, we need to ask ourselves, how do we work towards "genuinely sustainable agriculture"? How do we achieve food security on the Palouse? Collective consensus and action on issues regarding sustainable agriculture is one way to realize this goal. Both Greg and Robert agree. As our conversation neared its close, Greg offered his perspective:

Whether you're a liberal, a Christian, an atheist, whatever, well you got to eat. And very few people are going to say "I think I'll go throw down some arsenic today." Well there's a few that do that. But anyway, you know, getting themselves sick. They're all wanting to eat good food, going to be tasty, and supports their health. So, right there is that one little area that they all come together on.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD CERTIFIED EXEMPT LETTER

University of Idaho
Office of Research Assurances
Institutional Review Board
875 Perimeter Drive, MS 3010
Moscow ID 83844-3010
Phone: 208-885-6162
Fax: 208-885-5752
irb@uidaho.edu

To:	Ryanne Pilgeram
Cc:	Mark Warner, Alleah Schweitzer
From:	Jennifer Walker, IRB Coordinator
Approval Date:	January 11, 2018
Title:	Motivations and Ideologies of Farmers Participating in Alternative Food Movements in the Rural Northwest
Project:	18-004
Certified:	Certified as exempt under category 2,4 at 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2,4).

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Idaho, I am pleased to inform you that the protocol for the research project Motivations and Ideologies of Farmers Participating in Alternative Food Movements in the Rural Northwest has been certified as exempt under the category and reference number listed above.

This certification is valid only for the study protocol as it was submitted. Studies certified as Exempt are not subject to continuing review and this certification does not expire. However, if changes are made to the study protocol, you must submit the changes through VERAS for review before implementing the changes. Amendments may include but are not limited to, changes in study population, study personnel, study instruments, consent documents, recruitment materials, sites of research, etc. If you have any additional questions, please contact me through the VERAS messaging system by clicking the 'Reply' button.

As Principal Investigator, you are responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable FERPA regulations, University of Idaho policies, state and federal regulations. Every effort should be made to ensure that the project is conducted in a manner consistent with the three fundamental principles identified in the Belmont Report: respect for persons; beneficence; and justice. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring that all study personnel have completed the online human subjects training requirement.

You are required to timely notify the IRB if any unanticipated or adverse events occur during the study, if you experience and increased risk to the participants, or if you have participants withdraw or register complaints about the study.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

General Farm Info:

1. I'd like to hear from you about who you are, your backgrounds, and how that all lead up to the establishment of this farm?

2. How long have you been farming in Idaho?

3. Give me a general picture of your farm.
    - What do you raise on your farm? What do you sell?

4. In your own words, how would you describe or label your farm to others?
    - Is the label "sustainable farm" an accurate description?
    - Why and in what ways? (small-scale, ecological management, GMO-free, pesticide-free, animal rights, good for community and workers, etc.?)

5. Do you connect or communicate with other folks you consider to be doing more alternative-style agriculture? In what ways?

6. Do you connect or communicate with folks you consider to be doing more conventional-style agriculture? In what ways?
    - Do you ever suggest that they try more sustainable methods if you do collaborate?

Markets:

1. Do you currently (or have you ever had) a stand at the Moscow farmer's market? If so, can you tell more about that experience and how you chose to sell there? (Convenient? Agree with values? Profitable?)
    - Do you feel like you need to conform to certain social standards when you sell in a public setting like that?

2. Where (else) do your products get sold?

3. Do you have competition selling in this market? How do you compare to your competitors?

4. How do your customers find you?

5. Do you have a marketing strategy? What do you do to appeal to potential customers?

6. Who makes up the majority of your customer base?
    - Why do you think that is?

Personal:

1. Can you tell more about your own values and motivations for producing food this way?

2. Do you have any farming mentors that influenced your values and methods?
    - Which topics or teachings on agriculture resonate most with you?

3. Do you have other motivations or incentives for being a conservationist farmer?
    - Are there economic incentives for operating this way?
    - Are there religious reasons that encourage you? (what are they? What denomination?)
    - Environmental reasons? (stewardship?)
    - Political reasons? (more right leaning or left leaning?)
    - Health reasons?
    - Experiences in military?
    - Experiences traveling?

4. What keeps you motivated to maintain this lifestyle? Why?

5. How do you think your motivations compare to other farmers in your network?

6. How do you think your values or ideologies compare to your customer base?

7. Have you noticed that Moscow is a divided community? And if so, why do you think that is?

8. What are some solutions to bridging those divides?

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Alleah Schweitzer, a Master's student from the University of Idaho's Department of Sociology & Anthropology. In this study, I hope to understand more about the motivations of farmers in the Pacific Northwest. I hope that this study will allow me to continue my academic research focused on issues in rural sociology. You were selected as a participant in this study because you are a farmer in Northern Idaho or because you can offer expertise on this community.

If you decide to participate, I will interview you once. The interview will last about one hour. I will audio record the interview so I can make sure I know exactly what you said, participation in the project requires agreeing to be audio recorded. I do not anticipate this interview putting you any risk or in any discomfort. My hope is that the time and space of this interview is not inconvenient to your schedule, if it is we can change the time or place or you can decide you would rather not participate. I do not make any guarantees that you will personally benefit from participating in this research. If you have questions about the study or interview, you can ask the investigator during the interview, when the interview is complete, or at a time you feel is appropriate.

It is up to you whether your identity remains confidential in my write-ups of the data. You may chose A) to be credited with your responses and named in my write-ups or B) to keep your identity confidential, meaning you will be given a pseudonym in all my write-ups and I will change any overly identifying elements of your interview, for example, if you name a company you worked for and your title there, I would not include those details in my write-up. If you chose option B, I will destroy all materials that use your real name once my research is completed.

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. Your decision will not affect your relationship with the University of Idaho or the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you do have any questions, please feel free to contact:

Alleah Schweitzer
Research Assistant
University of Idaho
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Moscow, ID 83844-1110
aschweitzer@uidaho.edu

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Office of Research Assurances, University of Idaho. This project has been certified as exempt by the University of Idaho's Office of Research Assurances Institutional Review Board (IRB). The project's number is 18-004. The contact information for the IRB is phone: 208-885-6340 email: irb@uidaho.edu.

You have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you have received a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

Print Name_____

Signature_____ Date _____

☐ My response should be kept confidential; I will be assigned a pseudonym in all write-ups.

☐ I would prefer to be credited with my responses and named in the write-ups

☐ I agree to be audio recorded. ☐ I do not agree to be audio recorded

Interviewer Name _____