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Tensions in (Agri)Culture: The Negotiation of Environmental Dialectics at an Urban Farmers Market'

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Jason Boys

Candidate

Communication & Journalism

Department

This thesis is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Thesis Committee:

Dr. Tema Milstein, Chairperson

Dr. Judith Hendry

Dr. Michael Agar

Dr. Karen Foss

Tensions in (Agri)Culture: The Negotiation of Environmental Dialectics at an Urban
Farmers' Market

by

Jason Boys

B.A., Communication,
University of Cincinnati

THESIS

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B.A., Communication, University of Cincinnati, 2010

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ABSTRACT

The following study shows how dialectal tensions in environmental discourse are negotiated and serve to create and sustain the culture of an urban farmers' market. Using theories of cultural communication as both theoretical grounding and methodology, the author was able to identify and interpret the functions of tensions previously presented by scholars in the field of communication. The principal set of tensions used for data analysis is the three dialectics presented by Milstein (2009) – *mastery/harmony*, *othering/connection*, *exploitation/idealism*. Upon analysis of these dialectics, a reoccurring theme emerged – discursive tension between *economic advancement* and *community advancement*. Cultural discourse analysis points to ways in which the use of these dialectics and this reoccurring theme under tension not only create the culture at this market, but also work to sustain it by generating increased levels of attendance and participation.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

On any given summer Saturday morning, in a small park on the west side of downtown Albuquerque, the Downtown Growers' Market (DTGM) will be up and running. Vendors pile high a seemingly endless variety of produce and locally made art is on display. Kids run around and toss football while their parents stroll leisurely, browse the farmers' and artists' booths, and smile at friendly faces passing by. Old friends get caught up and new friends are made. Dogs run, play, and look for scraps of food that might have fallen near the recycling stand. Vendors offer each other a hand whenever a need presents itself while jokes and gossip lend to the laughter that is all around. It doesn't take long to sense the shared importance of quality food, togetherness, and environmental awareness at this place.

While the Downtown Growers' Market might, at first glance, seem almost utopian, a deeper look will reveal that it is not all fun and games. There is money changing hands over the piles of produce. Signs on vendors' booths announce "Food Stamps Accepted Here." The market manager makes her rounds to assure that everyone is in his or her assigned spot, there are no unauthorized vendors in the park, and no one is selling prohibited items. At a booth run by market management, wooden tokens can be purchased with a credit card (for a small fee) and used as currency at the booths run by vendors who are yet to have credit card swipers attached to their smartphones. A visitor who arrives to the market early enough might hear vendors clash over having their booths set up too close to one another's assigned spots in the park while others battle for the best parking spots to unload their goods. While this market may be different from corporate businesses selling produce and other foods, make no mistake – this is still a place of business.

Farmers' markets attract many people with similar interests in mind. They care about fresh, high-quality, locally grown or produced products, and they want them to be grown naturally without the aid of pesticides, growth hormones, or other potentially harmful chemicals. They value the natural environment and don't mind going out of their way (or in some cases spending a little more) to protect it. They care about community and want to help each other out – even if they happen to be competitors. But the bottom line is that there *is* a bottom line for both the vendors and the customers. This idealistic place is situated firmly in a nation where capitalism reigns supreme. Money must be made not only for the survival of the market, but ultimately for that of the people who frequent it as well. This tension between community building and maintaining a capitalist enterprise makes Albuquerque's Downtown Growers' Market, and likely other farmers' markets across the country and even the globe, not only a unique shopping experience, but also a place where unique communicative interactions occur on a regular basis. The vendors at this market must work hard to build and sustain the community in which they operate while keeping their produce moving and the money coming in. Observations at the market point to ways in which it becomes ingrained in the vendors' communicative DNA that they must perform this balancing act between community and business when interacting with customers and fellow vendors - so much so that many do it flawlessly and without thought.

The following study utilizes observations of these unique communication patterns in their natural settings in order to point out not only how they are a product of the farmers' market culture, but how they work to sustain the culture as well. This study is founded on the assumptions presented in theories of cultural codes of communication (Phillipsen, 1997; Phillipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005). These assumptions include the following: 1.) where

there is culture, there are communicative codes of conduct, 2.) these codes are inextricably woven into speaking, and 3.) codes are simultaneously a product and creator of a particular culture. This study incorporates an environmental communication element by not only situating the market within a particular place, but also by paying special attention to how those at the market view the natural world around them and how these views are enacted communicatively. This leads us to two more assumptions that guide the study (Carbaugh, 1996): 4.) culture does not determine nature, nor vice versa, but the two are related. They help to shape and are consequential to one another, and 5.) this relationship between culture and nature is enacted and thus observable through communicative interactions.

My observations show that vendors at the Growers' Market, particularly the farmers, have developed a culture that is dependent on communicative codes that allow them to simultaneously build community within the market while still operating a successful business. Milstein (2009) offers three dialectics that present themselves in environmental discourse (*Mastery/Harmony, Othering/Connection, and Exploitation/Idealism*) and are the cornerstone of this study. This study utilizes these dialectics to answer the following questions in an attempt to better understand this unique communication environment: 1.) How are Milstein's dialectics (2009) negotiated among vendors and patrons during interactions at the Growers' Market? And 2.) How do these negotiations serve to create and sustain or to harm the community of the market?

The following sections will begin with an in-depth review of extant literature that is relevant to this research, including works regarding the history, current state, relevant terms and ideals, and benefits of farmers' markets, as well as previous literature that will work to establish the theoretical framework of the study. Theoretical concepts to be discussed are

concerned with cultural communicative practices and patterns of communication when dealing with the topic of nature. A methodology chapter then lays the groundwork for practices that were utilized for the collection and analysis of data. Methodological perspectives, community and participant selection, methods of observation, interview protocols, and the physical layout of the research site are discussed in detail in this section. The next two chapters are the analysis of all collected data and directly answer the research questions presented above – chapter 4 illustrates how dialectics are negotiated at the market and chapter 5 examines how these dialectics sustain or harm the community of the market. And finally, the sixth and final chapter focuses on potential future research and practical implications of my findings.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Below is a review of existing literature pertaining to this thesis including an overview of literature on farmers' markets and those works that shape the theoretical framework for the present study. To provide an understanding of this unique research site, I provide a history of farmers' markets, as well as an overview of current trends, appropriate terminology, and social aspects of the farmers' market movement. Following the discussion on farmers' markets, I explore theories of cultural communication (Hymes, 1972; Philipsen, 1992), communication concerned with nature (Carbaugh, 1996), and tensions in discourse about nature (Milstein, 2009) in order to illustrate the theoretical framework of the study.

Farmers' Markets

History. Farmers' markets are by no means a new concept. In fact, their roots can be traced back as far as ancient Mesopotamia (Robinson & Hartenfeld, 2007). While the faces at the markets have clearly changed, some things have not. Markets have always been a place where local farmers congregate to sell their produce while simultaneously providing a backdrop for social interaction (Sommer, 1980). Farmers' markets in the United States have certainly had their ups and downs over the years but are currently experiencing the largest and most rapid growth spurt in their history (USDA, 2012). In the US, markets began to appear as early as the late 1700s and were a common fixture in most cities and towns until the 1850s (Robinson and Hartenfeld, 2007). This is the time when economic and cultural trends began working against farmers' markets as urban development increased and farmers were pushed further and further from the city centers. Furthermore, rail cars made the delivery of produce from far away places more commonplace thus diminishing the need for

local farmers. By the early 1900s, suburban sprawl had pushed the farmers so far out of the cities that they simply could not afford to transport their products the far distances, and the urban farmers' market all but disappeared. The industrialization of agriculture also hurt the small-scale farmer, and those farmers' markets that remained in operation became sites of wholesale distribution for large produce companies instead of places where local farmers sold their own products.

But the farmers' market was not doomed forever. During World War II, the United States government began promoting the development of "victory gardens" – small, privately owned and operated tracts of cultivated land – stating that they were a help toward the war effort because any food grown for American families by the families themselves freed up other food for the troops. While the majority of victory gardens across the country disappeared after the war, several in San Francisco remained. In 1943, the director of the San Francisco Victory Garden Counsel, John Brucato, devised a plan to combine the surviving gardens into one farmers' market in an attempt to satisfy unmet demands for fresh produce within the city. This market is credited with beginning a slow trend that ultimately led to the astounding number of farmers' markets in operation today. In 1970, there were approximately 350 farmers' markets operating in the United States (Robinson & Hartenfeld, p. 64). According to the United States Department of Agriculture (2012), that number had risen to 7,864 by the year 2012. This dramatic increase in the number of farmers' markets in the United States could be attributed to an increase in environmental consciousness and desires for local food (Halweil, 2002), as well as a number of perceived social benefits of this particular shopping experience (Baber & Frongillo, 2003).

The Definition of a Farmers' Market. Farmers' markets of today, while likely sharing some similar attributes, have certainly evolved since the days of ancient Mesopotamia. Even though most markets have many commonalities, it is impossible to find two farmers' markets that are exactly the same even if they are located in the same city.

Andreatte and Wickliffe (2002) point out the uniqueness of farmers' markets:

Different markets have their own character, depending on whether they are state, city or town supported, on the type of farmers who use them and the products they sell, and on their location, their years of operation, and the clientele they serve. (p. 168)

Even within the city of Albuquerque there is a variety of farmers' markets. One is in a park with grass and large trees, while another operates on a blacktop parking lot. One is in a gravel lot and another is held on the campus of a major university. While one market has been in operation for several years and is well established, others are just beginning. Some offer live music, face painting, and other forms of entertainment, while others are more strictly a place to buy produce.

If farmers' markets can be so different, what do they have in common? What differentiates a farmers' market from any other place consumers buy produce? Kirwan (2006) identifies two tenets represented at all farmers' markets. First, all produce sold at these markets must be local in its origin of production (the term "local" will be further examined below). Second, vendors at the market should have been directly involved in the production of the goods sold. The New Mexico Farmers' Market Association (2013) defines a farmers' market as "a public market place where fresh foods from a defined local area are sold by the people who have grown, gathered, raised or caught them." For the purposes of

this study, I define farmers' markets as an organized location where locally grown produce is sold to customers directly from those who produced it.

Local Food. Some of the recent spike in farmers' markets' popularity is due to an increased interest in local food. As the environmental consequences of transporting produce has become more evident, people are looking for places other than the supermarket to stock their pantries. Halweil (2002) states that food in the United States typically travels between 2,500 and 4,000 miles from "farm to plate" not only using up fuel, generating greenhouse gasses, and disintegrating roadways, but also diminishing the likelihood of face-to-face interactions with the people responsible for growing the food being purchased. There is an increase in environmental consciousness throughout the United States, and purchasing locally grown food is one way that people have decided to begin making a difference (Alonso & O'Neill, 2010; Conner et al., 2010).

People are not only buying local foods for the wellbeing of the environment – they are buying them for personal health benefits as well (Robinson & Hartenfeld, 2007). Prematurely-harvested produce and soil engineered to require little rotation drastically reduces the amount of nutrients in the food as well as reduces the amount of flavor that typically accompanies produce consumed at times of peak ripeness (Sommer, 1980). Studies have shown that high levels of chemicals used to increase growth rates and shelf life in corporate agriculture have led to an increased likelihood of health problems for farmers, farmworkers, and consumers (Andreatta & Wickliffe, 2002). Health concerns including reduced risk of food borne disease and increased levels nutrients are among the top reasons patrons cite for frequenting farmers' markets (Conner et al., 2010).

The concept of local food can mean different things to different people or markets. Conner et al. (2010) found that almost half of respondents interviewed at a Michigan farmers' market defined "locally grown foods" as those grown in Michigan, while others considered food grown in the Great Lakes region to be local. The New Mexico Farmers' Market Association does not see a need for a ubiquitous distance to be administered for all markets, as long as the distance is agreed upon as a guideline for vendors within each individual market (2013). Albuquerque's Downtown Growers' Market requires that 100% of all produce sold must be grown in the state of New Mexico in order to be considered local and thus be permitted at the market (Downtown Growers' Market Rules and Regulations, 2013).

Socializing. While every farmers' market is unique based on local geography and culture, socializing seems to be a trend among them all (Sommer, 1980). Although research shows the primary reason that shoppers frequent farmers' markets is for the high-quality fresh produce, the social atmosphere is often mentioned as well (Baber & Frongillo, 2003; Andreatte & Wickliffe, 2002). These markets are a place where people come not only to shop, but also to talk, catch up, gossip, and share ideas and recipes. Robinson & Hartenfeld (2007) write that these behaviors become so much a part of the farmers' market experience that they become almost ritualistic. Like Sommer, Robinson & Hartenfeld go on to explain that this socializing experience is unique at each farmers' market because the cultural make-up, political climate, and economic status of the surrounding area are certain to differ from market to market. They state, "A market creates intersecting trading zones where histories, social groups, and cultures reinforce, share, and challenge" (p. 3). Baber & Frongillo (2003) call farmers' markets a "unique social institution" that is characterized by the uniting and

building of social ties between consumers and farmers (p. 87). Kirwan (2006) found both farmers and visitors to perceive farmers' markets as more pleasurable, interesting, and intimate than other shopping experiences and felt senses of "conviviality social intercourse," "mutual endeavor," and "community" between the producers and consumers as a result of their interactions (p. 309). Andreatte & Wickliffe (2002) identified advanced feelings of loyalty and trust between producers and consumers because of one-on-one interactions between the two parties.

Farmers' markets have also become a platform for political advocacy and speaking out for social justice. An often-shared political belief in the importance of local food systems has led to an increase in political voices concerning other matters involving ecological sustainability (Alonso & O'Neill, 2010). These markets are also often a place where concern about the unequal distribution of access to food is voiced and discussed (Smith & Weinstein, 2012).

Benefits for Farmers. Farmers' markets are not only a place for socializing, but a place of business as well. These markets have several benefits for smaller farmers who can't compete with the massive agriculture companies serving big box retailers. Farmers who sell at farmers' markets are able to acquire nearly 100% of their consumers' food dollar (compared to approximately one-fifth accrued by those who sell to supermarkets), and research shows positive impacts on jobs and incomes as a result of increased locally grown food consumption within communities (Conner et al., 2009). Limited production by small farms makes finding a foothold in the industrial agricultural marketing system difficult, making farmers' markets especially important to these farmers (Andreatte & Wickliffe, 2002).

Direct Marketing. Farmers' markets are unique from other shopping experiences in that they offer face-to-face interactions between consumers and producers. Extant literature on these markets often refers to this process as direct marketing, or a place where farmers sell fresh-picked produce and value-added products directly to consumers (Byczynski, 2000). This re-socializing of food ensures the mediation of trust and authenticity through personal interaction. Most consumers at farmers' markets assume some level of locality, quality, and genuineness of the produce simply because it is being sold at that particular venue (Andreatta & Wickliffe, 2002). Furthermore, these ongoing social interactions allow for the negotiation of new and unique criteria for quality on a case-to-case basis within individual markets (Kirwan, 2006). These criteria include not only the physical properties of the products, but also production conditions, traceability, and perceived trust and authenticity of interactions between the buyer and the seller. Conner et al. (2009) found not only financial benefits for farmers' who sold at markets, but also "non-economic ties created between farmers and eaters" as a result of direct marketing (p. 743). Unlike the anonymous relationships encompassing corporate agribusiness and supermarket chains, farmers' markets are a place where substantial relationships can develop between farmers and consumers (Smith & Weinstein, 2012). Wolf et al. (2005) explain that consumers describe the traceability of food to the grower as a positive aspect of farmers' markets (p. 192).

Theory

The Ethnography of Communication and Naturalizing Communication and Culture. A major theoretical and methodological element of this study is the ethnography of communication as it works as both a way to unveil communicative patterns at the farmers' market and a way to analyze them. The ethnography of communication, originally called the

ethnography of speaking, was first presented by linguistic anthropologist Dell Hymes in 1962. Hymes viewed communication and culture as being intrinsically intertwined. In other words, culture creates systems of communication while communication simultaneously reflects the values of said culture. In Hymes's *Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Life* (1972), he called for researchers in his field to move beyond linguistics and to enter into the world of sociolinguistics. He distinguishes between the two by stating the following:

Whereas linguists deal with dictionary meanings (denotation, or meaning abstracted from context), sociolinguistics deal with what Sacks calls situated meaning (meaning mediated and sometimes transformed by rules of speaking) which reflects speakers' attitudes to each other, and to their topics. (p. 37)

Hymes felt that a theory must be developed that explored relationships between "linguistic means and social meaning" (p. 39). Cultures can be better understood through the identification of systems of speaking and comparison of these systems to those of other cultures, and all of this can be accomplished through qualitative research methods. Central to this methodology is taxonomic classification of languages and cultures. While languages, according to Hymes, can be divided into four classifications (genetic, areal, typological, and functional), the natural units for sociolinguistic taxonomy are the speech communities themselves. Hymes defined a speech community as "a group of people who share at least one code or system of rules for enacting and interpreting their own and others' communicative conduct" (p.38). The principles of this theory ring true at the farmers' market as vendors and patrons display codes of communicative conduct while negotiating the tensions present in this unique context.

Gerri Philipsen's speech codes theory, first introduced in 1992, expanded on the ethnography of communication. Philipsen's theory reiterates Hymes's central idea that communication and culture cannot be separated. Philipsen began his research for this theory in the late 1960s in a neighborhood in the south side of Chicago (1992). As he observed the communicative acts of the residents of this multi-ethnic, primarily blue-collar neighborhood (referred to by Philipsen as "Teamsterville"), Philipsen began to notice habitual ways of speaking among Teamstervillers that were different from any style of speaking he had previously witnessed. For example, almost every communicative episode gave reference to ethnicity, locality, power structure (within the neighborhood), or what it meant to be a man or a woman. Philipsen theorized that these patterns of speaking were results of cultural codes of conduct that determine the appropriateness of speech within the community. These codes of conduct, or speech codes, then are "a system of socially-constructed symbols and meanings, premises, and rules, pertaining to communicative conduct" (Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005).

Philipsen's work in Teamsterville and years of subsequent theory development has led to six propositions that are the core of speech codes theory (Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005). When taken in the aggregate, the propositions state that speech codes are present wherever there is culture, multiple speech codes are deployed at once, a speech code points to something larger than just a set of rules of conduct, the significance of a speech code is determined by its interpreter, speech codes are embedded in speech, and speech codes are influential. Speech codes, like within every culture, are a major factor in the development and sustainability of the farmers' market community and determine the way vendors and patrons navigate the tensions present within discourses at the market.

Donal Carbaugh's work within the field of environmental communication expands the theoretical scope of this study. Being a cultural communication scholar himself, he adds focus to the assumption that communication and culture are inseparable by situating them both within environmental contexts. In his work *Naturalizing Communication and Culture* (1996), Carbaugh explains that culture informs how we look at the natural environment, just as the environment affects culture. It is a reciprocal process similar to that of communication and culture as explained in the ethnography of communication, and it is fitting when discussing how members of the farmers' market community's perceptions of their environment are simultaneously molded by their culture while being a creator of said culture.

Communication in Place. Fundamental to this study are the assumptions that all communication is environmental whether the topic is concerned with the environment or not, and that all communication affects and is affected by the environment in which it takes place. Carbaugh (1996) states that:

All systems of communication practices, as carriers of cultural meaning, and whether about "nature" or not, occur in natural spaces, naturally create ways of living in those places (bodies included), and thus are affected by and carry real physical consequences for those places. (p. 39)

This is an important concept for this study as it examines not only how a particular group of people communicates, but how this particular group uses communication to create and make sense of a specific space. Furthering this idea of human interaction as an element of the environment, I turn to Milstein, Anguiano, Sandoval, Chen & Dickinson (2011) and their description of a sense of *relations-in-place* in which nature is not seen as something "out there," but as a place where human interaction takes place and where human relations are

grounded. Any amount of time spent at the Downtown Growers' Market will provide exposure to interactions taking place and relationships being developed thus making the market not only a place to buy and sell produce but also a natural setting for communication. By looking at communication as a naturally occurring event, in no matter what setting it takes occurs, we begin to bridge the gap between human/nature relations – a dualism that is regularly supported in the field of environmental communication. Conversely, the market is regularly referred to as a place where people “go” or “visit” to get away thus separating the space from their everyday life.

While the market may indeed be a natural setting, this place is certainly not viewed or utilized the same way by all who participate. Broad (2013) discusses different values pertaining to land. He explains that some people associated with a particular place will be more interested in the land's exchange value (what the land is worth monetarily) while others are likely to be interested in the land's value use (highest potential usage for the land). It is important to note that those concerned with land value use are more likely to carry emotional ties with the land than those who are not. Similar to concepts of *relations-in-place* (Milstein et al., 2011), those concerned with the land's value use see nature less as something “out there” with a quantifiable monetary value and more as a place where their lives are actively taking place. Observations at the Downtown Growers' Market and subsequent interviews point to vast differences in the objectives of participating farmers.

Tensions. Central to this study is the analysis of tensions present at the Growers' Market and how they are negotiated communicatively among members of this culture of vendors and shoppers. Milstein (2009) states that “examinations of discourses often reveal multiple ideologies in tension – as dominant ideologies assert and reproduce themselves, so,

too, do alternative ideologies resist and challenge dominant ways of thinking and doing” (p. 26). The consideration of such tensions provides a better understanding of the cultural dynamics among those being observed (Martin & Nakayama, 1999) – in this case the members of the Downtown Growers’ Market community.

Perhaps the most broad of these tensions are the ideologies described by Corbett (2006) as she explains that environmental ideologies reside on a spectrum, the endpoints of which are the anthropocentric (human-centered, seeing humans as the superior being in nature) and ecocentric (viewing all of nature as interdependent and nonhierarchical) stances on nature. Seated along this spectrum (starting on the anthropocentric side and moving toward ecocentric) are the ideologies of unrestrained instrumentalism (resources exist solely for human use), conservationism (emphasizing the greatest use of natural resources for the greatest number of people), preservationism (supports conservation of resources for current and future use and enjoyment, as well as for their potential future value), ethics and value-driven ideologies (believing that humans have an ethical duty to protect non-human entities rights to exist), and transformative (seeking to change anthropocentric viewpoint to ecocentric). The use of green open space to sell produce, capped-off trashcans that force people to use recycling/compost stations located throughout the park, and regulations on the locality of products are just a few examples of how these ideologies are present at Albuquerque’s Downtown Growers’ Market.

To continue our discussion of tensions pertaining to perceptions of nature and to narrow the focus of this literature review, we turn to Marafiotte and Plec’s (2006) explanation of the nature/culture dualism. Marafiotte & Plec state that when examining disputes concerning nature or “nonhuman worlds” (p. 49), there are likely to be two opposing sides

present – those who view nature as existing purely for human use and those who see humans as being a destructive glitch in nature’s otherwise perfect system. These disputes arise at the Growers’ Market, and are best examined by focusing on the negotiation of tensions and dualisms. Marafiote & Plec affirm this idea by stating the following: “Examining colloquial discourse through the lens of dualisms provides an understanding of the pervasiveness of perceptions of the natural world as exclusive of humans and human constructs, and vice versa” (p. 54). They explain that these dualisms can be found through the observations and analysis of individual utterances, which is fitting to this study as I observed the discourses of urban farmers and their customers in their natural setting. Some environmental scholars have begun to bridge this gap between humans and nature. For example, Milstein & Kroløkke (2012) describe orca whales viewed by tourists on whale watching expeditions in the Pacific Northwest as “boundary creatures” which have the ability to connect humans to nature in unique ways thus developing what Milstein regularly refers to as “humanature” relations. Orcas, being mammals like humans but living “out there” in the non-human world that is the Pacific Ocean, are able to straddle the human/nature divide.

A final set of tensions and a driving theoretical concept for this study are the three dialectics presented by Milstein (2009) as an explanation of how humans’ relationships with nature are culturally constructed and then expressed discursively. The three dialectics Milstein claims “hold sway in environmental discourse” (p. 27) are *mastery/harmony* (mastery over or harmony with nature), *othering/connection* (seeing nature as other or as connected to self), and *exploitation/idealism* (to profit from or to preserve nature). These dialectics present themselves regularly at the Growers’ Market as vendors and customers

navigate this complex and unique setting that is concerned both with community development and business advancement.

The *mastery/harmony* dialectic is concerned with whether nature is seen as being controlled by or in an equal relationship with humans. As Milstein explains, a common western viewpoint is that *mastery* of nature is a sign of societal success. The very history of United States begins with the annihilation of cultural practices alluding to harmony with nature followed by the implementation of mastery-oriented practices popular among European settlers. On the other hand, *harmony* represents the idea that industrial progress is a force that threatens nature and that humans should be adaptive and strive for a reciprocal relationship with nature instead of attempting to dominate and control it. The *othering/connection* dialectic explains the ways humans may discursively frame nature as a separate and subordinate entity from humans (*othering*) or may offer a representation of nature in which humans are also animals and nature and thus interconnected with the environment around them (*connection*). And finally, the *exploitation/idealism* dialectic illuminates environmental discourse concerning the use of nature. Discourse positioned near the *exploitation* pole would represent nature as something to be commodified for the profit of humans, while idealism discourse would represent “desires to preserve and respect nature, as well as to reverse destructive human impact on nature” (p. 28).

Data collected at the Downtown Grower’s Market revealed that these dialectics are present in virtually every interaction. Vendors effortlessly shift from asking a customer personal questions about how their kids are doing or if they landed a new job to telling them about a sale that they are having that week. Petitions for green policy are being signed (idealism) in front of gas-guzzling trucks that have been converted in to mobile restaurants

(exploitation). Customers are connected by webs of shared information that they are not even aware of (connection) while being clearly labeled as customer or vendor by which side of the produce table they are standing (othering). By using Milstein's dialectics as a lens for this study, it became clear how tensions at the market work to create, sustain, and evolve this culture.

By examining the history, current trends, and common ideals of farmers' markets, it has become clear that this is a unique setting not only for shopping, but for communicative interactions as well. Unlike a large, corporate grocery store, this is a setting where many small business owners come together to create a large and complex system of goods, services, ideas, platforms, and goals. Contrasting the get in, get out mentality of shoppers at a grocery store, customers at this market are more likely to slow down, take in the sights and sounds, talk to friends and strangers, and maybe even lie in the grass and relax for a bit. Some visitors even arrive with no intention of purchasing anything at all. Although there tends to be many shared beliefs and ideals at the market, the use of space, the selling of particular kinds of produce, and the importance of perceptions of nature in this particular context lead to constant tensions and to negotiations of dialectics in almost every interaction. Now that the uniqueness of this setting and of these types of interactions has been established, we move forward to discuss the methodology utilized in order to identify the negotiations as they occur communicatively.

Chapter 3

Methodology

At first glance, Albuquerque's Downtown Growers' Market might simply appear to be a place to buy and sell produce. If one takes the time to look deeper, it will quickly become apparent that there is much more going on here than at a large grocery store or anywhere else one might shop. There are common ideologies and values concerning quality, the environment, cooperation, and community among the vendors and patrons that serve to create a distinctive environment and that are observable through communicative patterns and codes of conduct. Being that these common ideologies of the market are still situated within a greater capitalist society, tensions are ever-present in this space thus creating an extremely unique setting for human interaction.

Being a long-time supporter of farmers' markets, I visited the DTGM regularly and was often surprised by the overwhelming feeling of community within a business setting. I often noticed how the balance between the two seemingly opposing ideals of business and community was negotiated communicatively. Having encountered this unique setting for human interaction, I felt it was my role as a qualitative researcher to observe the interactions of this particular group of people (Fitch, 1998). To do so, I engaged in participant observation, meaning I was directly involved with the community, talking and working with them so that I might learn from their point of view (Agar, 1996). These observations, along with qualitative interviews, were used to develop a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the community of vendors and patrons at the Growers' Market in order to answer the following research questions: 1.) How are Milstein's dialectics (2009) negotiated among vendors and patrons during interactions at the Growers' Market? And 2.)

How do these negotiations serve to create and sustain or to harm the community of the market?

Methodological Framework and Perspectives

To gain an understanding of the communicative behaviors that are enacted in order to navigate tensions present at the Growers' Market, this study is methodologically and theoretically grounded in theories of cultural communication including the ethnography of communication (Philipsen, 1992) and cultural discourse analysis (Carbaugh, 2007) as well as those concerned with spatial and environmental communication (Carbaugh, 2006; Milstein et al, 2011). The methodological framework of this study includes the assumption that culture and language are socially constructed, and that they are inextricable. Speech codes theory (Philipsen, 1997), a primary theory grounded in the ethnography of communication, explains that, where there is culture, there are multiple speech codes being deployed at any given time. These speech codes are woven into speech, and actually work to create the culture itself. As methods, the ethnography of communication and cultural discourse analysis are discourse analytical practices in which participant observation and interviews are primary tools.

Fieldwork methods for this study, including interviews, observation, coding, and data analysis, are informed by Lindlof and Taylor (2011). Methods of taking, reflecting on, analyzing, and transcribing fieldnotes will be steeped heavily in the work of Emerson, Fritz, and Shaw (1995). I expand on my use of these methods below.

Carbaugh's cultural discourse analysis (2007), while indebted to the ethnography of communication, goes beyond the development of thick description and adds a critical element to the analysis of data. Cultural discourse analysis offers the following five basic

modes of inquiry: 1.) the theoretical mode, which considers the perspective of and the conceptual problem being addressed by a particular study, 2.) the descriptive mode, which explains what communicative practices actually took place, 3.) the interpretive mode, which analyzes the importance of that practice to the participants, 4.) the comparative mode examines what is similar or dissimilar about these practices in regard to those of other speech communities, and finally 5.) the critical mode, which questions whether this practice serves to advantage some more than others as well as the level of relative worth of the practice among participants. This final mode is especially important to this study as it goes beyond the primarily descriptive methods of the ethnography of communication and situates the data within a particular political and socioeconomic context for the purpose of analysis.

It was of particular importance during critical analysis that I considered my own social status as it certainly affected my perception of the research setting. Being a white, middle-class, heterosexual male offered a distinct insight to the behaviors observed at the market. This is especially true since my personal demographic information is similar to several traits often recorded and found to be dominant at farmers' markets and because studies show different levels of comfort at farmers' markets depending on whether visitors are members of majority or minority groups (Conner et al., 2010). While the Downtown Growers' Market is fairly diverse, my observations still point to a primarily White demographic in a city that has an otherwise heavy minority influence.

Selection of Community

The Downtown Growers' Market was an appropriate setting for cultural communication research not only because of the commonality of unique social interactions,

but also because of access. The market is open to the public and admission is free. The frequent and open exchange of information at this market makes the collection of data seem to be an almost naturally occurring event. Furthermore the repeat, almost ritualistic visits by regulars at the market create a unique opportunity for the observation and analysis of patterned communication.

Selection and Exclusion of Participants

Observations. A diverse array of people frequents the Downtown Growers' Market. People from a multitude of cultural backgrounds come to the market for a variety of reasons. Some come early, shopping alone with the intent to get the best produce before it is picked through by other customers, while others arrive much later with their families with no other objective than to lie in the grass and listen to the band playing that week. Vendors, who are often at the market before sunrise, hope to have a banner week in sales regardless of whether the market is their primary source of income or simply something they participate in as a hobby. In order to create a thick description of this context, any person entering the market was a potential subject to my observation. The bulk of the observations were taken from the vendor stall of Valley Farm (pseudonyms are used for all farms and individual participants mentioned throughout this study) – a community supported agriculture (CSA) farm located in Albuquerque's South Valley who agreed to participate in the study by letting me observe from their particular vantage point. According to the protocols of participant observation, I helped the vendors when the need arose (stacking or weighing produce, cleaning up, helping customers, etc.). Otherwise, I situated myself in the back of the booth where I observed and took fieldnotes.

Interviews. Upon the completion of ethnographic observations and fieldwork, I conducted three interviews for the purpose of gaining clarity on data collected through observations. Two of these interviews were with the owners of Valley Farm – Debi and Olivia. The third interview was with Dwight – the owner of Hillside Farm. Interviews ranged from eighteen to twenty-one minutes with an average length of nineteen minutes. Each interview was recorded on a digital recording device and notes were also taken to assist with recall of the setting and nonverbal behaviors. Once transcribed, recordings were deleted in an attempt to protect the privacy of the participants. No minors or anyone else considered being a member of a vulnerable population were eligible for interview. The protection and privacy of participants was assured in the following ways (as stated in my Institutional Review Board approval): 1.) participants were repeatedly reminded that interviews were completely voluntary and could be terminated at any time, 2.) participants were given pseudonyms for purposes of the interview, and 3.) all data from interviews were stored on a password-protected computer or in a locked drawer.

Methods

Hours of observation. The Downtown Growers' Market operates every Saturday between the months of May and November. Hours of operation during the summer months are 7:00 to 11:00 a.m. In September, the hours of operation are changed to 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. to accommodate for the seasonal change in daylight hours. I typically arrived with the owners of Valley Farm (approximately thirty minutes before the market opens) and completed my observations when they finished for the day. I attended meetings concerning the market to which I was invited by the owners of Valley Farm. Meetings included

grower/buyer mixers and social events. Market hours and special events provided more than 100 hours of observation over one market season.

Physical layout of the park and market. The Downtown Growers' Market operates in the very heart of the city of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Robinson Park is situated between 8th Street and 10th Street to the east and west (respectively) and Copper Avenue and Central Avenue (old Route 66) to the north and south on the western edge of downtown. The park is only a few blocks away from the center of Albuquerque's primary business district. Robinson Park is triangle-shaped, and occupies the northeast half of a two-block area. The park is mostly a grassy field with an s-shaped, paved walkway that curves through the center. There are large trees throughout the park as well as several park benches and trashcans. Sidewalks also run around the perimeter of the park.

On market day, approximately 75 vendors set up booths in Robinson Park in which they sell their produce or art (the number of booths changes from week to week as not all vendors come every Saturday). Booths are set up on both sides of the interior walkway, along the sidewalk on the north side of the park, and in an open area on the east side of the park. Food trucks offering a variety of prepared food and drinks generally park along the south side of the park on Central Avenue. On market days, a local recycling organization caps off trashcans with large, orange construction cones and displays signs that point patrons to tables in which trash can be sorted and recycled. A different local musical group is present almost every Saturday and usually sets up on the east side of the park on the interior grass.

The booth ran by Valley Farm was typical for the market. It consisted of two or three tables (depending on the amount of produce that week) positioned under a white EZ-Up tent. Customers made their way to the front of the tables usually from the direction of the paved

walkway next to which it was set up. Debi, Olivia, and whoever else might be working the booth for Valley Farm typically stood behind the tables where plastic bags for packing up produce for customers and a canister containing cash was stored. It was not uncommon for Debi or Olivia to move around to the front of the booth to greet friends or to help customers pick out produce.

Methods of observation. As mentioned above, I typically arrived at the market 30 minutes before the official start time. Upon arrival, I made my way around the exterior and through the interior paved walkway of the park noting the physical setting (weather, number of vendors and shoppers, etc.) as well as the apparent “mood” or “key” of the market that morning (quiet, calm, jovial, etc.). I then made my way to the Valley Farm booth where I often helped set up the booth by raising the tent, stacking fruit boxes, hanging signs, preparing the hand washing station, and weighing produce. Once the booth was completely set up, I began observing interactions among those at the market and taking fieldnotes. Notes were taken on the number of visitors in particular locations in the park, whether people were walking around or stationary, whether they appeared to be shopping, socializing, or both, and communicative activity, both verbal and nonverbal, in which they were involved. I engaged willing persons in conversation, and made attempts to join conversations already in progress. The written product of these observations, including jottings, fieldnotes, and post-observation reflections, were organized using qualitative coding methods (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011).

Interview protocols. As mentioned above, three interviews were performed for this study, each of which had the same protocols for recruitment and consent. I identified three individuals whom I believed offered the greatest insight into the negotiation of

dialectics at the market - the two co-owners of Valley Farm and the owner of Hillside Farm. I gave each a brief overview of the proposed study and verified their willingness to participate. Interviews took place at locations chosen by the participants – Debi and Olivia both requested that they be interviewed in their home and Dwight asked that I come to his office. These locations allotted maximum comfort and convenience for the interviewees. Interviews were informal and semi-structured with open-ended questions (Agar, 1996; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). This qualitative style of interview was chosen in an attempt to maximize participant comfort and to allow the participants and myself to guide the interview in the best way that we saw fit. Interview outlines were developed specifically for each participant to answer questions that presented themselves during the coding and analysis of observation data and that worked to answer the research questions presented for this study.

Categories of data collected. Once data were collected and transcribed, behaviors and speech acts were coded and organized in an attempt to identify trends and signifiers of the negotiation of the dialectics presented by Milstein. Coded behaviors included what people do once in the park (shop, walk around, lie in the grass, etc.), while coded speech acts included verbal and nonverbal discourse among vendors and patrons of the market as well as signage and printed materials displayed and distributed throughout the park. Included in these discourses were those directed to and coming from me, the researcher. Once transcribed, data were color coded and categorized according to which of the three dialectics (Milstein, 2009) were represented by particular communicative acts. Data were coded according to which dialectical pole I believed was represented by a given behavior or speech act. Dialectical poles were color coded (highlighted) by the following scheme:

mastery, dark green; *harmony*, light green; *othering*, light blue; *connection*, yellow; *exploitation*, red; *idealism*, purple. Following the implementation of this original coding scheme, a new theme emerged and thus further coding and analysis were necessary.

Therefore, communicative acts representing economic advancement were made **bold** while those representing community advancement were underlined.

Summary

The previous section is a description of and rationale for the methods utilized in the study of Albuquerque's Downtown Growers' Market. Discussion has included the methodological framework and perspectives of this research including the ethnography of communication and Carbaugh's cultural discourse analysis. I offered a description and rationale pertaining to the research setting, research community and participants for both observations and interviews and discussed interview and observation protocols. Finally, I outlined the categorization of data and coding schemes.

Chapter 4

Dialectics at the Growers' Market

My analysis of the data collected at the DTGM offered an abundance of examples pertaining to the negotiation of Milstein's dialects (2009). It was uncommon to hear a single interaction that wasn't rife with tension. This chapter offers an extensive look at the use of these dialectics in order to answer my first research question: How are Milstein's dialectics (2009) negotiated among vendors and patrons during interactions at the Growers' Market? Following a brief introduction, I have divided the chapter into sections that coincide with each of the three dialectics presented by Milstein: *mastery/harmony*, *othering/connection*, *exploitation/idealism*.

Like Philipsen's work in Teamsterville, qualitative observations and interviews of members of the DTGM community uncovered many communicative codes of conduct. At the forefront of these codes is friendliness – so much so that that negativity tends to stand out. People smile as they pass by, mutual friends introduce strangers, and some vendors seem to hug more of their customers than they do not. A customer with a bad attitude is subject to eye rolls and snickers between vendors when he or she turns their back. Whether this friendliness is always authentic or sometimes a way to engage customers and make a sale is yet to be determined and will be discussed later in this paper, but, nevertheless, a positive attitude seems to be a major part of the communicative makeup of this place.

Although the DTGM may be a friendly place, it is still a place of business. Therefore it is also extremely common for conversations, between pleasantries, to turn to the topic of money. Vendors and customers dance between business and small talk effortlessly and without notice. Talk of prices and weight are included in almost every conversation, no

matter how brief, and are rarely contested. Unlike other marketplaces comprised of many small, privately- owned businesses (flea markets, urban street vendors, etc.), price negotiations are rarely attempted. Although it is not uncommon for a vendor to throw a little extra produce in to the bag after it has been weighed for a friendly or returning customer, it is uncommon for the customer to instigate a conversation about price reduction.

Another common topic at the DTGM is the source and growing conditions of the food itself. Even though locality and natural growing conditions might be assumed at this type of a market, they are still discussed regularly. A vendor is more likely to exclaim “fresh, organic, local tomatoes” than simply “tomatoes!” If a customer asks about a vendor’s farm, organic growing methods are mentioned second only to location.

According to the propositions of speech codes theory, multiple communicative codes at the DTGM point to a distinct culture as well as a shared ideology that is bigger than the codes themselves. There is a shared system of beliefs at the DTGM that were unveiled through the use of qualitative research methods. Further analysis of these speech patterns through the lens of Milstein’s dialectics provides an in-depth understanding of the complexity and uniqueness of this culture. As is true with any communication concerned with or embedded in a particular environmental setting, interactions at the DTGM are flooded with tension not only in regards to the natural environment but with the relationships among the people invested in that environment, as well.

Mastery/Harmony

The concept of any park offers examples of the *mastery/harmony* dialectic, and Robinson Park is no different. Like many city parks, this park is designed to represent a small piece of nature in an otherwise developed area. Robinson Park has flowers, grass, and

large trees. There are also park benches, concrete sidewalks, water fountains, and signs announcing the park's "hours of operation." While Robinson Park is a place where one might come to get a feel for nature, its very existence is a result of the manipulation of the earth and governmental policy.

Signs of domination over the earth show up regularly at the DTGM. I overheard one repeat customer claiming, "they need to add more parking around here" because she had to walk several blocks that morning from her car to the market. Land is parceled off at the market just like it is on the farms where the food is grown. Each vendor is awarded a specific amount of space for their booth under the condition that they sell products deemed appropriate by market management. One morning, upon arrival to the market, a woman confronted a man selling fresh tortillas because he was set up in her spot. After a friendly greeting, she simply said, "this is my space. Sorry to make you move." Without question, the tortilla salesman picked up his table and shuffled it down a few feet to let her in to her space. The possessiveness of her declaration "*my* space" points to a perceived control of the land on which she intends on selling her goods. Bryan, a regular participant in this study, was asked to stop selling his soap in another vendor's booth because he had not met the requirements set forth by market management. After a visit one morning by the market manager, Bryan said to the owners of Valley Farm, "She shot me down...I'm not supposed to be here." He was told that he could finish out the day in the booth, but he was not to return the following week unless he went through the proper channels.

Just like the land at the park is divided up and controlled, so is that which is used to grow the produce sold there. When asked to discuss their businesses, both Debi and Dwight mention the acreage of their respective farms. Debi stated in her interview: "Well,

behind the house, I'd say that's a little less than a half-acre. And then, the other property is about an acre but we only have a half-acre cultivated...so total, I'd say a little less than an acre." This statement demonstrates mastery in a couple of ways. First, acreage being a human-made method of measurement shows domination over the land by dividing it in ways that we see fit. While this may not be comparable to building a dam or creating nuclear power, it is still an example of allocating land according to our own needs. And second, while discussing the "other property" she only includes land that has been cultivated in the final acreage count thus giving precedence to the land that has been dominated by contemporary farming techniques.

Similar to Debi, Dwight often mentions the acreage of his farm. During his interview, he told me that he currently had about forty acres being farmed, but could probably move up to sixty fairly easily. He followed this by saying that they, meaning his company, have:

...finally have kind of gotten to the point on the farm where we're able to afford some nice machines and stuff. We were able to automate some of the systems. Plastic mulch layers, sub irrigation stuff is all put down by tractor. Transplantors, it's all done by tractor stuff. Something like that you're not going to have on a two-acre farm.

Consistent with ideology of Milstein's *mastery*, higher levels of domination over land appear to be equated with the success of Dwight's business. Dwight claims that he "finally" can afford the machines necessary to further manipulate the land in to generating more produce. The use of the word "finally" makes it apparent that this has always been a goal for this particular farm. On the other end of the *mastery/harmony* spectrum, Olivia

seemed to find success in not using heavy machinery. She often mentioned the lack of tractors used on the farm and, in her interview, appeared proud of the fact that Valley Farm regularly utilizes their access to flood irrigation.

While discussions of the use of land tended to lean toward the mastery pole of the dialectic more than harmony, delivery and consumption of the actual produce tended touch more on both sides. Most signs on vendor booths make reference to the “fresh” produce, and the constantly mentioned “growing season” clearly affects the produce sold at the market at any given time. When the owners of Valley Farm told customers that the tomatoes were “done for the season,” the customers, although sometimes seemingly sad, typically accepted this as an inevitable reality and moved on. This acceptance demonstrates a harmony with nature that is observable both through the vendor’s representations and through the patrons’ shopping habits. On the other hand, the importance of convenience to customers and some vendors’ willingness to do whatever it takes to provide this convenience certainly requires some level of mastery. Dwight’s Hillside Farm not only removes the necessity for their customers to come to the market to find fresh produce – his customers don't even need to leave their house. Hillside Farm’s biggest moneymaker is its home delivery option. With home delivery, customer simply go online, pick the produce they would like to have for the week, and the next morning a large truck with Hillside Farm’s logo displayed on the side shows up at their door and drops the food off. Dwight shared that “home delivery is so easy” and repeatedly expressed the importance of “customization, flexibility, and convenience” in his business model.

One man arrived at the Valley Farm booth with a backpack filled with grapes and asked to trade for some tomatoes and eggplants. Olivia asked, “What did you have in

mind?” “Pound for pound?” he responded. Using human-made measurements to trade fresh produce offered a snapshot of the entire *mastery/harmony* spectrum. When men in chef’s clothing came by the Valley Farm booth one day and bought several tomatoes, Debi explained to me that they “go around the market, buy produce, design salads, and then make them” using whatever produce is available at the market on that particular day. These salads symbolize harmony among vendors as well as with nature because of the use of in-season produce.

While many observed interactions aren’t concerned directly with nature, their very occurrence in this space demonstrates a harmonious relationship between both humans and nature. As explained above by Carbaugh, communication itself is a natural event, therefore I find it important to bridge the human/nature dualism that regularly presents itself in environmental communication research and use these dialectics as an analytical tool for human to human communication as well as human discourse concerning the natural environment. One of the initial observation sites for this study was a “How to Build a Better Booth” workshop offered by market management two months prior to the market season. Farmers who were nervous about designing a good sign for their booth were instructed to “ask an artist to trade for produce” and “use resources there to enhance your stand because it will ultimately enhance the entire market.” When a neighboring vendor ran out of plastic bags at the market, she asked Debi if she could trade her some hibiscus tea for some of hers. In asking, she seemed to already know that the answer would be “yes.” When Valley Farm ran out of bags, Dory pointed to a vendor in another booth and asked me, “See that guy over there with the ponytail? Will you guy ask him for some bags?” When I asked him and told him whom I was with, he handed them over without a

word. When Valley Farm sold out of produce one day and began to tear down the booth, Olivia, seemingly without thought, poured the water from her hand washing station over the flowers being sold by a neighbor to help protect them from the late-morning sun. The neighbor saw her do it and barely responded. It seemed as if it was simply expected and natural behavior. It appears that many vendors voluntarily opt out of traditional capitalist exchange systems and depend on communal sharing in order to succeed.

Vendors also expressed signs of harmony among each other even on topics directly related to business practices. When asked about their relationships with other farmers at the DTGM, Olivia said, “we don’t want to lowball them. We want to make sure it’s a fair market,” and Debi expanded on this by saying “I think it’s about looking out for each other, you know? Making sure nothing happens with our money, supporting each other.” Even Dwight, who typically didn’t appear to buy in to the benefits of harmony at the market stated, “It would be great to have this kind of barter thing” between vendors even though he clearly felt that this was an unrealistic goal.

The DTGM offers several examples of mastery and harmony pertaining to both the use of the land and the relationships among those who participate. While the park is not a wild space where nature is truly able to take control, it does provide an area where trees and grass hold precedence over concrete and steel. The land within the park may be parceled off to accommodate to vendors, but the cooperation between them makes these human-made boundaries appear a little more fluid. While land is dominated and greenhouses are built to make the produce, the market’s hours of operation in which the produce is sold are adjusted midseason to accommodate changing daylight hours. While

examples of this dialectic are seemingly endless, this study will now move forward to examine yet another point of tension that is regularly negotiated at the market.

Othering/Connection

The *othering/connection* dialectic presented itself more than any other in the data with communication pointing toward connection being most common of any of the six poles. While the DTGM offers a unique setting to connect with both nature and other people, it is often referred to as somewhere that people “go” or “visit” thus pointing to a view of the market as something “other” than everyday life – a place to escape and experience something different. Data referring to the market as a place to get away for the day was coded as *othering* because it clearly represents a view of the market as something different than the norm – a view that ultimately alters the way people communicate once in this space (Carbaugh, 2006). Debi told me in her interview “people go...lie in the grass and listen to the band...and just be together. No one goes to the mall to lay down and stretch out, to play with his or her kids...or a flea market, you know?” In this single statement, she states that the market is a place where people “go” (*othering*) to “lie in the grass” and “be together” (*connection* to both the earth and each other) which is unlike malls or flea markets (*othering* by distinguishing the market from different styles of business settings). She went on to explain that the DTGM was like a “refuge” where people could go to forget about their busy lives much like “going to the mountains and taking a hike.” This single image of the market represents both *othering* and *connection* in that the market is something “out there” (Milstein et al., 2011) that people must travel to with the intent of connecting with nature and other humans.

The DTGM offers a unique place for people to connect with nature through produce. Similar to how Milstein & Kroløkke (2012) found orcas to be “boundary creatures” that work to close the gap between humans and nature, fresh and local produce bought directly from the source connects people to the earth and to their own community. Several customers expressed feeling of attraction to the Valley Farm booth because of the produce. They exclaimed that this was their “favorite stand” and that they “always come here first” upon arrival to the market. One customer stopped in her tracks when she noticed the large shishito peppers that were for sale mid-season and said “I love these!” Another customer used the word “love” when she noticed eggplants that had mutated from purple to yellow in the fall season and expressed her “need” to try one. One customer said that a large green squash “called out” to her as she walked by. When Debi asked what she was going to do with it, she replied, “I don't know. I just couldn't pass it up.”

Once the food had enticed people to enter the booth, this dialectic presented itself not only between customers and the produce, but between customers and vendors as well. Debi and Olivia constantly asked customers about their personal lives and the produce they had purchased from them in prior weeks. They both had an uncanny ability to remember names, details about their customers' lives, and their food preferences. Olivia asked one customer “how were the shishitos?” and told another “you picked out the best tomatoes we had last week.” Upon Valley Farm's return to the market after a two-week hiatus, a woman told Debi, “My husband was worried! We haven't seen you!” A woman looking at Bryan's soap (before he was asked to leave by market management) said to me, “I wonder whose soaps these are.” I pointed to Bryan and said they were his. The two quickly started a conversation about his operation and she ended up buying several bars. After inquiring

on the price of Valley Farm's cherry tomatoes, a customer replied, "you all are pricey!" Direct marketing at the DTGM offers a chance for customers to meet and connect with the producers of the products they are considering buying, even if the end result is a face-to-face complaint. While there was an obvious connection between the farmers and the customers, most interactions took place from across the produce table – farmer in the back, customer in the front – clearly "othering" the two parties. Several times throughout their interviews, Debi, Olivia, and Dwight used the term "they" to describe their customers in statements like "we know what they want," and "they come for the food." The use of the word "they" was a signifier of othering in every relationship observed and/or discussed at the market.

The primary way in which people connect with each other as well as with the produce at the market is through information exchange. This exchanging of information creates an invisible web that seems to hold the entire market in place. At the "How to Build a Better Booth" workshop, the market manager encouraged new vendors to "talk to other farmers" because there are "plenty there who are willing to help." This statement shows a distinct separation between farmers while simultaneously connecting them through the information that they might share. Olivia explains, "It's really about sharing information...I think it's cool to have somebody walk to your stand and say 'what would you do with that?'" She said she will then:

...take them individually and go step by step. Its not such a daunting task, then, I don't know, that builds a relationship with that customer and then someone else can overhear and you know, I think information to be shared is a good thing whether it be a customer or your neighbors or someone else.

As information is passed between customers and vendors, this invisible web begins to connect everyone without them even being aware of its existence. When one woman came to the booth to buy a particularly hot variety of pepper, she, without being asked, told Debi, “I love these...I like to slice them open, put mustard seeds in them, and sauté them in oil.” She went on to say “Or, I heat up some oil to about 350, put the oil in a jar, then shove the peppers down in it. Let it sit somewhere cool and dark for a couple weeks, and you have a nice, spicy oil to cook with or sprinkle of things.” After this customer left, I overheard Debi and Olivia repeat these cooking suggestions to three more customers who were looking at the same peppers. Debi explains the uniqueness of information exchange and direct marketing by stating, “Most people don’t go to the grocery store and talk to their [food] source about recipes. ‘What the hell do I do with this rutabaga?’” This statement yet again “others” different shopping experiences by describing the connection that takes place at the DTGM.

Vendors and customers are also connected through the sharing of food. There is a clear convivial attitude among most who participate at the DTGM that is easily observed through sharing. Bryan, who hopes to open a bakery someday, brought food to share almost every week. One week it was his lemon-raisin scones, then the blueberry coffee cake, then his, as he calls them, “life-changing” cinnamon rolls. He passed these out to everyone at the Valley Farm booth, and then to anyone else who was around before he ran out. When Leslie, a neighboring vendor who is best known for her concoction of rice, beans, cilantro, and Fritos known as the “farmer’s bowl,” heard that Debi was about to leave the market and drive to Colorado, she quickly offered to make her a snack for her trip. Other vendors regularly stopped by the booth to say hi and eat a couple of cherry tomatoes.

Sharing food is clearly a norm at the market that works to connect both vendors and customers. Dwight even talked of future plans to coordinate brunches and dinners for the members of his farm in order to generate a stronger sense of community.

The relationships between the vendors at the market cover the entire *othering/connection* spectrum. While vendors are constantly comparing themselves to each other, they also seem to look out for one another and share a certain common bond. On Valley Farm's first day of the season at the market, Debi (holding up a bunch of radishes) said, "they are selling radishes for \$2 for half of these." She was explaining to Olivia that another farm was selling their radishes for nearly twice the price that Valley Farm was. Bryan explained that his soap was "half the price" of other vendors at the market and even blamed this for the reason he had been asked not to return. On the other hand, vendors often refer to a strong camaraderie among each other, and Debi and Olivia even refer to some of their neighboring vendors as "family." Olivia described her relationship with fellow vendors in the following way:

I think it's just a camaraderie. Looking out for your neighbor. Um, they need to go to the ladies room or the men's room or they need to run and do this. I think everyone is willing to help. I think we're all conscious about I don't know, um...I think if an individual is...I guess its just...I think we all like each other, there's camaraderie because we work hard. Every vendor works hard to create relationships with customers. I think we all appreciate each other in that way. We know how each and every one of them works hard day in and day out even after the market is over. People work hard 7 days a week, you know, in the heat of the sun, when it's dark, when it's cold..."

Although there is a distinction between vendors in this statement, there is also a clear bond through a common work ethic, shared experiences with nature, and a dedication to farming.

While communication concerned with vendor-to-vendor and vendor-to-customer relationships offers examples of both othering and connection, all conversations observed concerning market management rested mainly near the othering pole. One customer who was annoyed with the parking situation asked Olivia, “Did they open that lot back up over there?” When Olivia told her that they had not, she quickly responded “Assholes!”

Dwight, who often expressed frustration with the types of customers being attracted to the market, said “they did a good job of getting people out there” in reference to market management’s ability to draw big crowds on Saturday mornings. When asked more about how the market was being managed, he said, “They should ditch the bands and put the emphasis back on the food.”

During observations and interviews, distinctions were often made between the DTGM and other farmers’ markets in the area. When asked why the DTGM was special, Olivia quickly refers to a nearby market that is held on the grounds of a school: “You can’t pull this off there, which is sad. They have so much campus there and they select a spot where it’s asphalt and dirt and against a busy street and so it’s just not conducive to that.” Bryan, who tried selling his soap at that same market, often compared those experiences to his at the DTGM by referring to the “convection oven of a parking lot” in which the market was held. Dwight compared his sales earnings to a different market by saying, “those guys are making no money.”

On the other hand, Olivia painted a picture of interconnectedness between markets when discussing shishito peppers at the DTGM. She explained that they first showed up at

a farmers' market in Santa Fe, then "slowly started trickling down to all the different markets." She said that she heard they had been successful, so Valley Farm started growing and selling them. Now, at least four farms at the DTGM sell these same peppers creating a direct link through the produce and shared information to the market in Santa Fe.

Through direct marketing of fresh produce and information exchange, the DTGM is a place where people can connect with each other and with nature. Members of the DTGM community simultaneously connect themselves to and separate themselves from each other and their surroundings. Although the market is often referred to as somewhere one can "go" or "visit," it appears to be a place that is founded upon and sustained through an interconnectedness of people and nature.

Exploitation/Idealism

There is an extremely fine line between exploitation and idealism at the DTGM and communication moves back and forth quickly between the two. The use of the term "market" implies a place where people gather "for the purpose of trade by private purchase and sale" (Merriam-Webster, 2013) – the exchange of goods for money. In this case, the goods for sale are the products of nature and this commodification regularly points to exploitation (Milstein, 2009). While this particular market is primarily concerned with produce and other types of food, it is different from other food markets in that there are rules in place to guarantee the locality of the products and there are expectations that they will be natural or "organic." So what we end up with is a place where money is expected to change hands but under the stipulation that the products have been produced with some level of environmental and social consciousness. The result of this is environmentally friendly growing practices not only becoming the norm, but in fact becoming a primary

selling point for the produce itself. For example, one day as I walked through the market counting booths, the owner of Abuelo's Salsa shouted out to me, "Come try my salsa... I make it right here in Albuquerque so its local." In this statement, the woman offered me a sample in an attempt to make a sale and further enticed my by stating that her food was local. Because of her awareness of the shared ideals concerning the importance of environmentally friendly production practices in this place, she used them to promote and sell her product. This is but one of many examples of the *exploitation/idealism* dialectic in play at the DTGM.

As previously mentioned, my first observations for this thesis study were administered at the "How to Build a Better Booth" workshop ran by DTGM management. This was a free workshop for anyone interested in opening a new booth at the market or existing vendors who wished to increase sales. While terms like "local," "organic," and "green practices" were used regularly, it was clear that the optimization of opportunities to sell was the principal item on the agenda. Handouts included topics such as "21 Tips for Building a Better Stand at the Growers' Market," and "How to Create a Business Plan." A mock booth was set up in the front of the room to demonstrate how to organize produce to ensure optimal selling potential. Those administering the workshop (the market manager and a successful booth operator at the market named Heidi) stressed the importance of piling produce "high and deep" to create "walls of produce" that will catch the eyes of customers passing by. They told potential booth operators, "You will sell 85% of what you have as long as you have it piled high and deep." Heidi stressed the importance of paying attention to what is trending at the time and to take advantage. As an example, she said that she had never heard of kale chips until a customer asked about them. Upon hearing

about the chips, she quickly started growing more kale to meet the demand. Attendees at the workshop were encouraged to remember the acronym “SMOWS” – sell more of what sells – and to implement it in their business plans. While terms like “local,” and “organic” were used often during the workshop, their meaning or importance were never discussed.

The interviews performed for this study demonstrated vast differences in ideologies concerning exploitation and idealism among market vendors. Simply put, the statements made by Debi and Olivia, the owners of Valley Farm, often aligned more closely with the idealism pole while Dwight, the owner of Hillside Farm, primarily (and unapologetically) discussed matters regarding exploitation. The market, according to Dwight, only represents approximately 1% of Hillside Farm’s sales. This is different from Valley Farm who, although I don't have exact numbers, claimed to depend heavily on market sales for the financial success of their farm. Earnings for Hillside Farm come mostly from the home delivery of produce – a service that Dwight refers to as the “real growth machine” for his business. At the time of the interview, Hillside Farm delivered to approximately 1,500 homes. This is a stark contrast to the fifteen families who trade labor and money for a share of the Valley Farm harvest. Unequal levels of dependency on market sales as well as different opinions on indicators of a successful farm have resulted in very different attitudes concerning the DTGM among these owners.

Olivia attributes much of the success of the DTGM (as well as the overall rise in popularity of the farmers’ market movement) to people’s realization that “they need to take advantage and help the world.” When asked to clarify if she was claiming that environmental concerns were in part responsible for the rise in popularity, she simply responded “exactly!” Debi explained that young people who are involved with the farming

movement are different than their counterparts from the sixties. Where the sixties were “more like back to the earth, escape,” what we are seeing now “is more like ‘I’m engaged, lets do it here.’” Both Debi and Olivia feel that the market provides a space to build a community of people with common ideologies about then environment. Debi stated that the market works to “blend a lot of peoples’ idealistic ideas about farming and food.”

While Debi and Olivia seemed to view the connecting of people with shared ideologies as a primary function of the DTGM, Dwight was mainly concerned with the bottom line. He voiced frustration with the people “who were just coming to have a breakfast burrito, a cup of coffee” and said that he would “like to have the people walking around with the grocery sacks, and not the people who are walking around for the social event.” He expanded by saying, “the social thing is great, but...it’s not beneficial for the farmers.” He repeatedly referred to the market as a “circus” with “juggling clowns” and blamed market management for attracting the “wrong kind of people.” He admitted that the marketed was “packed,” but claimed “people weren’t buying anything.” He went on to say, “If you want to have bands in the park, go have bands in the park. But basically we’re hurting the growers because it takes away from sales.” He explained that much of his frustration stems from a 40% decrease in sales since management had begun to focus on social aspects of the market. He wonders, “Why can’t we just have good food?”

This reduction in sales has encouraged Dwight to adjust his purposes for attending the market. He expressed the importance in farmer participation in order to “get your farm’s name out” although he said that his farm was beyond the point of needing to do that. Instead, he now focuses on signing up new CSA members – shareholders in the farm – and customers for his home delivery service. He states that he “won’t be oversold” meaning

that he makes sure that he has the highest prices at the market. This might be a poor sales strategy if he was concerned with selling his produce at the market, but he is not. Instead, he raises the prices at the market to make his home delivery rates seem better and to demonstrate the high value of his food to existing and potential CSA members. He admits that six dollars per pound is expensive for tomatoes, but says he wants “to have the value for our food. It makes our CSA look that much more valuable.” He justifies this by claiming, “It’s the best food around...certified organic, and it’s worth it.”

While the tension between exploitation and idealism is easily observed when comparing these two farms, it also presents itself when examining the two farms individually. Like the woman at Abuelo’s Salsa, Debi and Olivia are quick to tell potential customers that their food is “organic,” “local” and contains “no pesticides.” While they clearly value the importance of community at the DTGM, they also pay attention to what is being grown and “what’s successful” with other farmers. Debi explains that although the social aspect is great, “people go there to buy the food...they really have a goal. And so everybody is competing for that share of the market.” On the other hand, Dwight, who primarily seems concerned with the exploitation of the market for financial gain, also references the importance of supporting local and organic food systems. He discusses how selling primarily local products on the Hillside Farm website is something he “feels good about” and how people start farmers’ markets to “support the organic movement,” although he ultimately feels that too many new markets are actually hurting the cause. Both Dwight and Debi described customers’ tendency to “sprinkle” their money around the market instead of spending it all at one booth in an attempt to support the movement. The practice of strategically spending money to better support the farmers’ market movement

encompasses the entire *exploitation/idealism* spectrum and demonstrates the importance of both the produce that is sold and the ideologies that are shared at the DTGM.

While idealism commonly presents itself in matters of food at the DTGM, it also appears in other political matters dealing with conservation and social justice issues. While performing observations at the market, I was regularly approached by people with clipboards and asked to sign petitions on matters such as water rights, reform on policies concerning minimum wage, and immigrant worker rights. Because the bulk of the observations at the DTGM occurred during the peak of the 2012 primary election campaigns, conversations often revolved around the latest presidential debate or potential scandal and generally supported the Democrats' stance on any issue. A regular at the Valley Farm booth showed up two weeks in a row wearing a purple t-shirt with paw prints on it that read "Dogs Against Romney," and a group of women were "Pressing for Change" by ironing clothes in a comical attempt to speak out against corrupt politicians. A booth often set up near Valley Farm promoted and taught about water conservation – a practice observed each week as Olivia poured leftover water on her neighbor's plants instead of simply discarding it in the grass. One week, dozens of tutu-wearing pit bulls and their owners showed up to promote "Pit Bull Awareness Month." A valued part of the Valley Farm identity is that it is "woman-owned" – a fact that is mentioned on Valley Farm's bio page on the DTGM website and often cited by customers as a reason they support the farm. Clearly, idealism goes beyond humanature relations at the DTGM and also touches upon what members of this community believe society should look like as a whole.

Summary

Milstein's dialectics present themselves and are negotiated constantly at the DTGM. The *mastery/harmony* dialectic is observable not only through the interactions between vendors and customers themselves, but also through a consideration of the park setting in which they actually take place. Community members demonstrate *othering* by describing the market as somewhere they can "go" to escape everyday life, only to later describe a *connection* with produce that has the ability to "call out" to them as they walk by a farmer's booth. Vendors continuously use communication to separate themselves from each other and from their customers while simultaneously connecting themselves by creating an invisible web of shared information. And the tension represented by the *exploitation/idealism* dialectic is near the very core of the existence of a community that survives on the buying and selling of produce while continually aligning itself with ideologies concerned with matters of conservation and environmentally conscious production practices. As this chapter has provided rich examples of how the dialectics are negotiated at the DTGM, it is now possible to discuss the possible benefits or burdens they carry for this community.

Chapter 5

The Function of Dialectics

There is clearly no shortage in examples of dialectics in communication at the DTGM. Because their presence has become clear, I will now explain the role of these dialectics pertaining to the current trend of success for this market. This chapter answers the second research questions presented in this thesis: How do these negotiations serve to create and sustain or to harm the community of the market? I begin by explaining the complexity of Milstein's dialectics when observed in a natural setting for communication, and then describe the role of each dialectical pole in the success of the market. And finally, I describe a reoccurring tension that presents itself within each of Milstein's existing dialectics.

The Intersection of Dialectics

By examining the community of the Downtown Growers' Market through the lens of dialectics, it is easy to see the complexity and uniqueness of this particular culture. There is constant tension between the dialectical poles that is observable in almost every interaction. To advance this discussion, the complexity of the dialectics themselves must be explained. The poles of Milstein's dialectics can be divided in to two categories that align with the ideological tensions presented by Corbet (2006) - anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. I have aligned *mastery*, *othering*, and *exploitation* with the anthropocentrism ideology because all three point to a disconnection from nature and stress the importance of its domination over nature for human gain. Conversely, *harmony*, *connection*, and *idealism* align with ecocentrism because of shared values in reciprocity with and eagerness to protect nature.

Like any culture itself, these dialectics are complex and fluid. Analysis of the data acquired for this study show that tension does not only exist between poles of the same

dialectic, but, in fact, has a tendency to intersect multiple dialectics within single interactions. At any given time, tension can exist between any of the anthropocentric poles and ecocentric poles. For example, vendors constantly check with each other to see what is selling and how much people are paying for it. This practice demonstrates a tensional intersection as vendors seek out information from each other (connection) in order to optimize profits (exploitation) without “lowballing” each other (harmony). Vendors offer examples of how to prepare a certain type of produce (connection) while simultaneously weighing it (mastery) and calculating the price (exploitation). Chefs gather produce from several different farmers to create a salad (harmony) then sell it for profit (exploitation). When Olivia spent too much time talking with a neighboring vendor (connection), Debi playfully scolded her by saying “you need to be selling” (exploitation).

On the other hand, poles from the same ideological category often times support and reinforce one another. Eggplants that change color with the seasons almost declaring their ripeness and need to be picked (harmony) had a tendency to “call out” to people passing by (connection). The DTGM was expressed as a place where people with shared beliefs about politics and natural food (idealism) could gather (connection). Farm bios on the DTGM website boast “sustainable agriculture that connects humans, wildlife and the environment” and “community-building and sustainable agricultural practices” offering direct links between connection and idealism.

Dialectics as Tools of Community Sustainability

While the concept of tension might inspire thoughts of entropy, this data suggest the contrary – dialectical tensions at the Downtown Growers’ Market serve to both create and sustain the community of those who participate. The DTGM is unique setting in that it offers

both a place to support environmentally friendly practices of food production and to profit from such practices. To explain how the dialectics serve to sustain this community, each pole will be discussed individually.

Mastery. While it has never been my intention to support practices of mastery (or any of the anthropocentric poles for that matter), it does play a large role in the sustaining of the DTGM community. I have discussed in detail how the very idea of a city park offers examples of *mastery* even if it is created to provide a natural space for plants, animals, and humans to coexist. In doing so, Robinson Park offers a setting that is conducive to communication concerned with nature and the importance of its protection. Olivia describes the park as “just an ideal setting” and a “good place to be.” Even Dwight who gave no signs of connection to the market admitted that it was a “nice environment.” The grass and the trees at Robinson Park create an ambiance at the DTGM that, according to Olivia, can’t be pulled off by other markets in the area. While Robinson Park’s most basic function in regards to the DTGM is to provide a place for growers and customers to meet, the development of this particular setting serves to create a space that is unique (and attractive) for this community.

The parceling of land and the weighing of produce are key to the survival of the DTGM. During market hours, Robinson Park is divided in to approximately 80 small spaces in which vendors set up their booths. The availability and use of these spaces is strictly monitored by market management – a practice that is vital to the survival of this community. Regulations on the use of space at the market were the leading point of contention observed, but the market would transform in to something completely different without them. Vendors apply for and are granted use of the space well in advance of market day. That being the

case, vendors have no need to compete for space on Saturday morning. They arrive at their leisure and feel comfortable talking and catching up with others instead of rushing to get their spot. The sale of produce by weight allows vendors to monitor the going rates in order to keep prices competitive while not undercutting one another.

Harmony. The idea that industrial progress and technological advancement threaten to disrupt harmony with nature is fundamental to the DTGM community. The market not only offers a platform for discussion on how to work with nature instead of against it, but participation at the market embodies this ideology. People view the market as a chance to support small farms and environmentally friendly production practices, and those who spend time at the market gain insight on the importance of harmony with nature by recognizing growing seasons and natural environments in which food is able to grow.

Harmony among vendors makes participation more attractive. I have offered several examples of vendors helping one another. They assist with the set up of booths, lend each other items they may have run out of, and send customers who might be looking for a particular product in each other's direction. All of this help lightens the load for everyone involved and makes success at the market appear more attainable. For example, the owners of Valley Farm struggled at first with the workload involved in operating a booth at the market, but now that they have become a part of the community and enjoy the benefit of help that comes along with it they enjoy selling there and have no intentions of stopping.

Othering. A perceived separation between humans and nature actually serves to benefit the DTGM community. Many of the visitors the DTGM go week after week to stock their pantries with produce from their favorite farms. Others buy a coffee and a pastry that they enjoy while they stroll around and take in the scene. Some simply go to lie in the grass

and listen to the band without ever spending a dime. No matter what their intentions at the market, many of these visitors come for one shared reason – to escape their everyday life and enjoy something different. As I previously mentioned, Debi claimed that for many people it is like a “refuge” with a “calming effect” that is similar to “going to the mountains and taking a hike.” She went on to say that for her personally, the market gives her “a way of thinking about living that work doesn't.” This is interesting in that it presents the DTGM as not only a refuge for visiting customers, but for the vendors as well. While harvesting produce, setting up the booth, and making sales is clearly a form of labor, it isn't necessarily considered “work.” The DTGM offers a place where all who participate can escape the hustle and bustle of life and relax if only for a few short hours once a week.

Connection. The connection pole could be considered the cornerstone of the DTGM community. As Milstein & Kroløkke's orcas served as “boundary creatures” (2012) so does the produce sold at the market. Fruits and vegetables produced through natural growing practices create a direct link between people and the earth thus strengthening humanature relations. Imagine an all-natural cycle in which chemical-free food is consumed thus generating the energy needed to plant and harvest more food only to be consumed to generate more energy. The cycle goes on and on as members of this community become more and more connected to the earth. It is no surprise then that customers express feelings of produce “calling out” to them, similar to how the orcas have the ability to “speak for themselves” (p. 128). Furthermore, Milstein & Kroløkke found that as connections were made between humans and the orcas, there were expressed desires to learn about and to protect the whales. This very phenomenon can be, to a certain extent, credited in the success of not only the DTGM, but to the entire farmers' market movement. Key to supporting the sustainable

agriculture movement is coming to the markets and spending one's money. If visitors feel connected to this produce and thus wish to ensure its survival, they must return week after week, spread the word, and work to keep more people coming in. Furthermore, if those who experience this connection wish to learn more about the produce, all they have to do is show up. It has already been established that information exchange is deeply embedded in the communicative DNA of the DTGM, so there is no better place to learn more about the produce than the place where the connections are actually taking place. Connections to the food at the market and the land in which it grows inspire repeat (to the point of ritualistic) visits among customers and a desire to spread the word thus creating a community that is ever-increasing in both size and loyalty.

Exploitation. While the DTGM is clearly a unique shopping experience, at the end of the day it is still a market. The DTGM is firmly seated amidst a capitalist society, and goods in exchange for money is the name of the game. While Debi stressed the importance of community and the benefits of the “refuge” that is the DTGM, she followed up by saying, “people go there to buy the food. I mean, they really have a goal,” and while the market is a uniquely cooperative place, there is always an underlying competitiveness because, as Debi said, “it’s still money.” At the end of the day, the farmers need to make enough money to justify their time spent and customers need to feel they are getting enough produce in exchange for their dollar in order for the market to survive.

While all farmers may need to make a certain amount of money to justify attending the market, the amount of profit necessary for this justification is far from homogenous. Some farmers seem to be comfortable with making less money at the market because they have a sense of value in other aspects of the experience (community, shared ideologies, etc.). The

owners of Valley Farm, for example, admit to making little profit at the DTGM but speak very highly of the market as a whole. Dwight, on the other hand, consistently voiced frustrations about the market because his company was not gaining the returns that he felt it should. In fact, Dwight stopped attending the market midseason because he felt it wasn't worth his time. Not surprisingly, Debi and Olivia demonstrated a much stronger connection to the DTGM than did Dwight because its worth was not measured completely in terms of profit (Broad, 2013).

Measurements of monetary success may vary greatly among farmers, but the fact that they do exist is clear. Whether a farmer depends on the market for their entire income, uses it as a hobby, or sees it as a way to support the movement, some money must be made in order for the market to continue. If money stopped changing hands, the DTGM would not only cease to be a market, but would cease to exist all together.

Idealism. There is clearly a shared set of values at the DTGM, and it is often demonstrated through communication among members of the community. Words like “local” and “organic” are used on a regular basis making it clear what is valued in terms of food. Farmers feel that they are supporting the sustainable agriculture movement by operating their businesses, and customers feel the same by showing up and spending their money. Some farmers believe there are too many new farmers’ markets while others see it as a “beautiful thing.” Either way, the showing of support through attendance has more people coming to the market than ever before.

Aside from food related discourse, customers and vendors also talk openly about current political topics. Political consciousness is apparent through both casual interactions and formal demonstrations. These values make the DTGM a comfortable place for those

who share them – a comfort that attracts people to the market. There is a sense of unity among members of the DTGM community, and people can support the community by simply showing up and speaking out. People find it easy to verbalize their values in this place, and that comfort serves as an appeal to attend. While there were plenty of examples of people voicing their political beliefs, all that I observed were on the liberal side of the political spectrum. Similar to a relaxing day in the grass, there was a level of comfort among those who had political agendas because there was seldom any observable opposition.

While the dialectal poles are in constant tension, each actually plays a part in the current success of the DTGM. There may be a set of commonly shared values at the market, but not everyone utilizes these values for the same purposes. There is no need for ideological uniformity in regard to what qualifies as market success. In fact, it's quite the contrary. Different motives for participation actually make the market what it is – a place where people can come together, support a common cause, and still make enough profit to justify their time.

A Reoccurring Theme Under Tension

There is no doubt that the participants of the DTGM create a complex and unique culture. Data analysis not only provided many examples of Milstein's dialectics at play, but also brought a theme under tension throughout all three of the dialectics into focus. While existing dialectics served to unveil this theme, I believe it is necessary to focus in on this core tension separate from the extant dialectics as a dialectic on its own that uniquely represents a core cultural tension at the farmers market.

Community is valued at the DTGM, but money must be made for the very survival of said community. This leads to constant tension between what I will call *economic*

advancement and *community advancement*. *Economic advancement* can be explained as any discourse concerned with financial gain. This could involve interactions in which products and prices are directly discussed or vendors greeting customers simply to grab their attention. On the other end of the tension is *community advancement*. This discourse is utilized to bring participants of the DTGM together be it through lending each other a hand or simply talking for no purpose other than to catch up. Data have shown an extremely fine line between these two poles – so much so that it is often difficult to determine which end of the spectrum many interactions actually reside.

The DTGM is both a place to gather socially and a place to do business. One day when I was taking fieldnotes in the Valley Farm booth, a man and a woman approached from behind and began talking to Debi and Olivia. They all hugged and chatted behind the produce tables – a space usually reserved for the vendors. Once they had talked for a few minutes, the time had come to shop. The woman said, “We better come around to this side like customers” as they moved to the front side of the tables. This demonstrates a consciousness of both community and business, as well a clear separation between the two, through the observation of norms pertaining to both.

The “How to Build a Better Booth” workshop offered examples of this dialectic as well. Facilitators regularly encouraged communication between vendors. They claimed that cooperation between vendors would actually “enhance the entire market.” Friendly interactions between vendors and customers were also encouraged. Potential vendors were told to “talk to people” and “smile” - a practice that Olivia engages in regularly. When there are no customers in the booth, she often positions herself in front of the tables, near the paved walkway, and says “hello” and “good morning” to people as they walk by. Many of those

she greets are strangers while others are acquaintances. When I asked if she did this to attract customers or simply to be friendly, she playfully smiled and shrugged her shoulders.

Introductions between visitors to the Valley Farm booth were commonplace. Debi and Olivia would ask customers their names as they paid and would often remember the names in following weeks. While both Debi and Olivia explained how they enjoy connecting with their customers, they also claimed that it helps them to “better serve” the customers at a later time. Members of the Valley Farm community who might be helping in the booth for the day or simply stopping by were introduced to customers as CSA members stressing the perceived importance of the community.

Dwight described tension between business and community within his own operation. He said it is like he has “two different businesses that are almost competing against each other under the same roof.” There is home delivery, which he describes as the “growth machine” of his business, and then there is the “building the community” aspect. He explained that he is incorporating more community-based activities because that is what his customers ask for. By doing so, he is actually advancing his business *by* building community.

Whether the market should be primarily focused on economic success or community is not agreed upon between vendors. Debi feels that there is no other place in Albuquerque where people can gather like they do at the DTGM. She asks, “What do you like to do? Eat, drink, relax, listen to music. It’s all there.” In stark opposition to her positive take on the social aspect of the market, Dwight expressed frustration with people who come just to have breakfast and listen to music. “If you want to have bands in the park, go have bands in the

park,” he said while explaining that the social “circus” that is the DTGM is actually “hurting the farmers.”

Debi explained the relationship between business and community at the DTGM in the following way:

So, I think part of the camaraderie is about trying to make sure that we make things work and we’re successful, and we do that by sharing food...we exchange things. And I think that you don't get that in a business setting so the market creates a whole new kind of setting that's about sharing ideas...you are successful by everyone else being successful. I think that there is a sense of cooperation even though there is an underlying competitiveness.”

This statement describes camaraderie as a stepping stone toward success while completely disconnecting the market from what is commonly understood to be a “business setting.” Instead, the setting is founded on the sharing of food and ideas – an exchange system vastly different than that of a typical market place in a capitalist society. It is a fine line between business and community, and the two exist both in tension and in reciprocity. Debi says that the social interchange that is a result of direct marketing actually leads to loyalty among her customers. In other words, a sense of community is actually advancing her business. Both poles of this dialectic serve to sustain this culture because one offers a sense of togetherness for those who participate while the other provides an opportunity for the operation of a successful small business. There is clearly discourse concerned with both economic advancement and community advancement present at the DTGM even if it is often hard to tell them apart.

Summary

Milstein's dialectics are a constant presence in discourse at the DTGM. Like the community they work to create and sustain, the dialectics themselves are complex and fluid. Discourse regularly intersects multiple dialectics leading to the multiplicity of ways in which the poles may exist in either tension or support of one another. While each pole represents a unique ideology, each plays a role in sustaining the DTGM community. The unique positioning of the DTGM as a place to gather socially as well as a place of business lends to the emergence of a new theme in tension between *economic advancement* and *community advancement*. Examination of this reoccurring theme furthers an understanding of the complexity of this community and offers insight in to the current success of the DTGM.

Chapter 6

Discussion

Dialectics are as common at the DTGM as the produce that is being sold. They are negotiated regularly and often times seamlessly. By using theories of cultural communication as both a theoretical and methodological grounding, I was able to observe, document, organize, and analyze the use of such dialectics in order to not only verify their existence, but to explain how they contribute to the success of the market.

The *mastery/harmony* dialectic first presents itself in the physical setting in which the market takes place. Robinson Park is a space that is designed by humans and controlled by governmental policy in order to offer a green space in an otherwise developed city center. On market day, the land is parceled off and divided among vendors who share labor, food, and ideas harmoniously. The *othering/connection* dialectic is apparent when the market is described as somewhere that people visit in order to escape reality and, in doing so, are able to connect with nature in ways that they typically don't. And the very existence of any market is dependent on the buying of selling of goods – even if said goods are required to be natural and created through environmentally and socially conscious methods – thus making the *exploitation/idealism* dialectic commonplace in dialogue at the DTGM.

Once these dialectics were identified, it was easy to see that they were not in any way binary, but were actually highly complex and fluid. A single tension can intersect several dialectics while poles from the same side of the environmental ideology spectrum (Corbett, 2006) often reinforce one another. The complexity of the dialectics at play point to a highly intricate culture that is simultaneously producing and being molded by such tensions.

While each dialectical pole aligns with one of two decidedly different environmental ideologies, each play a role in the current success of the DTGM. The *mastery* of the land used to hold the market offers a setting conducive to dialogue concerning community and environmental protection. *Harmony* makes the market seem attractive to both vendors because it makes success seem more obtainable and shoppers because it offers a friendly alternative to corporate grocery stores. The *othering* of nature within the park offers a getaway from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, while *connection* felt with produce encourages people to return and learn more. And finally, *exploitation* ensures that money is made in order for the survival of a market that resides within a capitalist society, and *idealism* encourages visitors and vendors to participate as a way to support environmental movements promoted at the market. The lack of uniformity in ideology does not work to the detriment of the market, but actually serves to sustain it and make it the unique place that it is.

An in-depth look at Milstein's dialectics unveiled a reoccurring theme under tension at the DTGM that I have labeled *economic advancement/community advancement*. This theme is present within all three of Milstein's dialectics and is paramount to the success of the market. Both vendors and customers work to connect with one another and build community while simultaneously running a successful business or getting the most produce for their dollar. The DTGM is a place where community and shared experiences are highly valued but where money must be made for its very survival. The negotiation of this tension is so commonplace that it seems to require little thought or effort for many participants.

Practical Implications

Findings of this study are pertinent to farmers' markets, the sustainable agriculture movement, and beyond. As previously stated, to view any culture through the lens of dialectics helps us to better understand the true complexity of that culture (Martin & Nakayama, 1999). In this case, an in-depth look at dialectics has unearthed communicative practices that work to benefit the Albuquerque's Downtown Growers' Market by continuously increasing attendance and participation. Although the poles of the dialectics used in this study represent both ends of Corbett's spectrum of ideologies concerning the environment (2006), each plays a role in the success of the market. Market management would benefit from considering how each pole benefits the market and implementing subsequent policy that might highlight the benefits of each. For example, management at the DTGM or any other farmers' market should recognize the importance of community and connection for the participants while bearing in mind that financial success is equally important for the survival of any place of commerce. Over emphasis on any one pole can throw the market out of balance and completely alter the ambiance that serves as a primary attraction for many customers and vendors. While I believe that current management does a good job of maintaining this balance, data, particularly my interview with Dwight, show that all participants may not perceive this balance the same way. Different motives at the market cause a variance in levels of satisfaction pertaining to amount of focus management places on any one pole.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is just the beginning of research that should be done concerning dialectics among the farmers' market culture. This study opened the door by drawing attention to dialectics present at the DTGM, but there is much work to be done. While the first three

modes of inquiry presented by cultural discourse analysis were heavily utilized (theoretical, descriptive, interpretive), in-depth focus on the final two (comparative, critical) was beyond the scope of the study. Future research should compare the negotiation of dialectics presented in this to study to similar phenomena at other farmers' markets in the same city, across the country, and abroad. Such comparison would not only help us to better understand different systems of sustainable agriculture, but it would also shed light on the very cultures in which they are situated. Comparisons should also be made between farmers' markets and other contexts in which people shop for food. The uniqueness of farmers' markets and their cultures would become clearer if they were viewed in relation to those of supermarkets, shopping malls, or flea markets.

This study offers little clarity on the demographic makeup of the DTGM making a complete critical analysis difficult to achieve. A deeper look in to the demographics of such markets could unveil dialectics as tools of advantage for particular groups of people over others. If this is found to be the case, further research could examine possible intentional use of dialectics for personal gain.

Furthermore, this presented an ambiguity in criteria for perceived success among vendors at the market. Some farmers seemed happy to bring home small profits as long as they felt they were advancing the movement while others felt that minimal returns at the market simply did not justify their time. Future research would benefit from a better understanding of these criteria and of differences among farmers who adopt them.

And finally, this study has pointed to ways in which farmers' markets serve as a sort of Mecca for progressive thought. Further research should be done to gain an understanding of why this phenomenon occurs. Also, I have demonstrated how tensions in discourse help

to sustain the farmers' market community. The next step in research concerning these markets should be to examine their success on a macro level to determine how it serves to reinforce a greater ecocentric idealism and challenge unsustainable, mainstream thought.

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