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Food (In)Security: Provisioning Strategies in a Northern Wisconsin Town

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FOOD (IN)SECURITY:
PROVISIONING STRATEGIES IN A NORTHERN WISCONSIN TOWN

by

Margaret Ellen Kubek

A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science
in Anthropology

at

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ABSTRACT

FOOD (IN)SECURITY: PROVISIONING STRATEGIES IN A NORTHERN WISCONSIN TOWN

by

Margaret Ellen Kubek

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2015
Under the Supervision of Professor Tracey Heatherington

This thesis explores the food provisioning strategies of year-round and seasonal residents of Phelps, WI. Based upon criteria utilized by the US Department of Agriculture, and partially as a result of the closure of the local grocery store a decade ago, the town has been classified as food insecure. However, residents have adapted in a variety of ways. Ethnographic data gathered in the summer and fall of 2011 found that residents have modified weekly routines to accommodate a lengthy drive to purchase food. Year-round residents utilize the natural landscape to self-provision through strategies that include growing food, foraging, fishing, and hunting. Finally, two civic agriculture projects have increased the overall availability of food, but these efforts are mostly utilized by seasonal residents.

My research found that the recently initiated farmers' market and community supported agriculture project were used by seasonal residents, who tend to be middle- or upper-middle income; while year-round residents preferred self-provisioning strategies. Analysis of these choices suggests that year-round residents, predominantly lower- to

middle-income individuals, found these options to be unaffordable and, in the case of the farmers' market, scheduled at an inconvenient time.

Future research may explore ways in which Phelps could increase food security beyond the addition of a new grocery store in the community. Due to the natural landscape and existing civic agriculture projects, Phelps has the potential to become an area with a rich and diverse food landscape; however, efforts must cater to all residents by offering affordable choices, making those choices more convenient, and increasing opportunities for self-provisioning.

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For Jeff
&
Kate

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis explores food procurement strategies in the absence of convenient access to food due to the closure of the local grocery store. It will explore the ways in which year-round and seasonal residents of Phelps, WI provision for their food when the closest grocery stores are a 15 mile drive or more from their home. Every resident I interviewed has adapted to the closing of the local grocery store a decade ago by utilizing stores in other communities.¹

This project explores the strategies year-round residents use to supplement their trip to the grocery store. These are self-provisioning strategies that occur outside of the formal marketplace and include growing food, foraging, hunting, fishing, sharing, and bartering. In contrast to year-round residents' self-provisioning strategies, I found that seasonal residents of Phelps supplement their trip to the grocery store by procuring food in alternative agriculture projects such as farmers' markets and community supported agriculture (henceforth, CSA). In 2010, the Phelps' Chamber of Commerce and Town Board instituted a farmers' market in downtown Phelps. This marketplace, in operation every Tuesday and one Saturday per month in the summer, invigorated the normally quiet downtown area. There was also a CSA project operated by a farmer located on the outskirts of town. On the surface, the initiation of both these projects suggests that residents would have access to more food in town and could supplement their purchases at the grocery store by purchasing food from the farmers' market and the CSA. However, participant observation and structured and unstructured interviews suggest that these two

¹ The percentage of total food supply represented by purchases at these grocery stores ranges from approximately 2% to 100% for each household as reported by my interlocutors.

initiatives, both considered civic agriculture projects in the literature, cater to seasonal residents and tourists. I found that year-round residents did not utilize the farmers' market due to its inconvenient time, affordability, and preference for other food provisioning strategies. They did not become a member of the CSA due to affordability and preference.

Thesis Questions and Objectives

When setting out to conduct this research project I was interested in the implementation of strategies that occur when individuals lose convenient access to food due to the closure of the local grocery store. I wanted to explore how residents adapted to the store's closing and if other ways of procuring food were used to supplement the trip to the grocery store. I also wanted to investigate if these strategies initiated social change within the community. Prior to research, I garnered from conversations with friends and acquaintances from the area that residents participated in food procurement strategies that did not require a trip to the grocery store. For instance, I knew that residents picked berries, hunted, fished, and foraged for mushrooms and, to varying degrees, used these strategies to provision their food across the spectrum from picking berries to bake a pie to hunting deer to have meat for the winter.

In order to better understand the current food landscape of Phelps, I thought it important to investigate Phelps' economic and industrial history as a company town to explore if that affected the closure of the grocery store. Although I was able to gather information about Phelps' economic and social history, I was unable to come to any conclusions supported by data about the connection between Phelps' history and the current economic climate in the town.

Until a decade ago, Phelps, a small town in northern Wisconsin, supported a grocery store that carried a wide selection of foods. According to year-round and seasonal residents I interviewed (See Appendix A for a list of interviewees), the grocery store closed down for the following reasons: 1) competition from bigger grocery stores in other communities; 2) residents finding work in other communities and doing their shopping there after work; 3) the decline of the Phelps' local economy which initiated the closure of other businesses; and, 4) the penultimate owner's poor customer service and subpar meat market. Prior to its closure, the grocery store carried less variety and food that was spoiling or rotten. I recall one of my final shopping excursions to the grocery store when my mom and I headed to the meat case to find gray chicken breasts wrapped in cellophane.

Research Relevance

This thesis is relevant to food studies literature because it analyzes food procurement and provisioning strategies that are enacted by individuals who do not have convenient access to a local grocery store. There is quite a bit of literature around the topic of alternative food systems, including direct purchase from a farmer and growing one's own food, particularly in urban areas. However, literature focused on rural areas that are food insecure is lacking. Moreover, literature that explores self-provisioning strategies in rural areas is even less common. This thesis engages the following areas of food studies literature: 1) Civic agriculture, an area of the literature that proposes that direct sales via farmers' markets and CSAs is an antidote to conventional agriculture because it seeks to re-embed agriculture in local areas.. Two civic agriculture projects, a local farmers' market and CSA, have brought food back into Phelps, but are not being

used by year-round residents due to affordability, preference, and convenience. However, these two projects have attracted seasonal residents and tourists. 2) Self-provisioning strategies that include growing food and procuring food from nature which is the preferred way of year-round residents of Phelps. 3) Rural food studies.

A review of alternative agriculture and civic agriculture reveals a growing body of literature focused on local food systems (Allen et. al. 2003, DeLind 2002, Follett 2009, Grey 2000, Lyson and Gupill 2004, Lyson 2005). A sweeping critique of conventional, or commodity, agriculture supports the notion that the commoditization of food in the current capitalist system has focused on efficiency in production at the expense of consumer choice, control, and quality of food. In many cases in the literature, alternative agriculture is placed in a binary relationship with conventional or big agriculture and is described as projects that seek to re-embed the social and relational aspects of food production and consumption back into the economic transaction. My research complicates this binary relationship because year-round residents did not take part in the alternative agriculture projects offered in Phelps. Therefore, for many residents purchasing food from the grocery store, mostly provided by conventional agriculture practices, continued to be their preferred marketplace option.

In *Civic Agriculture and the North American Food System* (2007), Thomas Lyson lays out the components of civic agriculture that proponents view as an antidote to conventional agriculture. In the author's opinion, industrial agriculture undervalues and marginalizes farmers while placing value on the production of a cheap commodity produced in a way that harms the environment. As a panacea, civic agriculture "is driven by social processes other than economics" and is "one component of a larger theory of

civic community” (Lyson 2007:23). Supporters of civic agriculture view two initiatives which are occurring in Phelps, the farmers’ market and CSA project, as ways to forge relationships between consumers and producers, provide low-cost vegetables, and support a stronger local economy (Lyson 2007:27-28).

My findings in Phelps do not support these broad assertions. As a vendor at the farmers’ market I can attest to the notion that this type of marketplace develops relationships in the sense that producers and vendors generally engaged in conversations with consumers that went beyond discussing the product. However, consumers at the Phelps’ Farmers’ Market were overwhelmingly tourists and seasonal residents; year-round residents did not have access to the market due to the time it took place, affordability, and preference. Only one of my interlocutors, Pam Kent a year-round resident, shopped at the farmers’ market while I was conducting research and that was on a Saturday when she was not working. This data conflicts with civic agriculture’s proposal that farmers’ markets provide low-cost vegetables to community members. Interlocutors who spoke about the farmers’ market in interviews thought it was too expensive.

Furthermore, the CSA project I was involved with may have fostered a relationship between consumer and farmer, but the relationship was not strong enough to ensure ongoing participation in the CSA. The CSA members who I interviewed, a total of 5, would not be renewing their membership in 2012. Karen Miller, an interlocutor in charge of maintaining an informal membership database, did not think many other CSA members would be returning the following summer. I do not have market study data to analyze whether the downtown farmers’ market improved the local economy, as asserted

by supporters of civic agriculture; however, I can say with certainty based upon the little amount of money I made at the farmers' market that it did not improve the financial status of the farmer for whom I sold produce. Finally, due to a lack of businesses in Phelps' downtown, visitors to the farmers' market did not have the opportunity to support other businesses either before or after they made their purchases.

According to Lyson and Guptill (2004:371), commodity agriculture links with global systems and corporate-controlled food systems while civic agriculture is linked to the local market through direct sales systems. Farmers' markets and CSAs are considered civic agriculture projects because they provide the opportunity for consumers to purchase food from farmers who are located in their area. Civic agriculture is intended to give farmers more of the market share on selling their product because there is no middle man selling produce for them. In order for farmers to make a decent living their products must be valued accordingly. This component of civic agriculture translates into low-income people who are food insecure being priced out of these projects. In their study of factors and conditions associated with civic agriculture projects, Lyson and Guptill (2004:375-376) note that projects such as farmers' markets and CSAs are "driven by affluent, well-educated, urban consumers."

Civic agriculture benefits farmers but is not geared towards low-income, less educated, rural consumers. My research findings support this claim. This complicates the claim that "civic agriculture represents the rebirth of a more locally oriented agriculture and food system" (Lyson and Guptill 2004:370), because my research found that the farmers in Phelps who were taking part in civic agriculture projects were unsuccessful. Their lack of success was due to farmers' markets and CSAs being economically or

culturally inappropriate for community members. Moreover, civic agriculture is then not a viable option for rural communities that have a low-income population. As a concept civic agriculture supports projects that increase the income of small farm owners which is good, however, these projects do not ensure access by marginalized populations.

In championing farmers' markets as "keystones to rebuilding local and regional food systems," Gillespie et al. (2007:65) state that the "farmers' markets seem to offer something for nearly everyone." The authors of this article seem to value the local food system over customer access and preference. Moreover, they do not analyze small-farmers economic circumstances as producers of food in a local food system. Civic agriculture also emphasizes social interaction as a foundation for rebuilding the local food system, however, it appears to be discussing the interactions that occur at civic agriculture sites, namely farmers' markets and CSAs, between producers and those who frequent these sites which have been found to be middle-class, educated, white individuals.

Along with challenging the notion that civic agriculture can rebuild local food systems, this thesis will add to the body of literature about rural food procurement strategies. There is research around the topic of urban food systems in the United States, as well as studies that highlight food systems in the agricultural food belt in the Midwest; however, there is a dearth of research on the topic of food landscapes in areas of the United States that are rural. Phelps is rural, yet it is not a typical rural town because it hosts residents who are seasonal as well as tourists. There are residents who flow in and out of Phelps which adds a layer of complexity to the food landscape, because seasonal residents and tourists are of a higher socio-economic status than year-round residents and,

subsequently, can afford higher priced items found at specialty stores, the farmers' market, and a CSA. My research suggests that year-round residents relied upon self-provisioning strategies to supplement their trips to the grocery store while seasonal residents and tourists preferred frequenting the downtown farmers' market and membership in the CSA. Finally, this project adds to the body of literature about rural food systems because Phelps is a unique research site. There are opportunities for supplementing trips to the grocery store in a variety of ways - the natural landscape affords residents the opportunity to forgo purchasing food from the grocery store because of the opportunity to self-provision, and the farmers' market and CSA provides individuals with the opportunity to purchase food grown by local growers.

Chapter 2 of this thesis will outline my research. I will discuss my role as a researcher as it relates to my research site and the topic of this thesis. I will explore the ethnographic research methods I used, mainly participant observation and interviews, which support the data I collected.

Chapter 3 will provide the reader with the background and history of Phelps, WI. Phelps was once a company town, a part of the lumber industry in the late 19th and early 20th century, which affected the current economic status of the town due to the decline of the lumber industry and subsequent closure of other businesses. Phelps has not attracted new industry to the area with the exception of a small tourism trade. In this chapter I will also highlight the dynamic composition of the community, which includes year-round residents, seasonal residents, and tourists. The socioeconomic constitution of the community varies thereby affecting food procurement strategies.

Chapter 4 will describe the diverse food landscape of Phelps and how residents engage the various landscapes. This diversity includes the grocery stores located in communities at least 15 miles away, the offerings at the Phelps' Convenience Store, the farmers' market, the CSA, local individuals who sell meats, and self-provisioning strategies, such as foraging, hunting, fishing, and growing food.

Chapter 5 will feature the site where I spent a significant amount of time conducting participant observation and informal interviews, the Phelps' Farmers' Market. This site is significant because it was an effort by The Chamber of Commerce and Town Board to provide food to the community, however, it did not appeal to year-round residents. It is also significant because it enlivened the downtown area every Tuesday morning and one Saturday per month during the summer of 2011. I will describe the site, the vendors, the products, the consumers, and highlight the relationships formed at this marketplace.

Chapter 6 will discuss the self-provisioning strategies in Phelps, WI and the residents who participate in these activities. Self-provisioning strategies include hunting, fishing, and foraging. I will also highlight three of my interlocutors' participation in growing their own food - a farmer with a CSA, a hobby farmer with a small orchard and vineyard, and a backyard gardener.

Chapter 7 will offer my analysis of the food procurement strategies of my research site and suggestions for further research, such as focusing on the ways in which low-income seniors procure their food and rural food justice in a region rich with food in the natural landscape.

Chapter 2

Research

My Role as Researcher

My family has had a cottage just outside of Phelps, WI for 43 years. From the time I was three years old until I was in my late teenage years we would live at the cottage from the day after school recessed until the day before it resumed in fall. It is tradition in our family to spend the time between the Christmas and New Year holiday together in Phelps as well as the weekend after Thanksgiving. Since leaving home for college I spend weekends in Phelps at least once every few months. Even though I do not live in Phelps full time, it is the place I consider home.

My interest in Phelps as a research site is three-fold: 1) The place where we did our food shopping in Phelps while I was growing up, The Big Store, closed a decade ago. I was interested in learning how community members had adapted to that loss. 2) I have an interest in the dynamics of alternative food systems, such as buying food from a local farmer, farmers' markets, and CSA projects. I knew that Phelps had a new farmers' market, initiated in 2010, which I could explore while collecting data, but I found out about the CSA project while conducting research. 3) I wanted to learn more about residents' use of non-market strategies to self-provision, such as hunting, fishing, foraging, and growing food.

As a researcher I had certain advantages because I had spent a significant amount of time at the research site and visited over a number of years so I knew the opportunities and challenges I might face. I knew that the downtown area was not as active as when I was growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, which I presumed might make it difficult to

conduct participant observation; however, I did know that there was a new museum where I could ask questions of volunteers. I took advantage of family connections to persuade some year-round residents to agree to an interview, but the sites of my participant observation, the farmers' market and The Master's Hand Farm, were discovered and sustained through my own efforts as a researcher.

In general, I believe that alternative food system strategies, such as farmers' markets, buying directly from a farmer, and CSA projects, are beneficial to a community because they offer alternative ways for individuals to procure food. However, I learned that I need to critically assess these systems in order to present an unbiased ethnography. For instance, I found through participant observation that the farmers' market did not appeal to year-round residents of Phelps, and the majority of members in the local CSA were not year-round residents. This discovery shifted my focus from wholeheartedly accepting these projects as good and equitable for all community members to critically assessing the benefit they have for all residents regardless of socioeconomic status. My thesis will explore and analyze these findings.

Methods and Data Collection

I conducted participant observation² in the Phelps area during the summer and fall of 2011. The location of these observations occurred as a vendor at the Phelps' Farmers' Market, on Tuesday mornings and the last Saturday of every month, and at The Master's Hand Farm, which operates a CSA project and is the farm for which I sold vegetables at the farmers' market.³ My link to the alternative agriculture system in Phelps, namely the

² IRB#: 11.381. Review of research protocol by the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Institutional Review Board; protocol granted Exempt Status under Category 2 as governed by 45 CFR 46.101 subpart b.

³ The name of the farm where I conducted participant observation has not been changed due to it being recognizable as the local farm that offered a community supported agriculture project.

CSA and farmers' market, was my primary interlocutor, Tom Mareth.⁴ The research in this thesis that focuses on self-provisioning strategies was gathered through formal and informal interviews, and participant observation at three different sites where residents are growing their own food. The description of how residents adapted to the closure of the local grocery store was gathered mainly through formal interviews. Throughout my research, I was able to participate in self-provisioning strategies that included berry picking, fishing, and growing food, and shopping for food at grocery stores in other communities.

I conducted thirteen distinct interviews with a total of eighteen people. Five of my interviews included couples who sat through the interview together.⁵ (See Appendix A, Interviewee Demographics) I conducted interviews in late summer through late fall 2011 and chose interviewees based upon the relationships I built at the farmers' market, through my participant observation at the CSA project, and family connections. Fourteen of my interlocutors are year-round residents of Phelps, five of those grew up in Phelps and nine are transplants from other areas. Four of my interlocutors are seasonal residents; three of the four I met through the CSA. The seasonal residents are retirees, of upper middle-class status, whose experience accessing food will be shown to add an interesting dimension to the topic at hand. All of my interviews were conducted at the dining room table or in the living rooms of my interlocutors with the exception of one interview with a family friend that occurred at the dining room table at my family's cottage. (Appendix B, Interview Questions) One of Tom's volunteers on the farm, who is also one of my

⁴ With Tom Mareth's permission I will use his real name. It would be difficult to shield his identity because of easy recognition of his CSA and farm in Phelps, WI.

⁵ IRB#: 11.381. Review of research protocol by the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Institutional Review Board; protocol granted Exempt Status under Category 2 as governed by 45 CFR 46.101 subpart b.

interlocutors, kept an email list of CSA members which she shared with me. She emailed CSA members first to ensure it was permissible for her to share their email contacts with me. I then sent out emails and garnered three interlocutors in this manner.

My interviewees include retirees, working individuals, and low, middle, and upper-middle class individuals. I did not ask my interviewees personal financial information. I determined socioeconomic status through conventional means: type of housing, which I assessed while conducting interviews at interviewees' dining room tables, current job, and level of education, if discussed. I also assessed socioeconomic status by the ways in which they procured food; for instance, whether or not they shopped for sales at the grocery store, their ability to buy a membership in a CSA; and, their reasons for self-provisioning such as to save money. The age range of my interviewees is from 40 to 75 years. All of my interviewees are white. Two of my interlocutors discussed the challenges faced by low-income seniors to procure food. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to connect with any low-income senior citizens.

Chapter 3 Research Site

Visitors to Phelps may not see many people in the downtown area (See Figure 1 for a map of the downtown area). As one drives to the community from the south, the Phelps' convenience store is the first site where a visitor will likely see a gathering of people. At all hours of the day there is a car or two filling up with gas and people walking in and out of the store to pick up food, beer, liquor, or bait for fishing. In between the convenience store and the old hospital there are two bars that serve food that occasionally have two or three cars in the parking lot. The hospital just outside

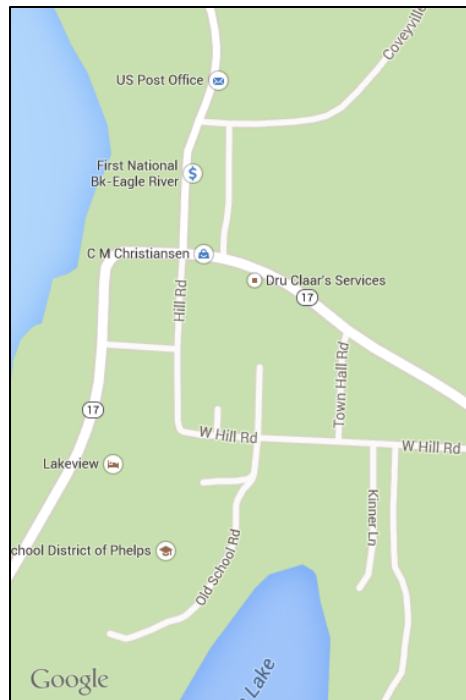


FIG. 1. Map of downtown Phelps, WI. Google Maps, 2015.

of the downtown area was once a bustling rural hospital.⁶ In the latter part of the 20th century it was a nursing home but recently closed. Residents were moved to a facility in Rhinelander. When a visitor enters the downtown area they have a beautiful view of North Twin Lake on their left and closed businesses and empty stores on their right.

There are two new places where people can visit and congregate: the Phelps' History Museum and an ice cream shop that opened in 2014. The other place in town that offers individuals a place to congregate is the farmers' market which invigorates the corner it sits on every Tuesday morning and one Saturday per month. There is also a

⁶ When my older brother was eighteen he was in a serious motorcycle accident; he almost had to have his foot amputated. Fortunately, there was a Chinese doctor at the Phelps' hospital who was able to prevent an amputation.

small diner that serves breakfast and maintains a steady clientele. These sites are “third places” as described by Oldenburg (1999). Third places refer to space where individuals can congregate outside of work or home. The diner and ice cream shop provide opportunities for residents and tourists to have conversations and see each other outside of work or home. The farmers’ market provides an episodic third place where mostly seasonal residents and tourists engage in conversation.

A visitor to downtown Phelps will drive by the site of The Big Store, which now houses a Saturday flea market; however, they might assume it is an abandoned building due to its dilapidated state. After a visitor turns the corner they drive up a hill and will come across the library which, when open, always has patrons using the internet and checking out books or DVDs. There are two churches that are active on Sundays and two baseball diamonds and a soccer field that are used for the occasional weekend tournament. Someone driving through town also has the option to turn left after they have passed The Big Store where they will come across a post office and the site of the recently closed bank. The post office hosts a steady stream of people but is not as conducive to conversation or congregating as the other places. In town board minutes dated October 12, 2009, the town chair “expressed the importance of getting a grocery and community center back into the community.” A town board member commented on the “need for all the need for all the community groups to get together to create a cohesive working group.”⁷

On the corner where I sit to sell vegetables for the Tuesday morning Farmers’ Market was once the site of a bar and previous to that, during the heydays in Phelps at the

⁷ Town Board minutes may be found at www.townofphelps.com.

dawn of the 20th century, a bustling hotel and restaurant. The bar has been razed and in its place is a parking lot, mowed lawn, and a planter by the sidewalk filled in the summer months with flowers maintained by the Phelps' Woman's Club. Also absent from the downtown of my youth is the hardware store, once a movie theater, and the grocery store known as The Big Store.⁸ Across the street from the site of the Farmers' Market is North Twin Lake. The area beyond the downtown is wooded and other market vendors and I frequently watch and discuss eagles as they fly overhead. The setting is serene and beautiful due to the lake vista and limited traffic.

Phelps has always been an out-of-the way place. It is located only a few miles from the border of the upper peninsula of Michigan (See Figure 2). It is 281 miles north of Milwaukee, WI and 347 miles north of Chicago, IL. The closest major city, Wausau, is 97 miles south and has a population of close to 40,000

Residents travel at least 15 miles for medicine, hardware goods, food, and other necessities. In particular, residents must travel at least 15 miles to purchase food at a grocery store. One of my interlocutors, Mark Boyd, a year-round



FIG. 2. Map of Wisconsin; Phelps is indicated with a red pin. Google Maps, 2015.

⁸ In my research I never found out how the Big Store was given that name. I do know that it was the site of The Company Store started by the business owners of the local lumber company.

resident who was born in Phelps articulates the complicated issue of access to food, stating, “What do they do in Third World countries? They don’t have that problem as such. They have more problems with finances. Ninety-five percent of the time they can walk to what they need. Even in Chicago and Milwaukee the people in these areas have more access to produce and fresh foods than people up here because they can walk.” This thought disregards the notion that some individuals in cities such as Chicago and Milwaukee cannot afford the food that they are able to walk to, but for Mark the issue is the geographic distance of the grocery store that he must travel to for food. There is the opportunity to purchase beverages, milk, eggs, canned and packaged food at the convenience store, but this shopping experience does not provide all food items a year-round or seasonal resident would need and it is a costly alternative.

There is no major thruway; in fact, some townspeople refer to the newly refurbished road that runs through town as “the road to nowhere.” The reconstruction of



FIG. 3. Downtown Phelps in winter via Highway 17. North Twin Lake is frozen over in the background. Photo by author.

Highway 17, the road through Phelps, angered residents as it

diverted what limited traffic the town had around the downtown area (See Figure 3 for Highway 17’s route through downtown). Although I do not have any data supporting the claims, some residents believe it played a role in the economic decline of Phelps. Mark Boyd thinks the “highway project devastated downtown, the whole corridor along

Highway 17.” He believes this resulted in the closure of a relative’s hardware store in downtown Phelps.

In contrast, Larry Kent, an interlocutor who had hoped to open a grocery store in Phelps, sees opportunity. He optimistically thinks that it is not a road to nowhere, but a road to somewhere; that is, to Phelps. He believes Phelps could be a destination. He states, “They’ve all got this mindset that there’s nothing...it goes nowhere – a road to nowhere. Which is not true. All roads go nowhere. Everybody you talk to – the road goes nowhere. Well, it goes around the lake, it goes up into Michigan.”

History of Phelps, WI

Phelps was founded as a company town providing lumber to the logging industry. In the early years, from 1894 to 1903, the logging business changed hands several times until 1903 when the Hackley-Phelps-Bonnell Company took over operations; these are the last names of the same men who founded the town of Phelps.⁹ According to an article in the Vilas Review, Phelps was the “last frontier for loggers as lumber activity ceases in the 1900s.” (Phelps Woman’s Club 2001)

Once the mill was in operation, the company town was built. Millworkers rented housing outfitted with electricity and water for \$10 a month. On weekday evenings the town’s lights would blink at 9:45pm and turn off at 10pm. It can be assumed that this provided a modicum of social control in the town. This aspect of Phelps’ history is an example of the social engineering that occurred in company towns to “insulate workers from class and political conflicts, increasing productivity, and achieving social harmony”

⁹ Of note is that Phelps was first named Hackley, which was chartered in 1905, but was later renamed Phelps due to confusion with the town of Hatley, WI; however, Phelps is now confused with the town of Phillips, WI (Phelps Woman’s Club, 2001).

(Dinius and Vergara 2011:2). Along with the company store built in 1905, a bank was incorporated in 1921 with CM Christiansen as one of the directors. Newspapers and a post office sped up connections to other parts of the state and country (Phelps Woman's Club 2001).

In an edited volume about the economic and social impact of company towns in the Americas, Dinius and Vergara (2011:1) describe the company town as “a planned community owned or controlled by a single company which has symbolized the power of industrial capitalism to exploit natural resources and transform society...the key is a combination of a single dominant industry with extensive company control over the daily life of the town.” In order to realize this economic reality, industrial capitalists had to recruit individuals to come to an isolated area, such as Phelps, by offering amenities that included housing, work, recreation, schools, and churches. It was necessary for an enticing civic life and infrastructure to be in place for the company town scheme to work, but the bottom line was always profit and production.

The company town was also a “powerful symbol of industrial modernity” (Dinius and Vergara 2011:5) not only because they advanced technologies in industry, but because of the services and amenities offered to entice and retain the workforce. Phelps once had a modern infrastructure that might have rivaled bigger towns and smaller cities. For the area to be accessible by tourists, industry came in the form of transportation infrastructure which included roads constructed in 1872. Railroad service was established in the 1880s by way of the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad and the railroad spur to Phelps was completed in 1905. A passenger train stopped in Phelps each morning at 8am bringing tourists and new settlers from the south. Passenger service was discontinued in

1931, but freight trains continued until the late 1970s. (Phelps' Woman's Club 2001)

Two of my interlocutors shared that they thought the closure of train service to the area affected economic progress and growth.

From 1906 to 1912 the town saw population growth as individuals from Finland were encouraged to settle in the area as farmland in northern Wisconsin was portrayed as similar in quality to that in Finland. A brochure from the Hackley-Phelps-Bonnell Company markets Phelps as a destination for relocation with robust offerings in the realm of civil society. The brochure touches upon every conceivable area of a person's life. Farmland, with harvested hardwood available for housing, is sold in easy installments; one's health will improve in Phelps due to the fresh air and water; when not farming, work is available in the mill or chemical plant; fresh produce, livestock, milk, and cheeses may be bought locally; local schools abound, and a Protestant and Catholic Church can be found in Phelps; and the "amusements" of hunting and fishing are available. (Phelps' Woman's Club 2011) The brochure infers that the company is interested in the success of the people who buy land from them, farm it, and work in the mills.

Finally, the brochure speaks of "progress" and lists all of the modern amenities located in Phelps – a department store, a cheese factory, summer resorts, large lakes, a good doctor, an amusement hall, a band, a hotel, a barbershop, and a bank (coming soon); but it also lists needs that settlers might supply – a garage, another hotel and restaurant, a laundry, a bowling alley, potato warehouse, etc. Amenities abound but there is room for growth so small business owners are encouraged to relocate to open a restaurant, a bowling alley, or a laundry. (Phelps' Woman's Club 2001)

Residents who worked for the logging industry were inclined to make purchases at the company store as their wages were paid in scrip. Millworkers referred to the money as “shink-shank.” It could only be used at the company store owned by the industrialists. Company owners claimed that the workers were paid in scrip to prevent theft; however, this was a profitable endeavor for the company’s owners because their business made money off of the workers in two ways – the logging industry made money off of the labor of the settlers of Phelps and, in addition, from the income from that labor. (Phelps Woman’s Club 2001) Mr. Smith, a year-round resident and vendor at the farmers’ market, describes it this way, “People didn’t make a heck of a lot of money. Christiansens basically controlled the community, whether good or bad. They paid in “chips” so everything that they earned was spent back in the community whether right or wrong. That’s the way they did it.”

Food was in abundance for the millworkers. Finnish settlers opened a farmers’ cooperative in 1916 and there were many settlers who operated their own farm to grow vegetables for local consumption. Two dollars per month was automatically deducted from millworkers’ paychecks to pay for a doctor’s services. “Recreational activities” were available in the early 1900s. Prostitution could be found in the town until Mr. Phelps burned down the brothel that housed the prostitutes. More family-friendly activities included an opera house and bowling alley with bars and pool rooms available for the millworkers on the weekends. Phelps continued to prosper and provide amenities and conveniences to residents and tourists. There was a grocery store, hardware store, summer activities for kids, and activity in the downtown area. (Phelps Woman’s Club 2001)

In 1928 the Hackley-Phelps-Bonnell Company was dissolved and consequently purchased by C.M. Christiansen whose descendants continue to have a strong presence in the town of Phelps. The saw mill that processed wood operated until it burned down in 1957; however, by that time the logging industry was obsolete in the area. (Phelps Woman's Club, 2001) Even after the dissolution of the Christiansen Company, the family continued to have businesses in the area and owned much of the land.

Once the logging resources dried up, the CM Christiansen's family continued to hold power in town through land and business ownership. However, small businesses began to open in the 1930s. There was a TV repair shop, a boat-making company, a shoe repair shop, a blacksmith, a coal business, a gas station, and a pallet corporation. CM Christiansen's son began a building materials company while CM manufactured pre-built homes from the 1960s until 1988. Even though the single industry was no longer the strongest economic thread in the township, Phelps continued to prosper economically into the 1980s. (Phelps Woman's Club 2001)

A striking comparison may be made between the Phelps of the early 1900s and the Phelps of today. Back when the Hackley-Phelps-Bonnell Company was in operation the town was expanding and had desirable amenities. To be sure, this growth resulted from a marketing brochure whose sole purpose was to lure settlers, but it did not exaggerate the businesses and opportunities available in the area. Today, Phelps has limited services and facilities in stark contrast to the booming company town of yesteryear. As services, stores, and companies close down due to the lack of economic opportunities, townspeople are acutely aware of what they are losing. Mark Boyd asks during our interview, "What can you get here in Phelps? Gas, a boat motor, expensive

cereal, and expensive milk.” According to him, these are not the sort of goods and services a year-round resident needs or wants; they are goods and services which cater to the seasonal and tourist population. I ask Ellen Nelson, a year-round resident who moved to Phelps in the 1980s, how she thinks Phelps is doing economically. She states, “Lousy. There’s nothing left. There’s nothing to do anymore. The logging industry went away and then all that was left were bars.” During our interview, Mark Boyd shares, “This town was destined to be what it is many years ago. For one thing it was pretty much owned by one family. Way back even when my mom and dad lived here. This town is not going anywhere. It’s destined to be what it is, small with no business.”

Since its founding Phelps also had, and to a certain extent continues to have, a history as a resort town for the benefit of those from the southern part of Wisconsin and Illinois. Local businesses have taken advantage of the opportunity to supply goods and services to tourists. The history of the resort industry in Phelps runs concurrent to that of the company town history. One of the first resorts in the Phelps area, The Big Sand Lake Club, was established in 1883.¹⁰ In order to lure tourists, resort owners boasted the beauty and serenity of the Phelps area as well as the opportunities for hunting and fishing. (Phelps’ Woman’s Club 2001) Phelps may have been able to economically sustain itself with revenue from the resort industry, but many resort owners sold off their cabins and property to individual owners. There are only a handful of resorts that continue to lure tourists to the area. Recently, the Phelps Town Board initiated weekend events to again entice visitors to the area. Still, amenities for residents in Phelps are lacking, in particular when one compares them with the offerings of the past.

¹⁰ My first job at the age of 16 was as a dishwasher at this resort.

Current Residents of Phelps, WI

Phelps has approximately 1,400 year-round and 4,800 seasonal residents. Most year-round Phelps' residents are low- or middle-income¹¹ and typically shop at one of three grocery stores located in other communities. Seasonal residents are generally members of the middle- or upper-middle class and can afford to travel to the grocery store and stores that offer specialty items, or purchase a share in the CSA.¹² They also tend to be retired so they have the time necessary to make trips to specialty markets and shop at the weekday downtown Phelps' Farmers' Market. There is a small population of tourists who typically utilize the convenience store for vacation food items and visit the farmers' market.

Due to its history as a company town and resort town, Phelps is a dynamic community made up of people born and raised in Phelps, those who moved to Phelps permanently, seasonal residents, and tourists. I had the opportunity to interview a mixture of individuals in Phelps, formally and informally. There is a stream of people going in and out of Phelps, mainly in the summer months, but no one moves to Phelps anymore unless they are buying seasonal property.¹³ Moreover, residents continue to find work in larger communities 15 or more miles away. The nursing home, which was the main employer, moved operations to a larger community an hour away. The availability of

¹¹ The median income for a household in the town was \$37,000; almost 10% of the population was below the poverty threshold in 2010. <http://www.city-data.com/city/Phelps-Wisconsin.html>, accessed January 13, 2015.

¹² The CSA model requires individuals to become a member through the purchase of a share prior to the growing season. This allows the farmer to know how much to plant and ensures that members share in the risks that the farmer might contend with due to unexpected weather damage to crops.

¹³ In fact, since 2000 the population of Phelps has decreased by 11%. <http://www.city-data.com/city/Phelps-Wisconsin.html>, accessed January 13, 2015.

goods and services for residents of Phelps has been in slow decline since the late 1980s due to businesses migrating to larger towns in the region.

It seems that some services in town today cater more to the seasonal and tourist people than year-round residents. For instance, the convenience store sells beer, gasoline, frozen pizzas, and some food that local residents could use, but the prices are twice as much as at a grocery store and the food is packaged and processed. There is one bar and one restaurant frequented by year-round residents, but these places are also dependent upon the tourist dollar.

Overt tension between Phelps' residents and those who enjoy the town as tourists or seasonally is not widespread; however, one of my interlocutors did state to me that he felt that the town is run by the seasonal people and tourist visitors. He shares, "We are under the thumb of the tourist. Not only the tourist, but what I call flatlanders. We are under their thumb. They dictate to us how we can do our homes on the lakes, when we can cut our grass, how we can waterski on the lakes." By his estimation, seasonal residents have an equal amount of say in decisions made about the town. He remembers better days and states, "I don't think it ever should have been that way. It never used to be that way. It used to be, you know, that the people up here would say, 'This is our town, our community, this is the way.'" Another interlocutor, Larry Kent, who is a year-round resident who moved to Phelps approximately a decade ago, is distressed by the power that tourists have in town. He gave the example of the new ordinance that allows all-terrain-vehicle (ATV) trails to be built, and use existing cross country ski trails in town. According to him, ATV trails attract a particular type of tourist, and the ATVs themselves are loud and tear up trails that might otherwise be used by cross country

skiers or more “silent” sports. In his opinion, the only reason the ATV trail campaign succeeded was because business owners want to lure more tourists to Phelps.

Interestingly, this topic was brought up unprompted during an interview with a seasonal resident who participated in Tom’s CSA. The tension between seasonal and year-round residents was evident to her as well. Maria Croft shared, “There are a lot of people like ourselves who have retired up here who are bringing ideas and the local people still feel on the other side, unfortunately, so it’s the lake people versus the town people which is not what we want.”

My research does not explore any more deeply the tensions that might exist between tourists, seasonal residents and year-round residents; however, my research does explore the various food procurement strategies that are divided along seasonal and year-round resident lines. My research found that the ways year-round and seasonal residents procure food differed; seasonal residents reported making trips to specialty grocery stores, the full-service grocery stores, shopping at the farmers’ market, and membership in the CSA. In contrast, year-round residents engaged in self-provisioning strategies conducted outside of the marketplace.

Chapter 4

The Food Landscape of Phelps, WI

Even though Phelps is considered to be a town with limited access to food, my thesis supports the idea that Phelps has a variety of affordable food options, if one has the time, knowledge, and skills to self-provision, or shop at the farmers' market or become a member in the CSA. According to the original USDA Food Desert map,¹⁴ Phelps is located in the middle of a large swath of food desert.¹⁵ Most of Vilas County, which borders Upper Michigan, is a food desert with the exception of Eagle River, a vacation community that has two of the major grocery stores frequented by Phelps' residents. There are other food desert regions located to the east and north of Phelps in Forest County, WI and Gogebic County, MI. According to USDA tools accessed in 2012, Phelps was in the middle of a food desert that spans three counties but this has since changed due to the USDA's new locator tools.

Based upon the USDA food desert locator tools, there is no question that Phelps is located in an area deprived of easily accessible, affordable food that can be purchased at a grocery store. The food desert locator shows that 44.5% of people living in Vilas County have low access to food and in 2008 the poverty rate was at 11.5%. According to the new Food Access Research Map, which looks at distance to grocery stores as well as access to a vehicle, Phelps is not located in a food desert but the surrounding area is food

¹⁴ (USDA-ERS, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-desert-locator/about-the-locator.aspx>, accessed May 9, 2015). This map is no longer available.

¹⁵ The USDA Economic Research Service defines a food desert as a census tract with a substantial share of residents who live in low-income areas that have low levels of access to a grocery store or healthy, affordable food retail outlet, <http://apps.ams.usda.gov/fooddeserts/fooddeserts.aspx>, accessed on April 30, 2015.

insecure.¹⁶ Residents of Phelps are considered to have low access to food based upon distance to the grocery store.¹⁷ The Food Access Research Atlas, which took the place of the Food Desert Locator, continues to assume that grocery stores, which typically are owned by large corporations, are the only manner in which healthy food might be acquired.

Ethnographic data complicates the notion of Phelps' location in a food desert as participant observation and interviews bear out the fact that residents procure food in ways not taken into account by the USDA. These methods include backyard gardening, hunting, foraging, and berry picking. Due to the farmer's market being small and newly formed, and the scale of Tom Mareth's CSA, these projects are not recognized by the USDA either. Even though Phelps has indicators of food insecurity, such as geographic distance to a grocery store, when one begins exploring the natural food landscape there are a variety of options. In order to purchase food from the grocery store, residents have to travel at least 15 miles. Yet residents live in a food rich environment that includes fish, fowl, deer, berries, apples, mushrooms, and other edible animals and plants. It might even be considered a food oasis if one has the skills and time to hunt, fish, forage, plant, and grow their own food, and the ability to preserve these foods for winter. There are

¹⁶ The USDA Economic Research Service defines food insecurity on a spectrum. Low food security (old label=Food insecurity without hunger): reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake. Very low food security (old label=Food insecurity with hunger): Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx>, accessed on April 30, 2015.

¹⁷ The USDA's Food Access Research Atlas may be found here: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx>. Phelps is located in an area that is more than 10 miles away from a grocery store.

alternative ways of procuring foods that local and seasonal residents and tourists have access to that tap into a way of attainment contrary to the notion that Phelps is food insecure. This frames the Phelps' food system conversation as adaptive and positive, and illuminates pathways that individuals in rural areas may take to access food. In fact all year-round residents I interviewed are engaging in food procurement practices that include fishing, foraging, hunting, and backyard gardening. (See Appendix A)

ErnstFriedman (2011) acknowledges that the USDA's tools to map food deserts privilege large supermarket chains as places where individuals access food while ignoring the myriad of other ways people procure food. In other words, the mapping tools only identify conventional ways of procuring food which typically involves a trip to the grocery store. She goes on to state that anthropologists can use this tool as a starting point to explore food security, and also to ensure that other modes of food procurement are identified as viable provisioning strategies.

Grocery Stores

When I first began my participant observation I had a casual conversation with a woman working at the convenience store in Phelps while she was ringing up my ice cream purchase. She had just moved up north from a fairly populated town outside of Milwaukee. She complained that grocery shopping is now a problem for her. She will make the long drive to the Walmart in Rhinelander once per month for her groceries, but is not pleased about the inconvenience. This sentiment is echoed by Ellen Nelson, a year-round resident who moved from Illinois to Phelps in the 1980s with her family. She is a short, plump energetic woman who wears glasses that darken in the sun. She maintains a good sense of humor that, at times, borders on sarcastic. Our formal, taped interview is

funny, informative, and filled with laughter. For instance, at the start of our interview she pushes a recipe for kale torte across the table. She has a mischievous smile on her face and states that she's heard that CSA members have kale coming out of their ears. Maybe I could share this recipe with CSA members?

As we begin our interview Ellen shares with me that the majority of what she eats comes from the grocery store in Rhineland, a 45 minute drive from Phelps. The exception is the apples she has recently picked, and tomatoes from her neighbors that she procured through barter because part of their backyard garden is on her lawn. Her daughter Allison attends college in Rhineland and coordinates the family's grocery shopping around her school schedule. In Ellen's case, groceries are purchased by Allison only if they are on sale.

All interlocutors interviewed for this project go to the grocery store for some portion of their food; the percentages ranged from close to 100% of food purchased at a grocery store to less than 5%. Typically, those who garden, attend farmer's markets, or partake of Tom's CSA, will spend less money at the grocery store during the summer months. No one reported that grocery shopping is convenient or an enjoyable activity. Everyone I interviewed plans their grocery shopping trips around errands, work, or school; they also plan around sales. Many relayed that their meals are often built around what was in the house, and if they found themselves short one ingredient that they could not hop into their car and go to the grocer to purchase items such as carrots or an essential spice.

In a research project that focused on lack of private transportation, grocery store location, and food access in a rural area of South Australia, Coveney and O'Dwyer

(2009) found that participants without private transportation had to rely upon social networks to get to the grocer as well as being dedicated to a routine. Based upon my interviews, all residents maintain a routine when shopping for groceries as did participants in the research project mentioned above. I found that social networks in Phelps are generally activated with regard to residents sharing food that has been hunted, grown, fished, or foraged. On the other hand, trips to the grocery store appear to be solitary affairs for residents; however, it was mentioned by two of my interlocutors who are year-round residents that the senior residents of Phelps must rely upon social networks to purchase food from the grocery store.

As a seasonal resident of Phelps, I have made the drive to the grocery store in Eagle River too many times to count. I have also driven to Iron River and Rhinelander for reasons other than to purchase food. The

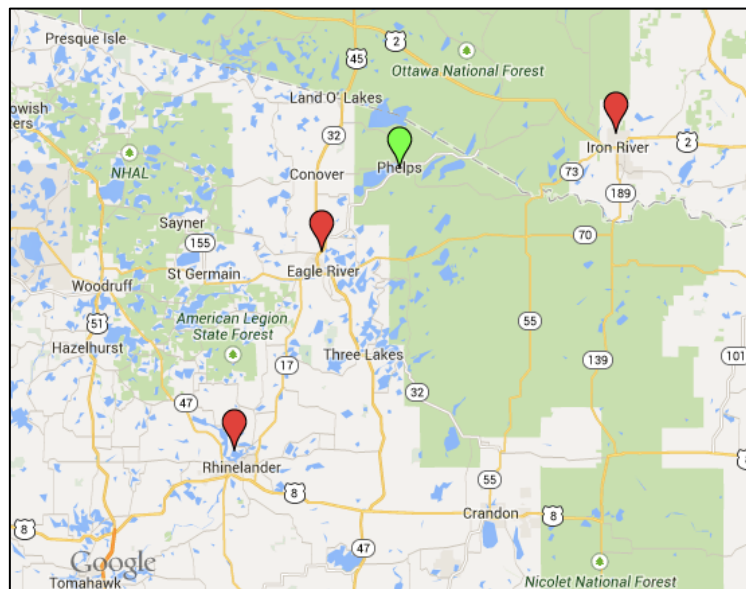


FIG. 4. Location of grocery stores. Phelps is indicated with a green pin. Google Maps, 2015.

route to these three communities involves driving on a two lane highway. The drive is beautiful because it is through the forest, winding past lakes and rivers in dense foliage. Complicating this serene picture is the fact that there are wild animals with which you must contend. Deer, raccoons, skunks, the occasional bear, opossums, wolves, foxes, and

other animals live in the surrounding forest and may decide they need to cross the road just as you are driving by. Moreover, the winters in northern Wisconsin are long. There are icy and snow-covered roads for at least five months of the year. This is a significant difference between the drive that rural residents must make to purchase food compared to urban or suburban residents who live fifteen miles or more from a grocery store.

Phelps residents can drive to three different towns to purchase groceries (See Figure 4 for map of grocery store locations). Iron River,¹⁸ which is 28 miles north of Phelps in Michigan, has Angeli's, a full-service grocery store with Italian specialty items. One Saturday a month Angeli's has a sale. One couple I spoke with will sometimes make the drive north to Angeli's in order to purchase Italian specialty items, but that is rare. Eagle River is a popular tourist community located on a chain of lakes about 15 miles south of Phelps; it has two grocery stores. Rhineland is 39 miles away and has two discount stores, a Walmart and an Aldi's. Travel time to each location is weather dependent. In winter months driving to the grocery store becomes more problematic as winter weather conditions can last for five months or more and include heavy snow fall and icy roads.

The Clarks, interlocutors who are year-round residents, informed me that they comparison shopped between a store in Eagle River versus the Walmart in Rhineland and found that by shopping at Walmart they could save 25%. However, they are hesitant to shop at Walmart because of its reputation and because they suspect that such stores may have hastened the closing of The Big Store in Phelps. Monica Croft, an interlocutor who is a seasonal resident, shares, "I don't like shopping at Walmart. It's too big for me.

¹⁸ Iron River, MI was settled by Italians; hence, Angeli's offerings.

I don't know where the food is coming from. If I buy some ground beef there, it comes from about a thousand different places. And all this pre-packaged stuff. I don't like it." It should be noted that all of these individuals are middle class or upper-middle class and can afford to make these shopping decisions. Ellen, whose daughter shops at Walmart, specifically shops for sales and is working class, and my assessment is that the worker at the convenience store who also frequents Walmart once per month cannot afford to comparison shop between Walmart and the other grocery stores.

When I asked Ellen Nelson if she was satisfied with her grocery store choices, she stated, "Well, it's all you have! What are you gonna do?" As Mark Body put it:

I tell you what I see...if I want something and I need something I don't want to have to drive 20 miles to get it. That's what's happened with the grocery store and the hardware store. If I need a screw or a bolt or something like that, I'm just out of luck. I can't run or go a mile and get it. These people that are on fixed incomes, they say, I need some carrots for the stew...well, you're just out of luck, because either you're going to go to the convenience store and they have them and you're going to pay four times for them or you're going to do without them, or you're going to say I'll drive to Eagle River to get them.

A study conducted in 2011 by Perkins Marketing Company supports the assessment that if people in Phelps decided to fully support a grocery store, they could have one in town. However, it is difficult for small businesses to compete with big box stores which are capable of buying food in bulk. Currently in the United States there are five grocery store chains that control more than 40% of retail sales; moving up the food chain to production, there are three huge conglomerates that control seed production, food production, and distribution. One company in particular, ConAgra, controls food production from seed to shelf. (Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002) In his documentation of the structures of the food supply chain, Isakson (2013:4) writes, "Since the onset of the

‘supermarket revolution’ in the early 1990s, food retailers have emerged as the most powerful actors within the agro-food system.” Bedore (2014:208) describes this process as an “historic trend of simultaneous expansion (into new global markets) and contraction (through mergers and acquisitions).” With this information in mind, it is not difficult to imagine the struggle that a local grocery store that sells local seasonal produce would have entering this market. Even though a market analysis supports the idea that the population of Phelps could financially support a grocery store, Phelps is not a large enough market for these food chain clusters to take notice. A large corporation will not make a profit in Phelps, Wisconsin.

I interviewed a couple who had researched opening a grocery store in Phelps. They thought it could work, but had difficulties finding distributors who would sell smaller quantities to them. The food distributors are profit-driven, just like the big box grocery stores, and have a minimum amount they are willing to sell to grocery store owners. According to the individuals I spoke with, the minimum amount they would need to pay a distributor was \$5,000 per month. While this price seemed financially viable in the summer months, when seasonal people and tourists were in Phelps, it seemed risky to assume that they would be able to maintain that amount in the winter months.

My findings reveal that residents of Phelps, whether year-round or seasonal, face significant challenges in obtaining food from grocery stores due to the distance from their home. Shopping for groceries is expensive and limited in choice. When asked about their grocery store options most residents were dissatisfied with their choices and reflected on the benefits that The Big Store provided when it was in operation.¹⁹ Until the end of the

¹⁹ My research did not uncover when the name changed to The Big Store or the etymology of the moniker.

20th century Phelps, WI had a full-service grocery store. I remember shopping at The Big Store with my mom throughout my childhood. We did not purchase groceries in other towns unless we were there for another errand or event. The Big Store started to decline about 15 years ago. The last memory I have of the Big Store was entering with my mom for some groceries about a decade ago. Back then the shelves were more than half empty and the meat was rotting. Up until recently, The Big Store was a flea market with the outside portion of the building in disrepair and the sidewalk in front of it littered with furniture and other used items for sale. (See Figure 5 for a recent photo of The Big Store.)

The Big Store was recently purchased by a developer who hopes to turn it into a site for micro-business; however, when I was conducting research in 2011 the store was for sale. A YouTube user with the username anewphelps²⁰ posted a video of the store to market the site as a viable business opportunity.²¹ The Big



FIG. 5. The Big Store is the white and brown building on the left. The site of the farmers' market is in the foreground. Photo by author.

Store is the site of the Company Store of Hackley-Phelps-Bonnell Company and was built in 1905. It also contained the company's offices. This place is not only important because of the historical significance, but is a prime location in downtown Phelps. The Company store contained food items, the post office, a butcher shop, and an ice house as ice at the time was the main coolant. (Phelps Woman's Club 2001) At one point the Big

²⁰ anewphelps is the username of the Phelps' Town Board Chairman in 2011.

²¹ The video may be accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_NEfKSZX4Q.

Store carried hardware and clothing, but over time the offerings became limited to food items.

About a decade ago the last successful owner of the Big Store retired to Florida and another man assumed ownership and operations. According to some of my interlocutors, the service was not very good, and the quality of the produce and meats was poor. This shift in ownership coincides with grocery stores across the United States closing down due to the inability to compete with larger stores like Walmart. Although it is difficult to say with certainty why The Big Store closed, it is assumed a result in some part due to competition from the Walmart 45 minutes away and larger grocery stores 15 miles away. It could not compete on two levels: price and selection. Blanchard and Matthews (2007:202-203) trace retail concentration over the last three decades, with the advent of supercenters such as Walmart, to adversely affect small-scale grocery stores in rural areas. Small grocery stores are unable to compete with the “buying power” of large retail chains. Residents saw the value of having a grocery store in town, but towards the end, many people began shopping in Eagle River because the Big Store offerings were limited and the building was falling down. When questioned about the lack of a grocery store in town, Mark Boyd makes sense of the loss of the grocery store this way, “People just go about their business. Some people adapt, some people jury-rig stuff, some people do without.”

The Phelps' Convenience Store

When I am in Phelps for the weekend, I will invariably make a stop at the convenience store in Phelps for food or gas (See Figure 6). For visitors in Phelps for the weekend, it actually is a

convenience. A visitor can fuel up their gas tank before heading back home, pick up beer or liquor for the weekend, or purchase easy to prepare vacation food such as a pizza or cold cereal. My husband



FIG. 6. The Phelps' Convenience Store. Photo by author.

frequents the convenience store every time he is in Phelps in the spring, summer, or fall to pick up bait for fishing. In fact, he has compared the bait from the convenience with that of bait from a resident selling it out of his basement and prefers the offerings of the convenience store because it is “fresher.” According to him, the service at the convenience store is friendlier. That being said, the convenience store is not a full-service grocery store and, therefore, seasonal and year-round residents must travel outside of Phelps for their food. The convenience store carries packaged food, canned goods, and staples such as milk, eggs, and bread. The prices are high, and the selection limited. During an informal interview with a seasonal resident on a fixed income, she states, “The convenience store is outrageous.” She recalls the time she was out of Raisin Bran and could not make it to the nearest grocery store. She had to buy a small box at the

convenience store for over \$6 in order to satisfy her taste. She was astounded by the price. The convenience store is mainly for staples – beer, pizza, cereal, peanut butter – for tourists to purchase so that they do not have to transport groceries with them.

A few of my interlocutors do rely upon the convenience store for staples when they cannot get to the grocery store. They purchase items such as eggs, milk, and bread. April Timm, a year-round resident, shares that if she has run out of milk she will buy it from the convenience store even though it is a dollar more than at the grocery store. She calculates that for this purchase she ends up saving more money than if she would drive to Eagle River just for milk. I was unable to prove this claim with other evidence, however, during one interview I was told that some of the senior citizens of the town rely on the convenience store for most of their groceries, because access to the grocery stores in other towns is even more inconvenient for them due to mobility. There had been a service that transported seniors to the grocery store in Eagle River one time per week, but the number of trips this program provided was cut back in 2011 and residents worry that the service will soon terminate.

Phelps' Farmers' Market

The Phelps' Farmers' Market was where I collected data and spent a significant amount of time conducting participant observation as a vendor. The Farmers' Market began operating in 2010. My primary interlocutor, Tom Mareth, states that he gave the idea of having a downtown farmers' market to the Phelps' Town Board; however, an extensive search of town board minutes from 2009 and 2010 did not reveal the source of the idea for the market. In fact, I did not find mention of the market in the town minutes

until it was already in operation in 2010.²² Every Tuesday morning and the last Saturday of the month from June to August in 2011, vendors at the farmers' market increased the amount of food available for purchase. My interlocutors who frequent farmers' markets, all seasonal residents or tourists, relayed to me that they use that food to supplement what they purchase at the grocery store. For tourists, a trip to the farmers' market may be part of their vacation. However, the data I collected uncovers the fact that year-round residents did not frequent the market, particularly the Tuesday morning market. In fact, I only saw one of my interlocutors out of the fifteen²³ at a Saturday morning market. All the rest relayed that they did not shop at the market due to its inconvenient time during the workday, prices, and preference.

Community Supported Agriculture

There is a local CSA project operated out of The Master's Hand Farm located a few miles from the downtown area of Phelps. The CSA has been in operation since 2008. I spent time on the Master's Hand Farm weeding, thinning vegetables, preparing CSA boxes for pick up, and talking with the farmer who runs the operation. I interviewed 4 people who were CSA members in 2011 and one who was a member in 2010; three interlocutors were seasonal residents, the other year-round. One year-round member volunteered her time by marketing the CSA and trying to create community within CSA members by encouraging them via email to visit the farm and share recipes. In exchange she received a CSA box to share with her family. Based upon what she shared with me about her and her husband's work, as well as how she was inclined to shop for sale items, I do not believe she could have afforded the CSA membership. All four interlocutors who

²² Phelps' Town Board minutes may be found at www.townofphelps.com

²³ Three of the eighteen individuals I interviewed were vendors at the market.

participated in the CSA stated to me they would not renew their membership the following year. Mainly this was due to restrictions placed upon their eating habits because of the box of produce they received each week.

During the summer of 2011, I prepared boxes for CSA members along with two or three other volunteers. In the morning before the farmers' market I would arrive at The Master's Hand Farm to harvest, clean, and box vegetables. (See Figure 7 for CSA box prep area) I would sell any remaining vegetables that did not



FIG. 7. CSA box prep area. Photo by author.

go into a CSA box at the farmers' market. By the time I arrived at 7:30 or 8 am, Tom the Farmer had already harvested the root vegetables so volunteers were responsible for cutting lettuces and picking tomatoes. One volunteer was a woman who helped Tom out in exchange for a CSA box. My dad also helped with this process. There usually was not much conversation because we were all busy moving in and out of the workspace and busily washing off and packing the boxes. Some vegetables were in abundance, such as kale, so boxes were always overflowing with that while other vegetables, such as carrots or broccoli, were scarce. We would painstakingly divide up the vegetables that were scarce to ensure every member received some in their box. During my interviews with CSA members in the fall, I discover that this was not a successful strategy as members either wanted enough of a particular vegetable to make cooking it worth their time or they did not want that vegetable at all.

Community supported agriculture projects require that consumers pay up front well before the seeds for the CSA vegetable box are even planted. This ensures that the farmer knows how much to plant and has the money to do so. The farmer can plan accordingly and does not have to worry about having too much or too little produce. Moreover, the CSA model requires that consumers share in the risks associated with farming and gardening. Tom Mareth, owner of the CSA, informs me that his CSA, which he refers to as a “cost share,” is in its third year and has grown from 8 participants to 33 during the summer I conducted research. The amount of members that commit to the CSA on a year-to-year basis is always a source of anxiety for Tom but he believes in the concept so he continues planning, planting, growing, and selling.

Tom formally began his CSA project 6 years ago; although, he has been giving away food and informally divvying up shares since the 1970s. We discuss the beginning of his informal CSA project:

Just growing a certain amount of food for people with money down so they don't back out because I tried doing...I made the mistake...I asked friends if I could grow vegetables for them and all they'd have to do is freeze or can “Oh, yea, that sounds real good.” Well, there was no money down so come time for harvest, “Oh, well we don't have time.” Because they were friends, whereas, with these boxes people are committed. You can plan and it works.

This thesis supports the findings of Ostrom (2007:105) that found that CSA farmers “started out with very idealistic visions for the CSA movement.” Similar to the farmers from Minnesota and Wisconsin in this study, Tom desires to produce healthy food for people free from chemicals and fertilizers. He also wants to farm in a way that will not harm the environment. Like the farmers in the study, Tom also struggles with sustaining membership from year to year as well as making a decent living wage from the operation

of the CSA. (Ostrom 2007:106) On the consumer side, this study reflects my research findings that members of CSAs are middle-class, educated, and white. (Ostrom 2007:109)

The CSA also ensures that customers receive a weekly box of a variety of fresh produce (See Figure 8). Hinrichs and Lyson (2007) explore the notion that crop diversity differs from that of industrial agriculture, which focuses on mono-cropping. They found that CSA projects are more sustainable and better for the environment due to this strategy and crop rotation.



FIG. 8. CSA and farmers' market vegetables.
Photo by author.

They also state that CSA provides a space where alternative discourses may be formed that shape the meaning of a way of doing agriculture that is environmentally sound and better for people. This means that farmers are not planting one crop as is done in conventional agriculture, but are producing a variety which is better for the soil. However, this variety is at times problematic for the CSA member. One of my interlocutors, Karen Miller a year-round resident who volunteered for Tom in exchange for her membership, explains her experience with the CSA this way:

I knew what I was getting into because I asked him about the crops, but I think some people did not expect what they received. They definitely get the quantity of what they pay for but not the variety they had hoped for. At least that's some of the comments that I received. Some people were disappointed that they didn't get certain kinds of things that they thought they would get. Some were disappointed that they got too many greens, and that kind of stuff.

A CSA is also a way to introduce vegetables that people might not otherwise purchase or do not have access to at the store. One customer I interviewed exclaimed, “opening up the box is like Christmas. We never knew what we were going to get!” For most this is an ambivalent prospect. Once the excitement that is generated by the first peek in the box wears off, the job of the CSA consumer is to plan out the week’s menu to ensure all of the produce is used. Moreover, some of the produce might be unrecognizable so the cook must research how to prepare it.

The Franks, whom I interviewed at their cottage in November 2011, were one couple who expressed excitement at opening the box; however, they expressed that they felt quite conflicted about the contents and how they were going to prepare their weekly dinner menu based upon what was contained in the CSA box (See Figure 9 for the contents of a CSA box). Mrs. Frank stated that during the summer she would change her everyday shopping practices to avoid the Wednesday farmers’ market in Eagle River. This was due to the fact that they either were still working through the vegetables from the box they picked up on Saturday afternoon, or they were holding off until they picked up their produce the following Saturday. She lamented the fact that she could not go to the farmers’ market and wander through the vendors and pick out exactly what she wanted. The Franks expressed the difficulties they had with eating



FIG. 9. A typical CSA box includes squash, kohlrabi, onions, cabbage, purple broccoli, and leafy greens. Photo by author.

seasonally. There might be certain foods that one of them liked to eat often, such as squash, and the other would only enjoy eating once every few weeks.

Similar to what I found in my research, Goland (2002:17) studied a newly formed CSA in Central Ohio. She reports that the CSA members were well-educated and middle- or upper-middle class. With regard to the CSA box contents, she found that, “In the spring, new shareholders expressed excited anticipation at the chance to try new kinds of vegetables and increase their overall vegetable consumption. Yet by fall this excitement had turned to frustration at trying to incorporate the same foods into their diets.” Members wished that they had more control over the food that was put into their CSA box, and had hoped for more basic items and not so many leafy greens. Two-thirds of these particular CSA members did not intend to return the next year.

During our formal interview, the Franks shared that all summer they had a taste for carrots. They only received a handful of carrots the entire summer and they both really wished for that in their box. They were committed to the CSA process and attempted to stay away from the farmers’ market and the grocery store for produce whenever possible. Mrs. Frank shared that cooking with the foods in the CSA box was a hobby for her. It was fun to figure out how to use certain items; kale was especially abundant and she finally decided to make kale ice cubes. She stated that if she were working outside of the home she would not have the time to focus on the CSA box. This is an astute observation on her part and, and along with the fact that CSAs are too expensive for some individuals, studies on CSAs show that time, affordability, and preference are all barriers.

April Timm, a year-round resident whom I interviewed at her kitchen table, took part in Tom's CSA the first year it operated. As a master gardener she grows many of her own vegetables but thought it would be "nice to try some of his things." She reports that kale was "coming out of her ears." She joked that Tom's wife was "kaled to death" but she canned so she knew what to do with all the unused produce. She shared at different points in our interview that there were "too many leaves and greens" and that, as a full-time worker, it was difficult for her to keep up with the box contents because she had to clean so many of the vegetables. Through surveys and interviewing CSA members in Maryland, Lang (2010:18) describes these same challenges that farmers face in satisfying customers. End-of-year survey data showed that members were frustrated by the fact that they did not have control over what appeared in their weekly CSA box and, at times, did not recognize certain vegetables in the box.

O'Hara and Stagl (2001:545), who surveyed CSA members in upstate New York to analyze motivation for membership, state that the CSA "may provide a vehicle for re-connecting and re-embedding food markets into their physical/spatial, social and ethical context." Their research concludes that members joined the CSA because they were searching for a marketplace that was re-embedded in their community. The interviews I conducted with CSA members support this finding. My interlocutors were interested in supporting a local farmer and thought that purchasing from a CSA was better for the environment than purchasing vegetables at the grocery store. O'Hara and Stagl (2001:548) also found that CSA members who completed the survey were better educated than the average New York household, had an income that was 30% higher than the average, and were more socially and politically involved. Although I did not survey

all CSA members, of the five I interviewed four had college degrees and were middle- or upper-middle class income individuals.

Unlike farmers' markets, which are public spaces, the farms that operate CSAs are typically private and tend to cater to more affluent individuals who can afford to put down several hundred dollars up front for their produce. The CSA is labeled a civic-agriculture movement by Hinrichs and Lyson (2007); that is, individuals who engage in this alternative marketplace are doing so consciously to be better stewards of the earth and to support local farmers who do not produce much income from their efforts. However, it can be argued that this "civic-minded" venture does not provide the same equal access that a farmers' market may provide. Other than the financial barriers, a CSA farm is typically on private property where farmers' markets could be considered spaces similar to the commons as they are generally in public spaces.

The transaction process at the CSA is different from that at the farmers' market as well. Member of The Master's Hand Farm put down money and shared the risks with Tom.²⁴ When contrasting the civic nature of both the CSA and the farmers' market both are capitalistic enterprises as farmers hope to make money, but in different ways. As stated above, the farmers' market is public whereas a CSA is private and one must be a member to participate. The farmers' market is open to all; however, in Phelps I found that it was not used by all due to the time it was held, affordability, and preference. Conversely, consumers at the farmers' market do not share the risks with the farmers. They can choose to purchase vegetables in the amount that they desire. There are barriers to participation in both these civic endeavors mainly determined by socioeconomic status.

²⁴ A CSA membership costs \$180 for a half bushel, or box, of vegetables; \$300 for a full bushel.

The CSA model is not only meant to support the farmer, it is also a tool meant to bring people together and closer to the food system that is feeding their bodies. Relationships between people are naturally engendered because the consumer gets to know the producer which is not a phenomenon that is seen in the industrialized food system. O'Hara and Stagl (2001: 546) state that a driving component of the CSA is "communication and interaction between producers and consumers...and are relevant to reestablishing the trust lost in disembedded markets." The Master's Hand CSA struggled with this concept to a certain degree. Tom wanted CSA members to come to the farm, walk around, and learn how the farm works. In fact, he would be happy if CSA members learned how to grow their own food as a result of being a part of his CSA. This desire was complicated by the fact that Tom's CSA members were from three different local regions. In order to accommodate shoppers, he had a drop off site for two of the areas so that customers were not inconvenienced with driving all the way to the farm each week. He also had a group of members who would pick up their produce boxes every week on Saturday afternoon. Karen, one of my interviewees who also volunteered for the CSA, relays some astute comments:

I think the farm concept for Tom would have done better if he had not done a delivery system. If he had made the people come to the farm, I think he would have gotten more of what he was looking for out of it. Because then it would also have more of a personal, one-on-one feeling. He loves to talk to people even though he doesn't have the time some days. He loves to get input and that's how he develops his thoughts and I think from not having that he lost a lot of it. The people he delivered to, he delivered a third of the business away; he didn't meet those people except for the first week. I think it makes a huge difference to people seeing it being grown...some of the disappointment in people's boxes would have changed overall had they come to the farm to see it.

The notion of civic agriculture is firmly rooted in the desire to take food out of the commodity chain and bring it into the realm of social processes such as personal relationships between producer and consumer, and the consumer with their food. The quote above illuminates the struggle that takes place within and between these relationships. In a study of CSA members' motivation, Summer et al. (2010:58) found through survey data of members in an urban CSA in southern Ontario, that members self-reported practicing civic engagement, community, and the celebration of local food. I found that these practices deemed cultural by Summer et al. are not activities practiced by low-income individual due to the price of membership.

Privately Owned Meat Markets

Another way in which residents eschew the traditional marketplace is by purchasing their meat from a local farmer. Many people whom I interviewed shared that they would buy a quarter or half cow, or other meats from sources other than the grocery store, and put it in their freezer. Henry Hall and Tom Mareth, two of my interlocutors who were born and raised in Phelps, raise animals for consumption and sale in Phelps. Henry resembles more of a lumberjack than a farmer. He is tall and wiry with thick brown hair and a dark beard. His wife Joan, a former nurse, fell in love with painting and quit working to pursue that passion. During our formal interview, they explain to me that they have raised many different animals over the years, but finally settled on sheep because they are easy to raise. Moreover, they are able to bring in money from the sale of the meat and by bringing ewes to market. In the past they had raised chickens but found them to be too much work, particularly keeping them penned in. They have thought about

grass-fed cows but don't think they have the amount of land necessary for such an endeavor. Sheep simply eat less and take up less space.

Henry and Joan get all of their meat from their farm or from other farmers who raise animals. In fact, their meals are based around what meat is in the refrigerator. When asked what they would be eating for dinner that evening, Joan looked at her husband who laughed and shrugged his shoulders as if to say, "I don't know." Apparently he is responsible for dinner on the weekends, and hadn't yet thought about it as it was still the morning. Typically, he goes into the freezer, picks out a meat, and bases the meal around it.

Others I interviewed bought their meat from farmers rather than from getting it at the grocer. Furthermore, year-round residents who I interviewed spoke fondly of the penultimate owner of The Big Store in Phelps, because he was a really good butcher. People in Phelps take their meat more seriously than they do their produce; seeking out a good cut of meat, or hunting and fishing were much more prevalent than backyard gardens, going to the farmers' market, or acquiring produce in some other way.

Self-Provisioning: Foraging, Hunting, Fishing and Growing Food

Contrasted with seasonal residents' and tourists' preferences, who I found participated in the local farmers' markets and CSAs, year-round residents eschewed those practices due to the inconvenient time, affordability, and preference. However, all year-round residents practiced some type of self-provisioning strategy. These included foraging for wild rice, berries, and mushrooms; hunting for deer, fowl, and bear; fishing; and, growing their own food on a farm or in a backyard garden. Similar to the variability in how much food interlocutors purchased from the grocery store, individuals self-

provisioned on a wide spectrum from close to 100% to picking enough berries to bake a pie. Chapter 6 of this thesis will explore in more detail the self-provisioning strategies used by year-long residents.

This chapter has shown that Phelps, WI has a rich and varied food landscape even though the grocery stores are not geographically located within the community. I found that residents of Phelps, WI procure their food in a variety of ways. They go to the grocer in Eagle River or Rhinelander, but they also hunt, fish, forage, and backyard garden. The beginning of this chapter explored the USDA's designation of Phelps, WI as food insecure. Ethnographic data has shown that Phelps defies the notion of food insecurity because there is plenty of food available if one has the willingness, time, and skills to hunt, fish, or forage. To be sure, some residents have always hunted, fished, and foraged because that is the way of life in Phelps; however, nowadays some of my interlocutors placed higher value on these processes because there was not convenient access to a grocer.

Chapter 5

The Phelps' Farmers Market

The Site

The Phelps' Farmers' Market provided a temporary place in downtown Phelps for people to gather, buy food, and have conversations (See Figure 10). It became a "third place" (Oldenburg 1999) on the

days it was in operation in the sense that it was a space outside of home and work where individuals could congregate, share information, and develop relationships. In my



FIG. 10. The site of the farmers' market in Phelps, WI. Photo by author.

research I found that the activities at the farmers' market were decidedly different from activities in other areas downtown. For instance, in a building to the left of the farmers' market site there was a diner open for breakfast. Typically, after I had set up my vendor table I would walk over for a coffee. My interaction with the waitress was friendly, but curt and brief probably because she was busy and I had to get back to my table. As a vendor, the conversations I had with visitors to the market were just that, conversations. One beautiful Tuesday morning, I conversed with a couple biking through Wisconsin. We talked about the route of their trip, how they were managing their eating and sleeping arrangements, and the fact that they could not purchase food from the market because they had nowhere to put it. The market I worked at was located on a patch of grass that

was once the site of a successful corner bar. The space was bounded by a building on the left, a building in the back of the vendors, and the highway that runs through town to our right. The farmers' market is situated on a prime piece of property in downtown Phelps.

The farmers' market is located on Highway 17, which is the main road through town, and on the corner where all cars must turn to navigate through Phelps. There was more traffic on the road than I had anticipated which meant there were quite a few people gawking at the marketplace when they slowed to turn the corner. This may have resulted in drivers attending future markets because they learned about the market while driving through town. Consistent with how McGrath et al. (1993:307) describe the market they studied, a suburban farmers' market, the Phelps' market was a "periodic community with its own ecology, boundaries, periphery, development, and members." Every Tuesday morning and one Saturday a month over the summer, it became a dynamic space with people interacting and products being sold. This is a space where relationships between producers, consumers, and individuals with their food are fostered and formed.

Farmers' markets are public spaces where farmers can set up booths or tables to sell their produce. (Hinrichs and Lyson 2007). Visitors to the farmers' market can attend simply to chat with vendors, ask questions, or meet others. The entire premise of the farmers' market is a space where the consumer has the opportunity to meet producer and learn more about the "social life" (Appadurai 1988) of the commodity they are purchasing. The conversations that I had with customers always focused on the produce. Visitors always expressed curiosity about the farmer, the farm, and sometimes how to cook what they were purchasing. Hinrichs et al. (2004:32), who analyzed the innovative retailing strategies of farmers' market vendors from California, New York, and Iowa,

state that, “Farmers’ markets are arguably the flagship of civic agriculture, given their widespread distribution now throughout the U.S. and their longstanding role both as fora for community interaction and sites for small business development.”

Gagné (2011:289) analyzed the market relationships at a farmers’ market in Washington, D.C. and found that individuals who frequented the market felt a sense of community while in this public space, which Gagné conceptualized as a “third place” where vendors and consumers developed relationships. Along with the sense of community individuals feel at the farmers’ market, Brown and Miller (2008:1300) propose that the “economic transactions that take place at farmers’ markets are combined with a variety of social interactions that make the markets valuable community institutions.” Francis and Griffith (2011:276) state “what makes markets meaningful and memorable is their unique role as social space.” My research supports these concepts. I witnessed and participated in developing relationships with consumers. In fact, I had conversations with most of my customers that lasted at least five minutes and included topics such as where they were from, where their cottage was located, or what they were going to do that day. The farmers’ market space in Phelps became a place for seasonal community members to interact with each other and their local farmer.

The Vendors

During the summer of 2011, as part of my research, I was a vendor at the farmers' market in Phelps, Wisconsin. The farmers' market occurred every Tuesday morning beginning in mid-June and ending in August. In the summer of 2011, there were also two Saturday farmers' markets for vendors to sell their produce. I also set up my vegetable stand one random Saturday just to experience what might happen.



FIG. 11. North Twin Lake. The view from my vendor's table at the downtown farmers' market. Photo by author.

From a methodological perspective, it made sense for me to conduct participant observation at this alternative market site so as to gain another perspective other than the CSA and farming activities at The Master's Hand Farm. Moreover, it seemed like it might be a nice exchange for the time that Tom was spending with me explaining his CSA, farming philosophy, and farming practices. I proposed the idea of selling his extra vegetables at the farmers' market to him early on in our relationship and he thought it might be a good way to unload the extra produce from the CSA.

The morning of the market, my dad and I would arrive at The Master's Hand about an hour and a half before the market opened at 9am. We were very excited for the first market so we arrived at the farmers' market site at 8am and ended up sitting for an hour with no customers or visitors in sight. On a typical Tuesday morning, Tom would be harvesting for the CSA boxes to be picked up that afternoon. We would help him while

we washed and packed produce for the farmers' market. None of us had any idea as to how much we should bring so we had too much at the first few markets. We brought kale, Swiss chard, kohlrabi, beets, and onions. The night before our first market my dad had driven the 30 minutes to Eagle River to purchase markers and poster board paper so that we could advertise our produce and prices. He made some signs the night before our first market and more while we were waiting for customers to arrive.

We drove to the market, approximately 5 minutes by car from The Master's Hand, and began setting up our produce. We discovered that we were not as prepared as we thought. Other vendors brought tents to use as sun shields for themselves and their vegetables, whiteboards, and had various ways of displaying their items that looked professional. Our produce had just been picked and quickly washed. We used old doors set up on boxes as our table, had no



FIG. 12. Our table at the farmers' market in downtown Phelps, WI. Photo by author.

tent so were exposed to the sun, and had homemade signs with our prices on them (See Figure 12). However, I think our stand looked good; the vegetables looked like they had just been pulled from the ground which they had.

McGrath et al (1993:291-295) conducted an ethnographic study of a suburban farmers' market to describe farmer and market visitors' behaviors in this specific sort of

marketplace. They set forth a “typology of vendors” to capture farmers’ behaviors around their selling strategies. Although the other typologies are not consistent with the vendors at the Phelps’ Farmers’ Market, one vendor typology is the “bumbling novice” which describes our capabilities as a vegetable vendor. They describe this type of vendor as inexperienced and new to the marketplace. Although our produce was phenomenal in quality because it was grown by a legitimate farmer, as vendors we did share some characteristics with the bumbling novice. For instance, we did not have a booth or umbrella to protect ourselves or the plants; the first time we sold at the market our plants began to wilt within a half hour. Instead of purchasing an expensive tent, we started to bring a spray bottle filled with water and would routinely spritz our wilting vegetables. The characteristics we shared with the bumbling novice were more than made up for by our enthusiasm in being at the market and helping Tom sell his vegetables.

The longest relationship a vendor has is with other vendors who are consistently at the market with them. Once you set up your vendor space at the market it is likely to be “your” space for the rest of the summer. My dad and I arrived very early at our first market and chose a spot we thought would be competitive due to its location. It was in the middle of the farmers’ market space and next to the permanent sign that advertised the market to vehicles driving by. There were two other scheduled market days prior to this one. The first was rained out and the second we did not attend because I had not yet made the connection with Tom. More than likely someone occupied our prime spot the week prior but the site we chose for our first market became our space for the remainder of the summer.

To our left was a woman who lived part time in Eagle River and part time in Mexico. She came to all of the markets except for the ones in August. She sold a niche product, sea salts mixed with home grown herbs and spices that were mainly used as a salt or spice mixture for cooking meats. By far she had the best set up with her salts packaged professionally and her table also decorated professionally. She offered samples of her salts mixed with olive oil. Fresh bread was available for dipping. Once we became comfortable with each other she shared with me that she used to live in San Francisco and would style the windows for the luxury department store Saks Fifth Avenue. She had a flair for marketing. In the winter she would go back to her husband in Mexico and sell her wares. She also sold at other farmers' markets throughout the area and had an online business set up to sell her product.

For most of June and July a woman selling herbed goat cheeses and homemade bread set up her booth to our right. She too had an online business, sold her cheeses commercially, and made the farmers' market rounds throughout the region. Her set up was pretty simple but she also gave samples of her cheese. Consumers would inevitably end up at her table munching on fresh bread and goat cheese. On the far end to our left was a gentleman from Upper Michigan who sold canned fruits and vegetables in mason jars decorated with cloth and ribbons. The Smiths, year-round residents who are retired hobby farmers, started out to the right of us but then moved to the left of the salt lady, and eventually next to my dad and me when the salt lady did not show up in August.

Much to my dad's and my chagrin, the Smiths always sold out of their produce every week. They did not bring much, their garden is much smaller than Tom's and is more of a hobby than a business, but they always sold out and had the items that farmers'

market consumers wanted to purchase. When we were selling the same items as the Smiths, it seemed that their items were priced higher than ours. McGrath et al. (1993:295) describe the tension between vendor competition and cooperation. In order for a farmers' market to be successful there must be a variety of vendors so that visitors have choices. This leads to cooperation amongst vendors that could be seen on several occasions at the Phelps' market. On various occasions a buyer would approach a booth and ask for a specific vegetable, typically we found that consumers wanted tomatoes. If we did not have some, but the Smiths did, we would divert visitors to their booth. If someone was at the Smiths booth and was asking for something they did not have, they would send the customer down to our table. There was a sense of camaraderie and companionship when no customers were around; however, once a customer entered the market space, everyone would become focused on selling their product.

This sense of camaraderie did not extend to the farmer who came to the market halfway through the season. This gentleman caused quite a stir amongst vendors, and particularly with the Smiths, my dad, and I as we were the only other vendors selling produce. The farmer and his wife came with a big truck filled with fresh produce, the type that is typically found at a farmers' market (i.e., tomatoes, corn, broccoli, beans, carrots, and cucumbers). He also had a scale to measure out what he was selling. This farmer was seen as an interloper by us because he was not local. His farm was located about 45 minutes away in Michigan. The first time he came to the market, he parked behind the rest of us and set up his table and filled it with vegetables. For some reason, people gravitated to his stand even though he was not at the front of the market site like the rest of us. I can only speculate the attention was due to his big truck that fostered the

notion that he was a professional farmer and had a variety of vegetables to offer. I also sensed that the Smiths did not approve of him selling at our market. The first time he came Mrs. Smith made sure that he paid the \$5 to the Chamber of Commerce. I think she was worried that the woman collecting the money might miss him because he was parked behind the rest of us. In my interview with the Smiths in November, they brought up this farmer again and said that they did not think it was right for him to sell in Phelps. The notion of relationships is again activated in this scenario and is evidenced in the clique that was formed between the local growers of Phelps who reacted negatively to the non-local vendor.

In theory Tom supported the idea of selling his produce at a farmers' market, however, in practice he was not sold on the idea of marketing his produce in this way. For Tom, time at the farmers' market meant time away from his farm and work he could be getting done there. This sentiment was echoed by the Smiths, who were interlocutors for this project and farmers selling produce alongside my dad and me. I asked them if they thought it would be better for business if the market switched from Tuesday mornings to Saturdays. Mr. Smith stated, "It's a little of a hassle for us regardless of when it is because by the time we get the stuff together in the evening and in the morning it wastes a good part of our day." Tom was unsure that he would make enough money to actually make it worth his time. When I first asked him about selling at the market he hedged a bit and spoke of these reasons. Eventually, he decided that I could sell his produce for him, but I believe he did this because he thought it would make for good information for my paper, not because he really wanted to do it. However, it was a good opportunity for him to test the waters and did not cost him anything. I only sold extra

produce that would not fit into the CSA boxes in any given week. This included kale, Swiss chard, and patty pan squash to name just a few. My father and I did not end up selling much of our produce on any given Tuesday. In fact, my dad would usually buy whatever was left over and take it home to my mom.

The Products

The name farmers' market is somewhat of a misnomer as at most farmers' markets there are also vendors selling crafts, canned goods, and other products. Competition is evident in the pricing of vegetables and the assessment that the particular vegetables you are selling are better than other vendors. Until we figured out that we should price our vegetables

approximately the same as other vendors, we had difficulties determining the price of our produce (See Figure 13). Paxson (2013: 84) labels the process that small farmers use to price their products, in her book about artisanal cheese, as

“accounting.” When farmers are pricing

their product they take into account that price is qualitative as it relates to the story or account behind the product, and quantitative as it relates to how much it should cost based upon the tension the farmer feels with the going price at the grocery store weighed against their labor. Because this was extra produce, Tom was not concerned about making a profit so we guessed at the appropriate prices. We came up with a pricing system that sold everything for fifty cents. My dad and I are not salespeople or marketers,



FIG. 13. Our prices at the market. Photo by author.

but our desire to be competitive generated a discussion about pricing items higher so that people would place more value on them and, perhaps, be more inclined to buy them. We ended up tweaking our “accounting” system to price harder to grow items at one dollar for a bunch. This included tomatoes, a bunch of carrots, or a bag stuffed with peas or beans. Even with the new pricing scheme, I do not think there was one market where we sold out of all our produce.

The Smiths, who were the only other vendors selling vegetables, figured out their prices based upon what prices were at other markets they visited. They sold their produce for more than we did; however, they sold more common, recognizable, and desirable vegetables. Tom does not use any chemicals or fertilizers and considers his produce to be organic while the Smiths used chemicals on their garden to speed up the growing process. This meant that they had vegetables available for purchase that were not seasonal while my father and I sold what was growing naturally at the moment. The Smiths always seemed to sell all of their produce while we would either go back to Tom’s farm and feed ours to the pigs or my dad would bring it home.

The products were the main topic of conversation at the farmers’ market. One time a visitor wanted to know how to cook a patty-pan squash. Luckily, Tom had told me that morning that an easy and tasty way to prepare them was to cut them up and sauté them. Other visitors wanted to know about the carrots and radishes that we sold. Tom planted a variety of each some of which did not resemble those found in the grocery store. They were colorful: purples, pinks, and reds that prompt people to ask if they taste different from orange carrots or red radishes. They do not. As Black (2012:8) summarizes

in her book about an Italian outdoor marketplace, “many conversations are initiated when talking about food.”

The Consumers and Visitors

Some familiar faces would stop by and scan the vegetables on a regular basis, but mostly it was families from out of town, seasonal people, or tourists biking through the area who came to the market. When I questioned my interlocutors who were year-round residents about this they relayed that it was more than likely because it was on a Tuesday morning when most year-round residents would be working. The market was easier for tourists or seasonal residents to attend as they had more time for this activity. One of my interlocutors, Mark Boyd, stated, “I go but I say to myself, ‘it’s such a farce, it’s such a farce.’ It’s way overpriced. It’s like anything up here. It’s tourist driven. If these markets, farm to market, had to rely solely on the people in this area, it would go out of business with them prices.” It is evident that Mark does not think civic agriculture will improve the local food system in Phelps.

People who buy their produce at the farmers’ market have a particular identity. I did not formally survey customers at the farmers’ market so the only claims I can make with certainty are that they were all white, seasonal residents or tourists, and were presumably middle- or upper-middle class because they are able to afford a vacation or a second home. Without much financial risk they are able to attest to participation in an alternative food system that benefits local farmers, the environment, and their health. Individuals who frequent the farmers’ market imagine that they are purchasing food that is locally grown and grown by a hard-working farmer. An example of this social

imaginary is an ethnographic moment I experienced one Tuesday morning. A woman approached our table and asked where the farm was located. I told her approximately 5 miles from where we were. She replied back, “Now that’s local local!” The meaning she attributed to food purchased at the market included the notion that local is good and something expected at a farmers’ market.

In contrast to what consumers experience at a grocery store, the layout of the Phelps’ Farmers’ Market was inefficient for circulation as all the vendors were in one line. This usually meant that a visitor walked down the row of vendors and then had to come back down the line to get to their car. The most obvious difference is the separation of employees and shoppers in the grocery store, and the close relationship that is formed through conversation between the vendor and consumer at the farmers’ market. There are social exchanges that add value to the produce that goes beyond commodification and the pricing of a tomato. (Hinrichs and Lyson 2007) Although I did not question any of my customers about how they thought the social interactions added value to the produce, from my observations I can confidently state that all of the market participants I interacted with were happy to be at the market and enjoyed talking with vendors and with each other.

Farmers’ Market Observations

My research indicates that even though there is a monetary transaction at farmers’ markets it is a decidedly different experience than one has at the grocery store. Farmers’ markets foster social relationships between people. When a consumer purchases produce at the grocery store he may ask the produce manager questions but will more than likely

read the signs written about the produce – where it was grown, how much it costs, how to prepare it, et cetera. At a farmers’ market most consumers take the opportunity to ask the grower questions about their growing and harvesting practices, where their farm is located, or what will be coming up for sale in the future.

Sommer et al (1981:17-18), who studied grocery stores and farmers’ markets in ten California cities, found that grocery store shoppers tended to shop alone while those who frequented the farmers’ market usually did so with friends or family. They also found that, while conversations between consumers and vendors occurred at the grocery store, they were generally perfunctory and short. At farmers’ markets, conversations were generally more informational because vendors and consumers were discussing the produce. They also found that grocery stores are purposefully constructed to increase efficient circulation of shoppers at the expense of conversational areas. There are also more physical barriers between shoppers and workers at grocery stores, as compared to farmers’ markets, which limits conversation. I found that market visitors typically purchased vegetables and products from more than one vendor. Even if it was possible for them to purchase their desired items at one vendor they generally purchased a few items from each vendor. This is similar to what Andreatta and Wickliffe (2002:171) found in their study of consumers at farmers’ markets in urban North Carolina. “The majority of consumers interviewed did not engage in ‘one-stop’ shopping by purchasing from a single farmer.” They go on to speculate that this is because consumers want to visit with more than one farmer. While that might be true, I would also speculate that consumers at the Phelps’ Farmers’ Market felt obligated to purchase from more than one vendor due to the limited number of vendors and limited visitors.

The Phelps' Farmers' Market aligns with Brown's (2001:658) definition which is "a recurrent market at fixed locations where farm products are sold by farmers themselves." According to Lyson (2007), the farmers' market fits into the realm of civic agriculture just as CSA projects do. At the farmers' market the distance between producer and consumer is geographically collapsed, a distinct difference from the space that exists between producers and consumers in a grocery store. This space also engenders the formation of personal relationships between farmer and buyer because individuals who frequent farmers' markets are interested in local, fresh food and want to know how their food was grown and who is growing it. (Chiffolleau 2009) Customers are able to support their local farmer, get to know the person who grows their food, and are assured that the process is different from food grown industrially. However, I found that this did not include year-round residents of Phelps.

The Phelps' Farmers' Market is different from Farmer Tom's CSA project. The farmers' market is typically in a public space that is open to everyone. Francis and Griffith (2011:262) "consider farmers' markets as public spaces when the market is operating in a designed, open, accessible, and non-vehicular space where people come to buy locally or regionally produced goods and engage in community life on a regular basis." The farmers' market I worked at fits this categorization. Within this public space, farmers' markets have the opportunity to make "local food more visible in public spaces" (Brown and Miller 2008:1300). Two farmers from Phelps sold their produce at the market which made their food more visible, but it was mainly more visible to seasonal residents and tourists. Moreover, the farmers' market was located in downtown Phelps

and was public, however, it was not “open” to everyone due to the fact it was held on a Tuesday morning when most year-round residents were working.

The Phelps’ market is downtown and easily accessible and visible to those in the downtown area specifically for the market or for other reasons. Tom’s CSA is outside of town, and not advertised as a civic agriculture project open to all. However, people do wander onto Tom’s farm and are given a tour by him, if they want one. I can attest to this as my first meeting with Tom he was warm, welcoming, and very vocal about his farm. But this is not the same experience as coming across a farmers’ market. Second, the farmers’ market is priced so that almost anyone could purchase something from a vendor; whereas the CSA contract between producer and consumer dictates that half of the price of a CSA box be paid up front and half by March 1st. Many people are priced out of this project.

Similar to what is espoused by civic agriculture, proponents of farmers’ markets believe that they re-embed food in local spaces and foster social processes, Chiffolleau (2009) in her study of direct sale agriculture in France, found that relationships between people, and between people and their food, are embedded in the social construct of the farmers’ market; and the social and economic transactions that take place at this particular type of market are anchored in networks of people. The Phelps’ Farmers’ Market was based upon a variety of social interactions – vendor to vendor, vendor to buyer, and buyer to buyer as well as economic interactions. In her survey of vendors at a farmers’ market in Kenosha and Waukesha, WI, Bubinas (2011:167) found that vendors valued the “social and economic camaraderie that develops at the market.” Francis and

Griffith (2011:263) describe farmers' markets as "mixed-life spaces" due to their public setting that presumably enables all community members to enter and intermingle.

Colasanti et al (2010), who surveyed individuals across Michigan who did not frequent farmers' markets, found that farmers' markets cater to a particular group of people, those who are white, middle to upper class, educated beyond high school, and female. They also found that respondents, who shared that they valued fresh, local food, found the time of their farmers' market to be a barrier. This is similar to my findings in Phelps. Barriers to attendance included a lack of awareness that there even was a farmers' market, time constraints, location, and either an overly crowded or empty atmosphere. The Phelps' Farmers' Market has many of these same barriers. The market was only advertised with signage on the site of the market. If a potential market participant did not drive by the market or did not notice the sign, they would be unaware of its existence. The market was held on a Tuesday morning which was the main barrier to attendance for many of my interviewees because they were working during that time.²⁵ The location of the market was not a barrier as it was located in a prime location downtown. Finally, attendance at the market fluctuated between no people to 5 or 6 at any given time, but the market space was so small to begin with I cannot say whether amount of people was a barrier or not.

I asked Karen Miller, one of my interviewees who intended to visit the farmers' market but never made it, what she thought about it. She laughed, "I don't think it's successful," she shared. She went on, "I feel bad for the people because I think it's a

²⁵ In 2012 the farmers' market was held on Saturday mornings. I did not conduct any observations during this time period so I am unable to state definitively whether this helped increase attendance.

waste of their time...we're off the beaten path to start with and our growing season is so short and the only people at our market is our local people to sell. The other markets have people coming from down state bringing stuff up and that makes a huge difference." Her observations are astute in the sense that much of what she sees can contribute to the success or failure of a farmers' market. The Phelps' Farmers' Market is in an out-of-the-way place which discourages tourists or residents from other towns; it is difficult for farmers to make a living on the limited produce that they can grow in a short season, which discourages their participation; and, other farmers' markets in the area have more vendors and thus more selection. Schmit and Gomez (2011:124-125) who conducted a study in a rural region of New York found that successful farmers' markets in rural, low-income communities have several components: 1) they attract vendors with large amounts of a variety of produce for sale at lowered costs. This sentiment is echoed by Karen Miller's critique of the Phelps' Farmers' Market; 2) vendors that sell fresh and processed foods to ensure more choices and one-stop shopping for visitors; and, 3) strong market management and community partnerships. The Phelps' Farmers' Market does not have any of these components.

The market did attract some return visitors. One woman, a year-round resident, enjoyed coming to the market because she was purchasing just for herself and wanted only a small amount. She would purchase kohlrabi when we had it, and would ask for it when we did not. One market day she asked for it and we did not have it, but we told her we would bring it next for her. Next week she did not show up. Another time a woman asked for several bunches of kale. We told her we would bring some next week for her, but she never showed up either. Most people wanted tomatoes or corn when they were

not in season. Even when my father and I thought we had vegetables that would be particularly enticing to consumers (e.g., carrots, lettuces, or peas), we would not sell out of these items. My point here is that it is difficult to know what people who come to a small farmers' market in an out-of-the-way place are going to want. It also supports the notion that shopping at the grocery store is more convenient because it typically carries a wide selection of produce so shoppers can purchase what they want.

Some folks would stop at every vendor's table and walk away with nothing. It appeared that others would go from table to table and buy a little something from each vendor in order to spread their wealth. McGrath et al (1993:301) describes buyer behavior at the farmers' market they studied as "serendipitous, impulsive, and immediate responses to sensory stimulation." They found that consumers did not come to the market with a shopping list in hand as is typical of consumers in a grocery store. In conducting my participant observation at the Phelps' Farmers' Market I would agree with this assessment. Many times buyers would come for a specific vegetable and if it was available they would purchase it, but they would invariably leave with other vegetables as well.

The barriers that exist in the farmers' market in Phelps include the extra time it takes to make a trip to both the farmers' market and the grocery store. In contrast to a CSA, the farmers' market offers more variety. There are different farmers selling various goods, and the variety increases if the farmer is using chemicals to make produce grown faster and out of season. A customer can come to the farmers' market and purchase exactly what they want in the amount that they want. This is different from the CSA box that is a surprise each time. Customers can also feel as though they are supporting a food

system as opposed to one farmer. They can purchase goods from several farmers and spread their money throughout the local economy. In order for alternative agriculture to succeed I would argue that the more types of vegetables sold and the different ways of purchasing will only add to its possibility of success.

My research indicates that the Phelps' Farmers' Market did not successfully cater to year-round residents due to affordability and time of the market. In order to increase participation of year-round residents and grow the downtown market, the organizers of the market must make changes to include this part of the population. This thesis follows Markowitz's (2010) critique of farmers' markets "civic" nature because they do not appeal to low-income consumers. Her paper illustrates how low-income individuals do not have access to farmers' markets due to location and price, and highlights the fate of two farmers' markets in low-income neighborhoods in Louisville, KY. Although this study was conducted in an urban area, the lessons learned are applicable to Phelps. First, Markowitz (2010) found that support from local government is key to a successful market not only financially but by being outspoken supporters of the market. Second, community support is needed for a farmers' market to be successful. In Phelps, this is where existing groups, such as The Phelps' Woman's Club, could be engaged to support the downtown farmers' market. Finally, government subsidies, such as

Foodshare should be accepted at the market so that the ability to purchase vegetables is not a barrier.²⁶

²⁶ Individuals living in poverty are eligible for Foodshare based upon income limits. For example, a family of four in WI will qualify for Foodshare if their income is below \$47,700. Source: <http://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/1592> accessed on April 30, 2015. Vilas County, WI, where Phelps is located, has seen an increase in individuals receiving Foodshare presumably a consequence of the recession of 2008. In 2007 4.3% of the population was receiving Foodshare; that increased to 10.8% in 2012. Source: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lrb/pubs/waag/WAAG-13-1.pdf> accessed on April 30, 2015.

Chapter 6

Self-Provisioning

In Phelps, I found that many residents use alternative means to access fresh, healthy food via hunting, fishing, foraging, and growing food. The skills and knowledge to engage in these activities have been passed down in the family or shared amongst residents. All of my year-round interlocutors used food from hunting, fishing, and foraging as a supplement to the food they purchased at the grocery store.

Participants

Participants in self-provisioning were year-round residents and were low-income to middle-income individuals. The one couple I interviewed who were living on a limited income, Tom and Sue Mareth, were subsistence farming; Tom sold some of his produce through the CSA and farmers' market and all of his work time was spent on the farm. His wife brought in income by cleaning houses. Tom shared with me that he gave up his job in the workforce because he wanted to self-provision. The Smiths, vendors at the farmers' market, grow their own vegetables, have an orchard, and also grow grapes for wine for personal consumption. They are retired and have filled their time with these activities that they deem enjoyable. Karen Miller has a backyard garden tended mainly by her husband; her husband and son also hunt and fish and her daughter fishes. They have a large refrigerator in their home to store their meat and fish. Karen describes the satisfying difference between a meal that is self-provisioned compared with one purchased at the grocery store. Ellen Nelson procures almost all of her food from the Walmart in Rhineland; however, she tells me during our interview that she and her daughter went apple picking the other day and intend to bake a pie. Tim Lang, a seasonal resident, has a

backyard garden that provides the salad for many summer meals and enjoys raspberry picking which typically turns into jam that he and his wife enjoy year-round. Pam and Larry Kent forage for berries as an enjoyable weekend activity. Mark Boyd tried backyard gardening but his property does not have enough light so he grows food on Tom Mareth's property. April Timm is a master gardener and intends to expand her garden. The Clarks recently moved and have yet to section off garden space. Otherwise, the Clarks, George Clark in particular, enjoy foraging for berries and wild rice. The Halls, who raise cows for meat, also enjoy foraging for berries.

Hunting and Fishing

Karen Miller and her husband and son fill her refrigerator and freezer with enough fish, fowl, bear, and deer to last the winter. In an interview she relays that her family acquires a majority of the meat they consume from hunting and fishing. She shares,

We hunt. They hunt and fish both. We've got bear in the freezer. We're hoping to have a deer for venison. We've got ducks and geese in there now. My son's an avid hunter and my husband's an avid fisherman. They're both avid fisherman so we've always got fish. That kind of stuff we always have. We have in the past, we haven't done it in a while because of budget dollars, but we've bought a pig or half a cow and that's what we're gearing to do again.

Karen shares that when her family enjoys meals prepared with foods they have self-provisioned, "You definitely enjoy them better and we talk about it. We discuss that as well. It's not that we just feel it; it's actually something that we vocalize. It creates a real sense of pride with my son when we say we're eating his this and that." I know many other seasonal and year-round residents who hunt and fish for sport, enjoyment, and to fill the freezer, however, I did not interview them for this thesis.

Sharing and Bartering

Many of my interviewees mention sharing and bartering as a food procurement strategy. When I ask Mrs. Smith about access to healthy food for people who do not garden, she replies, “I would say it depends on who they know. Somebody puts in a garden they give a lot away. The gardens take care of a lot of people.” Her husband chimes in:

The seniors here, if they know someone they get it. Even like us there’s people we don’t even charge. We just take something over to them that can’t afford anything like that. We’re not strictly just looking at the money aspect of it. We got a couple neighbors that once or twice a week we take stuff down to them. But we help each other. It isn’t always the dollar that’s looking at ya’.

Mark Boyd in particular mentioned that he does a lot of bartering for food and other items. For him it’s “a way of life.” Mark helps Tom on the farm during the growing season as well as with his livestock and wood splitting activities. During our interview he shared that, “everything I do for Tom is bartered. For instance, all my work that I do for him I get a half of beef, and if he does chickens I’ll get some chickens. He has something I need so there’s no money exchanged which is probably a good thing in instances. That’s a way of life. When you don’t have the funds, then you barter.” Mark also barterers with people at the nursing home. He states, “I do a lot of fishing. I pick a lot of berries and I’ll barter with people like at the nursing home over there. They’ll say, Mark, ‘What about blackberries and blueberries? We’ll make you some jam.’ To me that’s neat.” Mark also gives vegetables and items away to those in need. He “loves the outdoors and farming” and:

there's people in need, and to me if you're going to do it for yourself, if you're not going to can, it's really hard to plant one tomato plant, one pepper plant, or three feet of carrots. It's a waste so if you're going to plant it and you're not going to can it, you might as well give it away and not let it go to waste.

In analyzing urban and rural food insecure areas in Iowa, Morton et al. (2007) found that people in rural areas rely upon reciprocal giving, bartering and sharing as strategies for food provisioning outside of the marketplace. They contrast reciprocity with redistribution, such as public welfare benefits and private charities, which is a strategy that food insecure individuals in urban areas rely upon more. They do not stipulate why this is the case except to point out that individuals in urban areas may not have access to large areas of property to grow enough food to share with others as do rural people. Conversely, rural individuals may not have access to private charity sources, such as food pantries and community meal sites, because of geographic challenges. The analysis that rural individuals utilize reciprocal relationships to procure food holds up in Phelps, WI.

There is a food pantry in Land 'O Lakes, WI, a twelve mile drive from Phelps, available to Phelps' residents. No one I interviewed mentioned the food pantry; however, in town board meeting minutes from July 11, 2011 it is reported that 53 families and individuals from Phelps used the food pantry. It is not indicated whether that number is per month, per quarter, or per year. To be sure, food from a food pantry is more affordable than from the grocery store, however, participants still need to purchase gas to get there, have a reliable car, and drive in unfavorable conditions in the winter.

Foraging

During my very first foray into participant observation I engaged in conversation with two women staffing the Phelps' History Museum. I asked them to tell me about the various ways that residents acquired food other than from a grocery store. They spoke with humor about the fact that some berry pickers have their favorite berry spots picked out and bounded. They create imaginary boundaries around their favorite spot by tying a flag near the patch or keeping their spot a secret. They return annually. This activity creates a bond between nature and the forager, and the berry patch becomes steeped in meaning because of history, a sense of ownership, and the knowledge of a good secret kept. Although we did not keep them a secret, I recall my family having a favorite raspberry and blueberry patch that we would return to year after year. One of the blueberry patches is on the road that connects Phelps with Land 'O Lakes which is a town that we frequent because they have a good pizza joint. Every time we drive by the blueberry patch I remember the act of picking, smelling and tasting the blueberries.

Another aspect of foraging is that of the knowledge gained through the process that can be passed on to family or other community members. A keen sense of what is happening seasonally is necessary in order to return to the spot at the precise time when the berries can be picked. This requires knowledge about the weather, the growing season, and the optimal time to pick. Individuals come across this knowledge through observation, trial and error, conversations with others, and perhaps a radio program or newspaper article. Foragers are also aware that they might be treading in someone else's berry patch, which ensures that most people self-regulate their foraging behavior. They would not want someone to "steal" from their berry patch so they will not steal from

another's. Ellen Hall is a forager who picks raspberries. For the past couple of years she picked so many that she has rented a space at a farmers' market in a nearby town. The monetary gain she gets from selling her berries once a year at a farmers' market cannot explain her desire to pick so many berries that she and her husband cannot consume them all. She enjoys berry picking as a leisure activity.

George Clark loves hunting and foraging for food such as wild rice and berries. In the past, he occasionally hunted deer, but would mostly fish and hunt fowl. Nowadays he does not hunt, and his fishing practices are mostly catch and release. When he talks about fishing for trout it is with reverence and awe for their beauty. He talks about hunting for trout over the summer; catching a beautiful fish, admiring the markings, and placing it back in the river. When he describes this experience, he motions with his arms how he gently places the fish back in the river. He states that he could never kill and eat something as beautiful as a trout; he describes the coloring in detail. He also talks about a recent sojourn he took with his daughter in law to watch fish spawn in the river. He relays that they sat by the river, watching quietly.

About halfway through our interview at their dinner table, he points over to a desk in the living room. An expensive camera with a huge telephoto lens sits on his desk; George tells me he now hunts with his camera. He will travel into the woods to take photos of birds and any other animals he comes across. He considers this hunting and shares that photography feeds the hunting portion of his hunter gatherer personality. George has a difficult time going a day without photographing, fishing, or foraging for food. He is philosophical about his relationship with animals and nature. In conversation he circles back to the idea of hunting and foraging for food several times. When talking

about this topic his face holds a combination of awe and seriousness. He will tell you that he craves the feeling that provisioning food via foraging gives to him, and that he feels unsettled if day goes by where he is not out in nature.

McEntee's (2011:241) research project conducted in rural New Hampshire focuses on rural food procurement practices and provides a useful template for my research. McEntee's study distinguishes between food procurement practices with a focus on the "actor's intent." To better understand rural community members' food procurement practices with the intent to increase rural food justice, the author provides two ways of procuring food: "traditional localism" and "contemporary localism" that provides a useful lens for analyzing the differing procurement practices between year-round and seasonal residents of Phelps. The intent of traditional localism is procuring affordable food via any means while contemporary localism's intent is to impact the social and environmental fabric of a community.

Similar to my research findings in Phelps, McEntee found that most community members prefer to eat local food. For year-round residents of Phelps this meant local food that they self-provisioned, not the type of local food purchased in the marketplace. For seasonal residents of Phelps local food generally means food grown by a local farmer and purchased at the farmers' market or CSA. Just as in Phelps, McEntee's respondents thought that local food is too expensive. "They preferred local when they could grow it (or shoot it), but not when they had to pay for it. This behavior is part of what I call traditional localism." (McEntee 2011:247) This assessment is consistent with my findings in Phelps. The first question I asked interlocutors in my formal interviews was how do you obtain the food you eat? Invariably, almost all spoke about their trips to the grocery

store first. These descriptions were usually laced with frustration in the process to get to the grocery store. Year-round participants would then go on to describe in detail their self-provisioning strategies with enjoyment and satisfaction. Seasonal residents would discuss membership in the CSA; again there was frustration in the contents of the box, or their enjoyable trips to the farmers' market.

In contrast, contemporary localism is related to the alternative food movement which stresses support of the local farmer through direct purchase such as at a farmers' market or a CSA. With regard to rural food justice and ensuring access of local foods by low-income populations, McEntee (2011:247-248) offers this critique of the alternative food movement, "Contemporary localism is an extension of the current globalized food system, dictated by the same core values of efficiency and profit, where the end consequence of both systems is inadequate access to food for marginalized populations." In order to ensure rural food justice, McEntee suggests that the alternative food movement should highlight traditional localism as a way to ensure food access for low-income rural people.²⁷

Growing Food

When I began conducting participant observation I found myself wondering around town trying to find people to talk to about their food procurement strategies. As described above, there are not many places in Phelps where individuals congregate so I found myself at the site of the Phelps' K-12 school even though it was summertime. I walked into the building and came across two women cleaning a classroom. One of the women directed me to talk with her daughter, Tammy Clark, daughter-in-law of the

²⁷ Food justice supports fair pay for farmers and equitable access to fresh, healthy food regardless of income.

Clarks whom I discuss above in the section on foraging. I was told that Tammy grows much of her own food and is interested in homesteading and self-provisioning food.

Tammy lives a few miles outside of downtown Phelps in what is considered a residential area. There are other houses on her road. She has young children and quit her job as a nurse a few years ago so that she could devote more time to them and to growing food for her family. I enter her driveway one morning unannounced and introduce myself. We discover that she is around the age of my sister, who is 4 years older than I, and that they played softball together as children and young adults. I tell her a little about my project and ask her some questions about her food procurement practices.

Tammy is interested in moving out of Phelps so that she can have more property for her egg-laying hens, her goats, and her backyard garden. She does not have enough space on her property to grow what she desires and would not be able to feed her family solely on what she and her animals are currently able to produce. She reports that this is the first summer she has planted a backyard garden and she is unsure if her soil will produce what she is expecting. I ran into her a few years after this informal interview and she relayed to me that she and her family had moved outside of town onto a larger piece of property. They were “homesteading” which means they were producing their own food and their house did not have electricity or running water. This type of lifestyle would not have been possible on their property in town. Tammy has children to feed but her husband works outside of the home so homesteading was not a risky financial proposition for them.

Along with learning about Tammy's growing practices by wandering around town looking for people to talk to, several people I met early in my research directed me to Tom Mareth's farm, The Master's Hand (See Figure 14). One morning early in the participant observation phase, I got into my car and followed the directions to The Masters' Hand Farm which is only about 5 miles outside of town. I pull up to find Tom doing woodwork in one of the barns that I later learn he built himself. Tom looks like a farmer; he is about 6 feet tall, thin and tan, with thick, white hair and a beard on his face.

He has bright blue eyes that are alert, observing and taking in information. He likes to talk, but he always enjoys getting to work. As I walk up to him in the barn, he continues working, and I say hello to get his attention. I have startled him and he makes a joke about this. Even though he was in the middle



FIG. 14. The Master's Hand Farm. Photo by author.

of building something he stops what he is doing to talk with someone he does not know. I introduce myself and explain my research project to him. After he takes a brief moment to place me as the daughter of someone he has met, he goes on to talk about his farm while I pepper him with questions. His main concern is getting healthy, fresh, chemical-free produce to people in the area. He started his CSA in 2009 to do just that.

The Master's Hand Farm sits in a valley just outside of the township of Phelps. The setting is an idyllic 40 acre farm. In our interview Tom relays that he purchased the farm in 1976. He shares, "The animals and the garden were just an idea to be self-

sufficient and it was a part-time job. Instead of having a second job for more income I chose to grow things at home in place of that so that I could be there with the kids and, hopefully, spend more time as a family.” I ask him when farming became a full-time job for him. “Totally full time would have been about 12 years ago. It’s only been the last three or four years that the garden has increased and then it tripled, quadrupled in size when I started with the CSA.”

During my first meeting with Tom I do not pay much attention to the layout of the farm, the buildings, or the animals other than the plethora of chickens lying in the sun or running around (See Figure 15). This is due to the fact that Tom and I are talking about his farm, his ideas, and his needs for

close to an hour. I finally leave because I realize I am taking him away from a busy workday. On subsequent visits, I take in the farm visually. There are 20 or so egg-laying hens dodging around, one big beautiful rooster preening, several pigs, cows, and a horse. Tom built a



FIG. 15. The Master’s Hand barns and workshop. Photo by author.

woodworking barn that is well-maintained and looks newer yet it is made with wood materials so it fits in with the aesthetic of the farm. There is a small refrigerated cooler area that Tom utilizes occasionally over the summer during pick up times by CSA members. The mustard-color farmhouse is dilapidated and uninhabitable; however, it is still quaint and holds promise for restoration.

Currently, Tom uses the farmhouse as his lunch spot and office space. His grand scheme is to fix up the farmhouse, build his CSA business up, and eventually sell his farm to a young couple. The main barn where the pigs and cows live is weathered and looks old. It is also the area where customers can purchase unpasteurized milk and eggs produced by Tom's farm animals, or buy maple syrup produced by a man from a town about 2 hours away. There is no formal system for townspeople who want to purchase these items; one can simply walk into the unlocked barn, open the refrigerator and pull out milk or eggs. There is a box where money can be left or change can be made. This type of economic transaction challenges market economies that require money counting by the seller and a written account of the transaction for the consumer.

During the summer of 2011 when I conducted my research, Tom grew potatoes, a variety of squash, watermelon, cantaloupe, beans, peas, lettuces, kale, Norwegian spinach, beets, kohlrabi, onions, and scallions. The farmland itself is rich, beautiful, and seasonally fertile. The area where Tom grows his vegetables is at the base of two hills situated snugly in a valley and receives plenty of water. The area where vegetables are grown is approximately 4 acres in size which does not seem large when one considers the amount of vegetables it produces.

Tom wants to be a part of increasing farming practices in the area:

As you drive around, you see all the little farms that used to be here. I think I mentioned this to you the first time we talked, all these little farms used to supply milk for the logging camps and that's part of the dream where, man, why can't these farms come back and make this somewhat of a self-sustaining community? When you look and then the land would be back fit to produce because there would be animals again, and gardens again.

Tom does not go to the grocery store; his wife does the shopping when needed. I find out later in separate interviews with him and his wife that they self-provision close to 98% of the food they put on their table through their own efforts; they are self-sufficient in the food realm. For the winter months, they rely on the canning that Sue does with many of the vegetables that come out of the garden. The reason for their self-reliance is two-fold: Tom loves growing vegetables, and they find it more financially viable to produce their own food than to spend money in the grocery store. Tom works long hours to make this happen, but for them it works financially. Both will tell you they do it for their health.

Tom's identity as a farmer with a CSA, struggling to make ends meet is similar to what Paxson (2013: 8) explores in her book about artisanal cheese making. His work as a farmer and CSA organizer "remains a marginal economic enterprise but has become a mainstream cultural project." Civic agriculture projects have become mainstream in urban centers with successful farmers' markets sprouting up everywhere and CSA projects catering to the needs of middle-class, educated individuals. Urbanites especially tend to romanticize small farm life and imagine it as idyllic. Visiting farmers' markets and becoming a member of a CSA are new cultural practices that have changed the way in which some individuals engage with the marketplace. In contrast to the romantic notion of the small farmer, Tom and his wife struggle financially.

In *Capitalism and Its Discontents* (2009), Joan Gross explores the ways in which people are taking extreme measures to avoid traditional retail shopping and making do in an area of rural Oregon that has been labeled a food desert. In this region, "back-to-the-landers" and "freegans" manage to feed themselves without relying on grocery stores or

corner stores. The back-to-the-landers she interviewed share similarities with Tom and with Tammy Clark in that they “envisioned spending the majority of their time on the homestead, but ended up spending it in wage labor” (Gross 2009:75). In the case of Tom he raises beef cattle to sell and operates the CSA for profit; in the case of Tammy, her husband works to pay the bills. However, Gross (2009:72) found that her interviewees “identified with living an ‘alternative lifestyle’ in a rural area.” Neither Tom nor Tammy described their lifestyle as alternative or different from the norm. The freegans, or individuals who forage for food and dumpster, did not share similarities with residents of Phelps who forage for food. The freegans in Gross’s study were in their early 20s and not connected to a particular place. They also spoke about their resistance to the globalized food system and capitalism, and that their lifestyle was in reaction to the current food system in the United States. None of my interviewees, growers or foragers, spoke out against the globalized food system or industrial agriculture. Tom discussed his desire to grow healthy, chemical free food for himself and community members, but he did not explicitly state that he was resisting capitalism. Those who self-provision in Phelps are doing so to fill up their refrigerator and freezer but mainly it is to save money and because it is an enjoyable activity to them.

Other individuals I interviewed had backyard gardens including Karen Miller and April Timm that supplemented their grocery store purchases. The Smiths, who were vegetable vendors at the market, fall somewhere between the farming that Tom is doing and the backyard



FIG. 16. The Smiths' new greenhouse. Photo by author.

gardening that Tammy is practicing. They are hobby farmers in the sense that they are retired and grow food mostly for enjoyment. They have a lot of property so their garden was decidedly larger than a backyard, but they did not have to contend with an area the size of Tom's farm. The Smiths recently built a beautiful greenhouse to lengthen their growing season (See Figure 16). They intend to start their seedlings in the new

greenhouse. One beautiful July day they give me a tour of their orchard, vineyard, and garden (See Figure 17). They have a sign on the road advertising their produce; they highlight the apple orchard, and do get traffic that way. In contrast to Tom, they also have business cards that they leave around town and gave to people who



FIG. 17. The Smiths' orchard. Photo by author.

came to the farmers' market. They share with me that they make the most money from the sale of orchard items. Growing grapes for wine is something new they are trying this

year and will be for personal use, not for sale. With the items they grow, vegetables, apples, and grapes, they read books but rely more on trial and error. They both enjoy this practice and have made it their retirement hobby.

The Smiths reported during their interview that they had to supplement their soil because it was predominantly clay. Prior to the soil supplementation, carrots were puny and beets grew above ground. Karen reported that the soil in her backyard was not very rich or fertile, and they also do not have a large enough backyard to grow enough food that would eliminate a trip to the grocery store. April's garden is located on farmland so the soil is rich and fertile. She is a master gardener but finds that she must supplement what is grown in her garden because certain things that she finds crucial to her diet and sense of taste, such as peas, beans, and carrots, do not grow well in her garden. Mark Boyd, another interlocutor, tried to garden on his property but it was too shady so nothing grew. Fortunately, Tom's farm is located in a fertile valley; he practices crop rotation and plants nitrogen rich crops on fallow land so he does not need to use additives or supplements.

Although I did not conduct a formal survey around the topic of backyard gardening I am able to come to a few conclusions based upon information gathered: 1) tending a backyard garden that would provide enough food to sustain a family through all seasons would take considerable time which individuals in Phelps, who are working, do not have; 2) in some places, the soil in the downtown and surrounding area is not good enough for growing food and residents must have the financial and time resources to supplement the soil; and, 3) backyards in the downtown area of Phelps are not large enough to grow an abundance of vegetables.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

My research supports the idea that residents have adapted to the closure of the grocery store and have a variety of options in town. My research found that the farmers' market was frequented by seasonal residents and tourists. Year-round residents critiqued two aspects of the farmers' market: the day and time of the market (Tuesday morning) makes it impossible for working people to attend, particularly because most working residents do not work in Phelps,²⁸ and the cost of the vegetables was prohibitive for some. Instead of frequenting the farmers' market, year-round residents are provisioning for themselves by hunting, fishing, foraging, sharing / bartering, and growing their own food. Gibson-Graham (2006:70) uses the metaphor of an iceberg to exemplify the diversity in food procurement strategies which is consistent with what I observed in Phelps. The tip of the iceberg, that which is seen, shows that all residents buy their food from chain grocery stores. Beneath the surface year-round residents self-provision by growing their own food, foraging, hunting, and fishing; they are also bartering and sharing food in the case of year-round residents. Seasonal residents are purchasing food at the farmers' market and CSAs. The food procurement strategies are varied and appeal to different subsets of the diverse population of Phelps. This complicates the USDA's notion that Phelps is a food insecure area. However, even though there is opportunity to self-provision, some residents believe that their access to food is severely limited. Mark Boyd speculates to me during his interview that he believes that individuals in "Third World" countries have better access to food than Phelps' residents:

²⁸ Town Board minutes from June 13, 2011 reveal the Chamber of Commerce's desire to change the market to Saturdays "so that people who work during the week can attend."

I think maybe if a person had a farmers' market every day of the week it might be a benefit. You look at the Third World countries. That's the way they do it. They, the mom or the dad, go down and buy what they need that day...it's almost like they have better access.

My research never adequately answered the question of why residents did not fully embrace the CSA or farmers' market. The most consistent answer I received regarding the farmers' market was that it was held on a Tuesday morning and difficult for working people to access. In the case of the CSA, it seemed that many people simply were not aware that a CSA was right in their backyard, and the price was prohibitive. Research on the social equity of projects that espouse local and direct sales critiques the access that low-income individuals have to alternative food projects that link consumer and farmer. Future research in Phelps might explore several factors: 1) residents did not have the time to make a special trip to the farmers' market for their vegetables; 2) residents did not have the income to purchase a share in the CSA; 3) residents did not find value in purchasing vegetables from a local farmer; and, 4) residents were satisfied with the vegetable options at the grocery store.

In my interviews with CSA participants I found that there is friction between building relationships that civic agriculture supports and the concepts of convenience and time which people are so accustomed to in the industrial agriculture model. In this model a consumer is able to go to the grocery store any day at almost any time to pick up what is needed. However, they are far removed from their food geographically and naturally. Sometimes the food they purchase is from a different continent. Alternative agriculture is a movement where people yearn to know where their food comes from and who has produced it. However, getting to know the farm where your food is produced and the

farmer who produces it takes time and it can be expensive. One couple who I interviewed, members of the CSA in the summer of 2011, picked up their box of produce at the farm. They discussed the fact that they did not ever go into the garden area and only spent a few minutes talking to Tom. The husband stated that Tom is not really a talker because he is so busy. They also shared that their pick up time was in the afternoon on a Saturday. This did not seem like an ideal time to them which also impeded building a relationship with Tom. Tom also desires for these relationships to be built; however, he has a farm to tend to, eggs to gather, and cows to milk. His time is limited and his priority is to the farm first and then to his customers.

Also evident in food procurement is individual identity as a consumer accustomed to the industrial agriculture model. Most middle class people are able to go to a grocery store on any given day and pick out any vegetable they want in the quantity that they need. The convenience of eating out of season has a strong pull that caused friction for the CSA members I interviewed. Also, having to use everything in the box was a challenge for some with items going to waste simply because they did not know how to prepare a certain vegetable or they grew tired of it by the end of the week. The Franks shared their CSA half share with another woman. Mrs. Frank explained to me at the beginning of our interview that this woman and she had talked about our upcoming interview and the woman stated that Mrs. Frank could share her experience with the CSA as these individuals who shared a half bushel had a similar experience. Mrs. Frank relayed that the CSA experience was frustrating for her because she would go to the grocer and not know what to purchase because she did not know what was going to be in her produce box. She would want onions, for instance, and not purchase them because

she was afraid that they would show up in her box and she would have a plethora of onions to get rid of before they spoiled. The biggest inconvenience for her was not getting in her box the things she felt like she needed and having to travel to the grocery store to purchase, for example, a handful of onions.

In her critique of civic agriculture, DeLind (2002:222) questions civic agriculture's emphasis on "creating economic infrastructure rather than common inner structure." She would prefer that civic agriculture place more emphasis on community, place, and sensitivity to the particular socioeconomic dimensions of particular places. My research supports the notion that the re-embedded marketplace is not easily accessed by all community members. DeLind and Bingen (2008:128) state that Lyson introduced the concept of "civic agriculture to encompass a wide range of food and farming activities, all designed to encourage people to eat locally...they represent creative efforts by individuals across the nation to reconnect with the local and to re-embed themselves in community-based values and institutions." DeLind and Bingen critique civic agriculture's focus on the local and as an extension also being civic. They state that the emphasis is on market transactions at the local level at the expense of place and community.

There is friction between farmer security and food security in the sense that ensuring farmer security means higher priced food which has the potential to price out low-income consumers (Allen 2004). "The food movements privileging of market-based strategies makes the alternatives they create and endorse less accessible to low-income communities and communities of color while conversely ignoring the ways that racial and economic privileges pervade both conventional and alternative food systems." (Mares and Alkon 2011:69) Brown and Getz (2011:139-140) uncovers the irony of the

farmers and farm workers who produce our food as they are themselves food insecure. They propose that global capitalism creates an economic system of exploitation and inequality. They propose that food insecurity provides a useful lens for understanding these broader processes affecting small farmers. My research supports the notion that small farmers face financial challenges.

Macias (2008) looked at several community-based agriculture projects in Vermont – CSAs, farmers’ markets, and a community garden – to determine which of the projects were most inclusive. He found that the CSA project was the least inclusive of a diverse population because of the upfront costs and word-of-mouth marketing. This mirrors Tom’s CSA project in Phelps with regard to the cost as well as his marketing strategy. Through his research, Macias also found that CSA members and farmers’ market visitors tend to be college educated and middle class. He found that the community garden in this particular area of Vermont was the most socially inclusive option due to the low cost of entry; however, this type of food procurement requires time that some residents may not have. Macias (2008:1096) found that a state-subsidized “farmer-to-family” program that ensured low-income individuals received coupons to purchase food at the farmers’ market increased participation of that subset of the population. This also ensures that low-income individuals are not disenfranchised and can take part in conversations about local agriculture projects.

The food justice movement provides an antidote to civic agriculture and alternative food system projects and theories that do not take into account the expense of such projects that appear to cater to middle-class, educated, urban, white individuals. This movement “combines an analysis of racial and economic injustice with practical support

for environmentally sustainable alternatives that can provide economic empowerment and access to environmental benefits in marginalized communities.” (Alkon and Agyeman 2011:6) In practice, this would mean that residents of Phelps, both seasonal and year-round, would have a voice in building a local food system that benefits everyone, producer and consumer. However, Gottlieb (2009:7) points out that “rural food justice efforts are practically nonexistent and only a small number of references to rural food justice exist in the literature.” Moreover, rural food justice would need to take into account the unique circumstances that rural, low-income communities face. These challenges differ from those found in urban areas. Future food studies research in Phelps could add to the body of literature about rural food justice. This project provides a start to that research.

As with any marketplace, there is the barrier of income and lack of time that may present alternative food access challenges for some people. Mares and Alkon (2011) offer a critique of these alternative marketplaces precisely because they are not accessible to all people and they reinforce the notion that solutions to food insecurity should be market based. They argue that privileging market-based strategies, such as farmers’ markets and CSAs, has the potential to price out low-income individuals from these alternative markets. Hinrichs (2000:295) offers the same critique of CSAs and farmers’ markets because, as they promote increased social contact between farmer and consumer, these projects are still “rooted in commodity relations.” The relationships formed by these projects are unequal as they cater to the middle class, educated consumer at the expense of the farmer who is barely making enough money to live. However, Hinrichs goes on to

point out that CSA projects tend to pull food out of the marketplace more than farmers' markets because CSA members must share the costs and risks with the farmer.

In his research McEntee (2011) suggests that rural food justice can be realized if traditional localism, or self-provisioning, were emphasized more than the introduction of alternative marketplaces such as farmers' markets and CSAs. He contends that self-provisioning is a food procurement strategy better suited to the identity and socioeconomic status of rural individuals. My research suggests that year-round residents would support improvement in self-provisioning strategies because that is already the way in which they are supplementing their trips to the grocery store. Strategies to increase self-provisioning could include a community garden for individuals who do not have the space, soil, or sunlight to grow food on their own land, or classes or mentorships for individuals who want to learn how to grow their own food, hunt, fish, or forage. I know that I have always wanted to forage for mushrooms but am afraid I will procure the poisonous ones.

My research suggests that Phelps could become a rural community with an abundant food landscape accessible to year-round and seasonal residents. This is due to the abundance of food already available in the natural landscape as well as its farming history described in Chapter 3. Moreover, there are individuals who take action and are able to sustain projects. For instance, there is a vibrant Woman's Club whose most recent significant project has been to open a historical museum in



FIG. 18. The Phelps Woman's Club planting native flowers and plants in the downtown area of Phelps, WI. Photo by author.

downtown Phelps. They continue to expand the artifacts collection related to the history of Phelps as a lumber town. In addition to this project they are also active in the community in other ways. While I was at the Phelps' Farmers' Market they were beautifying the downtown by planting native grasses and flowers (See Figure 18). They received a grant from the Department of Transportation for this project. The Phelps' Woman's club also published a booklet in 2001 which details the 20TH century history of Phelps. The section of this thesis that details the history of Phelps would have been much more difficult to write if this book had gone unpublished. There is also a vibrant library with a robust collection of books and DVDs as well as internet access. These three projects illuminate residents' abilities to start and maintain projects within the community which would be necessary to improve access to food for low-income residents.

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Appendix A: List of Interviewees and Demographics

Name	Resident Status	Occupation	CSA Member	Self-Provisioning Strategies
Mark Boyd	Year-Round Resident; Born in Phelps	Certified Nursing Assistant	Yes (Volunteered for CSA Box)	Growing Food, Fishing, Foraging, Sharing
Anne and George Clark	Year-Round Residents; Moved to Phelps	Teacher, Retired	No	Foraging
Monica Croft	Seasonal Resident	Retired	Yes	Growing Food
Tom and Nancy Frank	Seasonal Residents	Retired	Yes	No
Henry and Joan Hall	Year-Round Residents	Farmer, Artist	No	Growing Food, Foraging
Deb and Larry Kent	Year-Round Residents; Moved to Phelps	Business Woman, Craftsman	No	Foraging, Sharing
Tim Lang	Seasonal Resident	Retired	No	Growing Food, Foraging, Fishing, Sharing
Tom Mareth	Year-Round Resident; Born in Phelps	Farmer	Owner	Growing Food, Sharing, Bartering
Susan Mareth	Year-Round Resident: Moved to Phelps	Housekeeper	Owner	Growing Food
Karen Miller	Year-Round Resident: Moved to Phelps	Mom; Manual Labor	Yes (Volunteered for CSA Box)	Growing Food, Hunting, Fishing, Sharing, Bartering
Ellen Nelson	Year-Round Resident; Moved to Phelps	Semi-Retired; Housekeeper	No	Foraging, Sharing
April Timm	Year-Round Resident; Born in Phelps	Banker	Yes	Growing Food, Sharing, Foraging
Becky and Rob Smith	Year-Round Residents; Moved to Phelps	Retired	No	Growing Food, Sharing

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Please tell me how you obtain the food you eat.
2. How often during the month do you go to the store to purchase food? Where do you typically go to do this? What foods do you typically purchase? I know about the grocery stores in Eagle River, WI and the convenience store in Phelps, WI. Are there any other places you go to purchase food?
3. Do you think you have easy access to affordable, healthy, fresh food?
4. What types of food, if any, do you obtain in a way that does not involve going to a store? Do you fish, hunt, or garden? If so, what percentage of your diet comes from store-bought food, and what percentage comes from food you have obtained in other ways?
5. Are you satisfied with the grocery store in Eagle River, WI? What do you think about the convenience store in Phelps, WI?
6. Do you recall the grocery store that was in Phelps? Do you think Phelps should still have a grocery store?
7. Tell me about the Farmers' Market in Phelps, WI. If you attend, how often? What sorts of things do you purchase there? Do you think they could offer other types of foods, or are you satisfied with what they offer? Please explain.
8. How long have you lived in Phelps, WI?
9. Please tell me what you know about the history of Phelps.
10. How do you think Phelps, and its residents, have been impacted by Phelps's history as a logging town?
11. How do you think Phelps is doing economically?
12. Do you have anything you would like to add?
13. What are you having for dinner tonight and where does the food come from?