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Perceptions and Motivations of Conscious Consumption

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and the Honors Program

by

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Dr. Michelle Roberts, Thesis Advisor

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Perceptions and Motivations of Conscious Consumption

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BACHELOR OF ARTS, ANTHROPOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

In today’s industrialized world, efforts in environmental sustainability are at the forefront of many social and political issues. Perhaps the most familiar and accessible avenue toward “green” behavior in the eyes of the average American consumer is through the purchase and consumption of ethical food products. This study sought to identify the overarching trends in consumer perceptions of “organic”, “local”, and “fair-trade” food (Long, 2010), as well as consumer perceptions of the stores in which they are sold. An understanding of the outside social, cultural, or economic factors that work with or against such perceptions in forming motivation toward sustainable consumer behavior in Reno, Nevada was another goal. Through the administration of surveys and interviews to individuals at a local food cooperative and on the University of Nevada, Reno campus, it was found that (1) a concern for personal, environmental, and social wellness, (2) extent of individual economic concerns, and (3) a general awareness of what the organic, local, and fair-trade food movements each entail determined consumers’ level of engagement with conscious consumption. Conceptions of these food movements as either individual or collective activities tended to inform consumer perceptions of store roles in said movements. As conscious food consumption encapsulates a wide array of positive and environmental, social, and nutritional dimensions, a critical anthropological understanding of consumer situatedness within the organic, local, and fair-trade food movements is crucial in furthering the sustainable goals of these alternative food systems.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

“For all the environmental troubles single-use shopping bags cause, the much greater impacts are in what they contain. Reducing the human footprint means addressing fundamentally unsustainable habits of food consumption, such as expecting strawberries in the depths of winter or buying of seafood that are being fished to the brink of extinction.”

Susan Freinkel, Plastic: A Toxic Love Story

As the population of the Earth continues to increase, so does our taxing of the environment in a multitude of ways. From deforestation and the use of fossil fuels to industrialized agriculture, the increasing burdens we continue to place on the Earth are slowly depleting the natural resources around us. The highly industrialized, mass-production-oriented cycle of food products is a major source of various environmental problems and hazards (Tanner & Kast, 2003; Trainer 2012). These ecological dangers pose great risks to the sustainability of the Earth as the global human population increases. Thus, many people in the developed nations of the West (the United States and western Europe), are slowly turning away from conventional food systems in favor of more sustainable systems, such as small-scale farming and meat production, organically grown and raised food products, fair-trade food networks, and the consumption of local and domestic foods (Weatherell, Tregear, & Allinson, 2003; De Pelsmacker, Driesen, & Rayp, 2005). Engaging in these practices is perhaps one of the most familiar and accessible avenues through which the average consumer may engage in “green” or
“conscious” behavior.

This type of consumer behavior is part of the larger realm of conscious consumption, a modern idea continually under discussion and changing people’s buying patterns across the developed world. It is a movement wherein citizens of developed, first-world countries are taking a stand against big-business, mass-produced, unhealthy, and unethical food items. These “conscious” consumers are seeking out foods grown in such a way that supports the ecosystem, the growers, and, ultimately, the health of the consumer (Weatherell, Tregear, & Allinson, 2003; De Pelsmacker, P., Driesen, L., & Rayp, G., 2005).

However, the exact mentalities behind conscious consumers’ modes of assessment and purchase of alternative or sustainable goods over conventional ones remain varied and are not necessarily based in ethical or environmental activism (Lockie, Lyons, Lawrence, & Grice, 2004). Prescribing to such consumption patterns may be due to impressions of healthiness, underlying ethical perspectives (e.g. veganism), national and individual quests for or against modernity (Carrier, 2007), or perhaps even socio-economic perceptions of the aspirational status of price-premium-carrying boutique health food markets (Flynn & Goldsmith, 2010). The purpose of this study is to achieve a holistic, anthropological understanding of the external forces that drive individuals to partake in conscious consumption through the purchase of organic, local, and fair-trade food products. In doing so, we may critically address, both socially and politically, the growing need for sustainable food systems. These alternative modes of food production may then carry more weight in their consideration in the public arena, pushing them closer to their ultimate goals of widespread environmental and social sustainability.
CHAPTER TWO

Background & Literature Review

According to Huang & Rust (2011), consumers’ awareness of environmental, social, and global problems caused by consumption has increased during the last decade, which has led consumers to weigh environmental performance of goods and services more heavily when making consumption decisions. This awareness of artificial environmental degradation and its ensuing negative social and economic consequences are part of a greater Western initiative toward sustainable development, which is defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as:

The management and conservation of the natural resource base, and the orientation of technological and institutional change in such a manner as to ensure the attainment and continued satisfaction of human needs for present and future generations. Such sustainable development (in the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sectors) conserves land, water, plant and animal genetic resources, is environmentally non-degrading, technically appropriate, economically viable, and socially acceptable. (2013)

In agro-environmental terms, sustainability tends to refer to reducing the ecological footprint of industrial and agricultural practices to preserve the health and viability of the Earth, while at the same time addressing the current inadequacy in our food system’s ability to provide enough food for an ever-growing population. According to Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld, “Sustainable development aims to balance ecological, economic, and social interests while engaging in efforts to modernize society…” In the world of agriculture and food production, three main modes of
sustainable action are the organic, local, and fair-trade food movements (2012).

**Organic Foods**

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations defines organic agriculture as the following:

Organic agriculture is a holistic production management system which promotes and enhances agro-ecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. It emphasizes the use of management practices in preference to the use of off-farm inputs, taking into account that regional conditions require locally adapted systems. This is accomplished by using, where possible, agronomic, biological, and mechanical methods, as opposed to using synthetic materials, to fulfill any specific function within the system. (1999)

Organic agriculture is alternatively known as Resource-Conserving Agriculture, which entails such processes as environmentally-integrated pest and soil-nutrient management, conservation tillage, agroforestry, aquaculture, water harvesting, and livestock integration. Such practices facilitate the natural maximization of soil health and replenishment using “locally available organic fertilizers, cover crops, use of nitrogen-fixing legumes and other crop rotations, and mulches; improved water management; and crop diversification to reduce the risk of crop failure” (Bennet & Franzel, 2013). No standard international regulations exist for the certification of foods and crops as “organic”, but currently more than thirty certifying agencies—including government and non-governmental bodies—for organic food operate under the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), ensuring country-specific health and environmental standards of organic agriculture and food production (Pogash, 2009).

Gomiero, Pimentel, and Paoletti (2011) admit the environmental goals of the organic
agriculture and food movement are “often little understood by consumers and policy makers” (p. 97). While much of the world’s traditional agriculture—as opposed to industrial agriculture—is de facto organic (Bennet & Franzel, 2013), minimum organic standards set by international certification bodies for major markets like those of the United States and Europe are firmly grounded in ecological soundness. For example, planting material must be chemically untreated and not genetically engineered; fertilization must be organic; synthetic herbicide, fungicide, and pesticide use is largely prohibited; and land clearing by burning must be regulated (Raynolds, 2000). However, much of the discourse surrounding organic foods—especially with regard to specific consumer-product interaction—is within the context of health and nutrition, with the literature coming to mixed conclusions of any significant nutritional benefits of organic food (Gastol, Domagala-Swiatkiewicz, & Krosniak, 2011; Gomiero, Pimentel, & Paoletti, 2011; Chang, 2013; Bjorklund, Heins, DiCostanzo, & Chester-Jones, 2014).

Still, these studies provide us with tremendous insight into how people, in the context of their place as consumers of organic products, view those products and the greater agricultural movement from which they come. A large body of research exists concerning the buying patterns of consumers with regard to organic foods, and so do the theories surrounding such patterns. Hartman & Wright (1999) suggest three levels of engagement with organic food consumption:

1. A wealthy, older demographic primarily concerned with health as opposed to sustainability and other environmental concerns.
2. A younger group whose “lifestyle considerations” primarily guide their casual engagement with organic food consumption. Environmental concerns are a meaningful—yet peripheral—concern for this group.
3. People whose environmental concerns surmount all others in their purchase and consumption of organic foods. However, this group’s behaviors are tightly bound by the constraints of organic food’s relatively high price and low availability. While such a model may fit nicely with common public perceptions of organic foods and the people who consume them, others argue that a multitude of other physical and abstract concepts, such as naturalness, animal welfare, food safety, quality, tradition, and taste act upon consumers’ organic consumption (Mannion, Cowan, & Gannon, 2000; Lockie, Lyons, Lawrence, & Grice, 2004).

When one considers the exponential growth of the organic industry in the United States alone within recent decades—nearly 500% from 1997 to 2007 (Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld, 2012)—the normalization of price and availability relative to conventional food products has made organics more accessible to consumers. Consumers have been increasingly able to purchase organic products congruently with their ethical beliefs, which range from purchases made with the environmental sustainability of agricultural practices in mind (Tanner & Kast, 2003; Long, 2010; Hanss & Böhm, 2012) to the consequential positive health and nutritional aspects of the food from those practices (Gastol, Domagala-Swiatkiewicz, & Krosniak, 2011; Bjorklund, Heins, DiCostanzo, & Chester-Jones, 2014), to the more fully developed social dimension of organic food production (Raynolds, 2000; Carrier, 2007). Organic food consumption is on the rise, with the market share of organics in Germany, France, and the U.S. quadrupling between 1997 and 2008 (Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld, 2012). The patterns of consumption as situated in mainstream American culture are changing—thus the need for a people-focused, anthropological understanding of those consumption patterns to which this research contributes.
**Local Foods**

“Local food” is food grown or produced close to where it is sold. However, the exact parameters that determine the “locality” of a certain distance are, of course, relative to a wide array of factors: the individual consumer, the product being considered, the season during which the considering takes place, and the geographic location in which both the consumer and the product are situated (Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld, 2012).

Focus on local food as an agricultural movement and cultural phenomenon is, however, a far more multifaceted subject. Oftentimes, consideration of “local foods” evokes ideas of environmental responsibility via the reduction of fossil fuel usage in food transportation. “Food miles”, as they have been popularly termed, describes the distance food travels from production site to consumers’ tables (Long, 2010) and is a primary focus of the local food movement. As such, the local food movement establishes itself as being grounded in conceptions of sustainability. However, the validity of the concept is debatable, with critics raising concerns such as whether or not the carbon footprint of food transportation alone is significant when one considers the total carbon footprint of the life-cycle of food production (Wilson, 2007; Kemp, Insch, Holdsworth, & Knight, 2010; Contestabile, 2013). Beyond food miles, the local food movement also puts an emphasis on other environmental, social, and economic alternatives to the globalized food production system. In the words of Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld (2012):

In contrast to globalized food provision, in the case of local agri-food networks, sustainability is understood to include short supply chains, more fresh and seasonal food, and knowledgeable relationships between growers and consumers. Short supply chains demand less energy for transport, processing, and packaging, while maximizing freshness and quality. When agricultural production practices
are developed in concert with local ecologies and tastes, they arguably also optimize environmental impacts. Short food-supply chains buffer local producers, consumers and economies against the cyclicality of global markets, characterized by resource scarcities, oversupply problems, sectorial crashes and energy intensiveness… [Local food’s] promoters consider short-food-supply chains to be more ecologically sustainable than long ones; that seasonal, locally produced foods are fresher and healthier; and that local food provisioning strengthens social bonds and communities. Other arguments hold that the viability and sustainability of local economies are enhanced through reduced dependence on global agri-food systems, and that the diversity of plants, animals, producers, products, consumers, and tastes is conserved and even enhanced through sustaining local agriculture. (p. 110-117)

Consumer perceptions of local food and agriculture tend to be positive, and motivations for the consumption of small-scale local foods over corporate global ones generally fall in line with the precepts of local food movements as stated above (Weatherell, Tregear, & Allinson, 2003; Trainer, 2012). However, critiques of the so-called benefits of local agriculture and its resulting food products do exist. A common perception among the public is that small-scale local food producers are inherently positioned against the environmentally damaging, socio-economically degrading industrial practices that have come to define modern, big-business, corporate agriculture (Weatherell, Tregear, & Allinson, 2003). However, even small-scale producers are subject to the market forces of supply, demand, and the bottom line of profit—forces that have established global food systems as culturally and economically dominant. Thus, in the name of competition and economic viability, local agricultural practices can begin to
reflect those of corporate agriculture depending on the particular crop, farmer, and geographic region (Holmes, 2013). Thus, the argument is made by Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld (2012) that ‘local’ should not be conflated with ‘sustainable’ (p 123). Watts, Ilbery, & Maye point out that designating a food as local does not indicate what processing methods have been used—in sharp contrast to more defined standards of organic food. They argue that local food refers only to the physical distance between the locations of production and sale, but the environmental impact of foods is also critically tied to its production methods (2005). Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld (2012, p. 124) elaborate:

Local food may use less energy for transport but more water and land, and in general, its production methods may use natural resources less efficiently than other methods. Local foods, therefore, should not necessarily be conflated with being organic and better tasting, and with saving family farms and strengthening local communities, because all this must be proven in particular instances.

**Fair-Trade Foods**

Standing in some contrast to the environmental sustainability concerns of the organic and local food movements, the system of fair-trade food production is much more grounded in the social and economic dimensions of sustainable food and agriculture (Raynolds, 2000; Loureiro & Lotade, 2005; Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld, 2012). According to Raynolds (2000), fair-trade is a system of alternative trade that criticizes the injustices inherent in the world economy and tries to transform North/South trade from a vehicle of exploitation to one of sustainable development… By building new consumer/producer solidarity links, fair trade seeks to re-embed the production and marketing of major agricultural and non-
agricultural exports from countries of the South in more equitable social relations. (p. 301)

The main precepts of fair-trade include minimum price guarantees for producers independent of the world market price, direct and long-term partnerships between producers and importers so as to provide a reliable basis for financial, technical, and organizational growth (Oosterveer & Sonnenfield, 2012, p. 133-134), democratic organization of producer groups so as to fully represent the interests of involved growers, and various standards of labor conditions. These standards include freedom from discrimination and unequal pay, no slave or child labor, and rights to safe and healthy working conditions (Raynolds, 2000).

Developed in parallel to the system of organic certification as established by IFOAM, fair-trade certification falls under jurisdiction of Fair Trade Labeling Organizations International (FLO) as an umbrella organization. FLO “sets fair trade standards, supports producers to gain fair trade certification and develop market opportunities, and coordinates global fair trade strategies to increase its impact and become more effective” (Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld, 2012; p. 134-135). Fair-trade regulations primarily affect such crops as coffee, bananas, cocoa, sugar, tea, rice, honey, and orange juice—crops and foods whose principal markets of consumption are in the developed, consumer-oriented Global North, yet whose production tends to be situated in the Third-World, production-oriented Global South (Raynolds, 2000).

Since fair-trade’s main focus is on socio-economic concerns, it is unknown to many consumers that fair-trade also tends to entail some degree of environmental sustainability in addition to its social goals. According to Raynolds (2000), these environmental goals include requirements that “attempts be made to protect forests and wildlife habitat, prevent erosion and water pollution, reduce chemical fertilizer and synthetic pesticide use, and compost wastes.” (p.
300). However, Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld (2012) assert that “the criteria for producers’
environmental performance remain purposefully vague in order not to exclude small-scale
farmers, who may find it difficult to implement strict environmental guidelines.” (p. 134). As
such, the fair-trade and organic food/agriculture movements remain distinct both in their goals
and standards of production, despite their close relation and interconnectedness within our world
system of food consumption.

Studies have found both consumer and store behavior concerning fair trade to have
foundations in all of the following arenas: environmental protection, alternative economies, and
concern for human rights (de Ferran & Grunert, 2007; Loureiro & Lotade, 2005). The latter
especially is a central focus of the fair-trade movement and forms the core of fair-trade’s
connotation in consumers’ minds. Simpson-Law (2009) found that the number-one reason for
purchase cited by consumers of ethically-produced fair-trade coffees is that they benefit
marginalized producers and farm workers (p. 89). However, other studies have identified an
attitude-behavior gap in some consumers: many general consumers carry a positive viewpoint
regarding fair-trade coffee, but their buying behaviors do not reflect that outlook and those
consumers did not purchase fair-trade coffee (De Pelsmacker, Driesen, & Rayp, 2005). Given its
more recent development and less standardized modes of certification, further investigation into
the structure of fair-trade and its situatedness in consumer culture is warranted (Long, 2010).

**Sustainability: The Consumer & The Store**

A significant portion of the literature that investigates consumer motivations to engage in
conscious consumption comes from a marketing, advertising, or consumer-studies perspective
(Gracia & Albisu, 2001; Tanner & Kast, 2003; Lockie, Lyons, Lawrence, & Grice, 2004;
DePelsmacker, Driesen, & Rayp, 2005; de Ferran & Grunert, 2007; Sheth, Sethia, & Srinivas,
yet the bulk of these studies tend to either focus on demographic correlations to conscious consumption or emphasize the individual as the catalyst for conscious consumer behavior. They investigate consumer behavior based around the standard parameters of education, income level, and gender. Otherwise, they are structured around economic concepts such as supply-demand models of large-scale consumption. However, a growing number of studies ranging widely across disciplines more holistically investigate the myriad of cultural, psychological, and structural socio-economic forces that push and pull at consumers—who have both individual and collective agency—in their conscious consumption patterns.

Of these, several hone in on public perceptions of conscious behavior and retail venues in their research initiatives (Weatherell, Tregear, & Allinson, 2003; Nijssen & Douglas, 2008; Hanss & Böhm, 2012). Investigating consumer perceptions offers numerous insights not only into the immediate motivations that drive consumers at the moment of conscious purchase (e.g. price, appearance of the food product, availability of the product), but also into possible origins of those motivations (e.g. more abstract ethical concerns). Whether those aforementioned motivations are grounded in consumer background, geographic location, and associated knowledge (Weatherell, Tregear, & Allinson, 2003), social and epistemological forces such as international awareness and store image (Nijssen & Douglas, 2008), or in customer conceptions of sustainability itself (Hanss & Böhm, 2012), the salience they inherently offer is essential in understanding the underlying cultural forces that shape and guide our consumer behaviors and the world in which they are situated.

Others contextualize conscious consumption, positioning the behavior within pre-existing structural and socio-political frameworks. Adams & Raisborough (2010) postulate that the
fundamental and all-encompassing infrastructure of everyday experience profoundly determines and alters consumer behaviors beyond what can be delineated into “fixed” rules of consumption. Huang & Rust (2011), on the other hand, synthesize existing information on consumption patterns and their specific arrangement within the overlapping realms of environment, economy, and social justice to create a theoretical model of systematized structure that either facilitates or impedes consumption in the face of relatively superficial forces such as altruism or individual agency. Fowler & Close suggest that discrepancies between differing levels of economic players (micro-level advertisers, meso-level advertisers, and micro-level consumers) interact in such a way to obstruct a synergistic collective movement toward sustainable goals (2012). Long (2010) situates consumer behavior within the culturally-determined “ethical” and “political” atmospheres in which they take place, arguing that consumption moves away from simple material value and into symbolic representation of beliefs and collective identities.

Still other researchers question who has the ultimate responsibility in socially, culturally, and economically determining conscious consumer behavior. Reminiscent of Adams & Rainsborough (2012), Middlemiss (2010) examines the context in which individual action takes place. However, she uses that information to identify and reposition the perceived versus actual responsibility for sustainable living and whose shoulders that responsibility falls on—the individual who makes the choice, or the society whose rules guide that choice? Similarly, Tsarenko, Ferraro, Sands, & McLeod (2013) investigate the roles that other willful, self-governing persons such as peers and retailers play in determining conscious consumer behavior. According to their study,

Being concerned for the environment and an individual’s self-perceptions of being socially attuned do not necessarily result in environmentally sustainable
consumption. Rather, learning from external factors, or motivation on the part of the retailer regarding such purchases and social interactions, are important influencers of environmentally sustainable consumption (p. 309)

This perspective is backed by Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld (2012), who declare that large American chain markets’ corporate retailing power can hold significant weight in planting the seeds of sustainability-oriented thought in the consumption patterns of their target demographics. As such, large corporations shoulder a great deal of responsibility when it comes to both introducing sustainable practices into their business models and promoting the consumption of sustainable goods amongst their consumer clientele (p. 201-217)

The broad field of focus attained by such a wide range of research investigations critically enriches the understanding of how conscious consumer behavior is determined and guided by both overarching external forces and the internal processes of the individual. Still, the perspectives offered up by these studies warrant further inspection of how the reciprocal awareness of both inner consumer agency and outer cultural determinants interact within the concentric structural framework in which they are positioned.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This investigation into conscious consumption patterns and the mindsets, motivations, and perspectives behind them utilized a mixed approach to data collection. Quantitative data were obtained in the form of a survey (see Appendix B), which was structured to assess demographic information of respondents; knowledge and behavior concerning organic, local, and fair-trade food products and their purchase; and customer perceptions of individual and store roles in the sustainable foods movement as well as where responsibility falls for sustainable consumer behavior. Surveys were administered at two locations: (1) a local community food cooperative that specializes in sustainably-produced and sourced food products in Reno, Nevada and (2) on the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) campus. Criteria for survey participants was simple: age (18 and older) and willingness (two participate). Qualitative data were then obtained in the form of semi-structured interviews with key individuals at each location. These individuals spanned a wide range of occupations, from student to professor to farmer. Some interviewees were randomly selected for interview after participation in the survey, and other interviewees were pre-selected due to their deep involvement in the sustainability-focused community of Reno, Nevada (e.g. some UNR professors, members of UNR’s sustainability committee, etc—see list of interview participants in Appendix A). Initially, surveys and interviews were planned to take place at multiple grocery locations that ranged from low to high in their “health-food” status. However, this could not be completed due to anti-solicitation bylaws of a majority of chain groceries. The inclusion of pre-selected interview participants was due to this lack of accessibility at chain grocery stores. Through these participants’ involvement in the interviews,
an extra dimension of information and consumer perspective was added to this research.

Survey

Full copies of the survey can be found in Appendix B. These surveys targeted three primary sets of information. First, demographic data was recorded to obtain the gender, age, highest level of completed education, household income, and political leaning of respondents, as well as whether or not respondents or anyone in their family had any background in agricultural work or education.

Second was a three-part knowledge and behavior assessment concerning organic, local, and fair-trade foods. Each followed the same general format, with slight variation occurring in the given reasons for buying each of those food products. The general design of this portion of the survey was based off of Michael Long’s Ph.D. dissertation research on the motivations of ethical consumption from the Department of Sociology at Colorado State University (Long, 2010).

Third was an assessment of consumer opinion and perspective concerning the place that both the consumer and the grocery store occupy in the sustainable food movement. A list of statements was given, which were then each ranked from one to five on a disagree-to-agree Likert scale, respectively. These statements ranged in their scope: conscious purchasing decisions at various stores; perspectives regarding consumer-store interaction; opinions concerning store responsibility to educate and increase awareness about sustainable food production and consumption; and stores’ and sustainable products’ cultural image and connotations. Survey participants were a random sampling of individuals on campus and shoppers at the grocery store.

At the local community food co-op, I set up a table near the cash registers for
approximately five hours during the day—a timeframe recommended to me by the co-op employees. Cashiers referred customers to me as the customers checked out, and I myself elicited customer participation as well with a sign that read, “Are you a conscious consumer? What do you think of organic, local, & fair-trade foods?” in addition to verbal communication with customers in which I asked whether or not they would like to participate in a student research project.

As potential survey participants approached, I first directed them to a disclaimer sheet I created in conjunction with the University of Nevada, Reno socio-behavioral Institutional Review Board that explained the parameters of the research—a copy of which can be found in Appendix B. I then proceeded to verbally explain the nature of the research and the survey procedures in order to provide a solid framework upon which potential participants could base their verbal consent. I made sure to note that: (1) the survey was comprised of three parts: demographics, a knowledge-behavior assessment concerning organic, local, and fair-trade foods, and a series of statements that participants would rate from 1 to 5 based on their level of agreement with the statements, (2) that the survey would take anywhere from 10 to 15 minutes based on participant answers, (3) that there was also an optional interview at the end of the survey, which would take about 20 minutes, and (4) that participation was completely anonymous. If potential participants found the terms of the research satisfactory, then those individuals proceeded to provide me with verbal consent to participate. Participants were provided with a paper copy of the survey, a clip-board, and a pen. Participants were free to complete the survey at my table or at another location of their choosing. A total of 26 surveys were completed at the co-op.

Survey administration at the University of Nevada, Reno took place in the North Lobby
of the Matthew-IGT Knowledge Center, again for a period of approximately five hours. Set-up was the same as the co-op: I sat at a table with a sign that read, “Are you a conscious consumer? What do you think about organic, local, and fair-trade foods?” Participant elicitation methods and consequent procedures then followed the same avenue as those of the co-op. A total of 37 surveys were completed on the University of Nevada, Reno campus.

**Interview**

In addition to the surveys, semi-structured interviews with random survey participants and key individuals in Reno’s sustainability community were also conducted. Copies of the interview questions, a list of selected respondents, and selected interview transcripts can be found in Appendix A.

Participants were comprised of a wide range of individuals, whose quantitative demographic and qualitative sustainability-related characteristics varied. Survey participants verbally and voluntarily consented to participating in the interview at the completion of their survey. Key individuals were chosen based on their level of engagement in sustainability-related initiatives (e.g. membership on the University of Nevada, Reno Sustainability Committee, administrative positions at local farms, etc) and by referral of other interview participants. I initiated contact with potential interview participants via email, in which I explained the nature of the research and the significance of the interviews.

A total of 18 interviews were conducted. Interviews were anonymous and tape-recorded, lasted anywhere from 15 to 40 minutes, and were conducted at a variety of locations based on participants’ convenience, including the co-op, the University of Nevada, Reno campus, and a local farm. Interview participants also completed paper surveys prior to the commencement of the interview. By using survey information as preliminary objective data within which I framed
the interview questions, a comprehensive understanding of the consumer’s mindset in their approach to sustainable behavior was achieved. From an anthropological perspective, these interviews provide the most salient data.
CHAPTER FOUR

Data

Due to the co-op’s special focus on organic, local, and fair-trade food products, and for the sake of accurate representation of the frequency of survey results, I kept the data from the UNR respondents and the data from the community co-op respondents separated in the data tables below.

Tables 1 through 6 are summaries of the demographic data gleaned from the survey. UNR data is presented on the left, and the co-op grocery data is presented on the right. There were a total of 37 respondents at UNR, and 26 respondents at the co-op.

Demographic Data

Table 1. Respondent Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>71+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 2. Respondent Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3. Respondent Agricultural Background**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agricultural Background</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agricultural Background</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4. Respondent Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; High School</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; High School</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Respondent Income Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level ($)</th>
<th>UNR Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
<th>Co-op Income Level ($)</th>
<th>UNR Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 20k</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>&lt; 20k</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 39k</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20 - 39k</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 59k</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>40 - 59k</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 79k</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>60 - 79k</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 - 99k</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>80 - 99k</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100k +</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>100k +</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Respondent Political Affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Affiliation</th>
<th>UNR Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
<th>Co-op Political Affiliation</th>
<th>UNR Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Liberal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>Very Liberal</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Liberal</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>Somewhat Liberal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Conservative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Very Conservative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Conservative</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Somewhat Conservative</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables 7 through 10 on the following pages represent the organic, local, and fair-trade food assessments and a summary of the individual versus collective action assessments. Statements present in this knowledge-behavior assessment portion of the survey were based partly on Michael Long’s Ph.D. dissertation research on the motivations of ethical consumption from the Department of Sociology at Colorado State University (Long, 2010) and partly on established precepts of the organic, fair-trade, and local food movements as defined by Raynolds (1999) and myself. Note that only respondents who had previously heard of organic, local, and fair-trade foods went on to indicate whether or not they make an effort to purchase organic, local, and fair-trade foods. Only those respondents who indicated that they did make an effort to purchase those food products went on to complete the “reasons for purchase” portion of the assessment and the individual vs. collective action assessment. However, all survey respondents, including those who had never previously heard of organic, fair-trade, and local foods, completed the “potential motivating factors” portion of the assessment. This is reflected in the numbers and percentages of respondents listed in the tables. Please reference the surveys in Appendix B for further clarification.
Table 7. Organic Foods Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>UNR</th>
<th>Co-op</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever heard of organically grown food?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you make an effort to buy organically grown food?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy organic foods for health reasons?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the lack of synthetic pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, hormones,</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or antibiotics and how they affect your health a reason you buy organic</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy organic foods because they are non-GMO?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy organic food to protest large food corporations?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy organic foods to help local/small-scale economies?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy organic foods to support local/small-scale farmers?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the better treatment of animals a reason you buy organic foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy organic foods because the food tastes better?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy organic foods because of ethical production standards?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy organic foods because of environmental concerns?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the lack of chemical fertilizers a reason you buy organic foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the lack of synthetic pesticides, herbicides, or fungicides and their</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effects on the environment a reason you buy organic foods?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would better product variety motivate you to buy more or start buying</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organic foods?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would better product quality motivate you to buy more or start buying</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organic foods?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would wider availability motivate you to buy more or start buying organic foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would more information about organic foods, the organic food movement,</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and what it entails motivate you to buy more or start buying organic</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foods?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would better prices motivate you to buy more or start buying organic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foods?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>Co-op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever heard of local foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you make an effort to buy locally produced food?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy local foods for health reasons?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy local food to protest large food corporations?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy local foods to help local/small-scale economies?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy local foods to support local/small-scale farmers?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is connecting with the community a reason you buy local foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy local foods because the food tastes better?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy local foods because of environmental concerns?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the concern for “food miles” a reason you buy local foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the environmentally synergistic growing of foods in the proper season (reducing nitrogen-based fertilizer use) a reason you buy local foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would better product variety motivate you to buy more or start buying local foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would better product quality motivate you to buy more or start buying local foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would wider availability motivate you to buy more or start buying local foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would more information about local foods, the local food movement, and what it entails motivate you to buy more or start buying local foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would getting to know the farmer who produces your foods motivate you to buy more or start buying local foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would more farmer’s markets motivate you to buy more or start buying local foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would better prices motivate you to buy more or start buying local foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>Co-op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever heard of fair-trade foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you make an effort to buy fair-trade food products?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy fair-trade foods because of fair-trade companies’ ethical</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>production standards?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy fair-trade foods because fair-trade companies do not employ</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>any forced or child labor?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy fair-trade foods because of safe working conditions?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy fair-trade foods because fair-trade companies provide fair</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wages for producers?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy fair-trade foods because those companies provide democratic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>representation for farmers and producers in their business practices?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy fair-trade foods because those companies do not engage in any</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labor or pay discrimination?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy fair-trade foods because of environmental concerns?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the protection of forests &amp; wildlife habitats a reason you buy fair-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trade foods?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the reduction of synthetic fertilizers &amp; pesticides a reason you buy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair-trade foods?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy fair-trade foods to protest large food corporations?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy fair-trade foods to help local/small-scale economies?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you by fair-trade foods to support local/small-scale farmers?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would better product variety motivate you to buy more or start buying</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair-trade foods?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would better product quality motivate you to buy more or start buying</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair-trade foods?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would wider availability motivate you to buy more or start buying fair-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trade foods?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would more information about fair-trade foods, the fair-trade movement,</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and what it entails motivate you to buy more or start buying fair-trade?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would better prices motivate you to buy more or start buying fair-trade?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10. Individual versus Collective Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Organic Foods</th>
<th>Local Foods</th>
<th>Fair-Trade Foods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>UNR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think of this food movement in terms of individual action.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think of this food movement in terms of collective action.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think of this food movement in terms of both individual and collective action.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Last is table 11 (the statistical results of the Likert-scale store perception inventory) on the following page. “Positive” responses are those of respondents who either “agree” or “somewhat agree” with the statement. (scores of 4 and 5). “Neutral” responses are those of respondents who were “impartial” to the statement (scores of 3). “Negative” responses are those of respondents that “somewhat disagree” and “disagree” with the statement (scores of 1 and 2). This portion of the survey provides more insight into how consumers situate themselves and the stores in which they consciously purchase sustainable food products within the greater realm of the organic, local, and fair-trade movements themselves. Exploration of these themes is continued in the interviews, and is discussed fully in Chapter 5: Discussion, Analysis, & Implications.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Positive Response (Agree)</th>
<th>Neutral Response (Impartial)</th>
<th>Negative Response (Disagree)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not limit my purchases to a single grocery store.</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>29 79%</td>
<td>2 5%</td>
<td>6 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>22 85%</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
<td>3 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I buy certain organic, fair-trade, or local foods at certain stores.</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>25 68%</td>
<td>6 16%</td>
<td>6 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>17 65%</td>
<td>6 23%</td>
<td>3 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer some stores over others for the variety of organic, fair trade,</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>24 65%</td>
<td>7 19%</td>
<td>6 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and local foods they have.</td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>22 85%</td>
<td>4 15%</td>
<td>0 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer some stores over others for the quality of organic, fair-trade,</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>21 57%</td>
<td>10 27%</td>
<td>6 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and local foods they have.</td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>22 85%</td>
<td>4 15%</td>
<td>0 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is up to me, the consumer, to make smart decisions about</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>24 65%</td>
<td>3 8%</td>
<td>10 27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buying organic, fair-trade, and local foods.</td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>22 92%</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is up to the store to make smart decisions about carrying</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>23 62%</td>
<td>7 19%</td>
<td>7 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organic, fair-trade, and local foods.</td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>16 62%</td>
<td>4 15%</td>
<td>6 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe stores and consumers are partners in accomplishing the goals</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>25 67%</td>
<td>5 14%</td>
<td>7 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the organic, fair-trade, and local food movements.</td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>26 100%</td>
<td>0 -</td>
<td>0 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel a sense of solidarity with a store in which I purchase organic,</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>18 48%</td>
<td>15 41%</td>
<td>4 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair-trade, and local foods.</td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>21 84%</td>
<td>4 15%</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My purchasing decisions are influenced by the image of a grocery as a</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>16 44%</td>
<td>9 24%</td>
<td>12 32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“health food store”.</td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>19 73%</td>
<td>6 23%</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other consumers’ purchasing decisions are influenced by the image of a</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>24 64%</td>
<td>10 27%</td>
<td>3 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grocery as a “health food store”.</td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>16 62%</td>
<td>5 19%</td>
<td>5 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying organic, fair-trade, or local foods is marketed in different ways</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>30 81%</td>
<td>6 16%</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>than conventional foods</td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>21 84%</td>
<td>4 15%</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying organic, fair-trade, or local foods has a specific cultural image.</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>29 79%</td>
<td>6 16%</td>
<td>2 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>19 73%</td>
<td>6 23%</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This image excludes certain shoppers based on economic or other reasons.</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>23 62%</td>
<td>10 27%</td>
<td>4 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>17 66%</td>
<td>5 19%</td>
<td>4 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My purchasing decisions regarding organic, fair-trade, and local foods</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>25 73%</td>
<td>3 8%</td>
<td>7 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are influenced by the price of the products.</td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>14 54%</td>
<td>5 19%</td>
<td>7 27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stores could do more to educate customers and the community about</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>35 94%</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organic, fair-trade, and local foods.</td>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>20 77%</td>
<td>6 23%</td>
<td>0 -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Qualitative Interviews**

As stated earlier, interviews took place with both random participants of the survey and key individuals in the Reno, Nevada sustainability community. These individuals included employees of the sustainability-oriented co-op where I administered the surveys, members of the UNR sustainability committee, workers and volunteers at local urban farms, and an assortment of community health and environmental science professors at the university for a total of eighteen participants, a few of whom were interviewed simultaneously. Participants varied widely in age, gender, occupation, income level and education level.

Interviews were semi-structured—key questions and points were discussed, and interviews lasted between 15 minutes at the shortest to 40 minutes at the longest. Interviews were tape-recorded, and participant pseudonyms were used. Responses to the interview questions varied. Level of involvement in sustainability initiatives (and its associated knowledge base) along with occupation of each interview participant were important in determining the tone and candor of their perspectives concerning sustainable consumption. A list of the interview questions, a descriptive list of selected interview participants, and selected interview transcripts can be found in Appendix A.

An in-depth exploration of interview results, with selected examples, can be found on the following pages in Chapter Five: Discussion, Analysis, & Implications.
CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion, Analysis, and Implications

The primary goals of my research were to identify the overarching trends in consumer perception of “organic”, “local”, and “fair-trade” foods (Long, 2010). Reaching a comprehensive anthropological understanding of the outside social, cultural, and economic factors that work with or against such perceptions in forming motivation toward sustainable behavior in Reno, Nevada was another goal. Special consideration was given to consumer perceptions of the role that the grocery store plays in (1) facilitating conscious consumer behavior and (2) furthering the sustainable goals of the organic, local, and fair-trade food movements.

I discovered that a number of anticipated factors play into people’s conceptions of conscious consumption, such as concerns for personal health, the environment, and social justice. Further, a particular noteworthy facet of consumer conceptions of conscious consumption was the interplay between notions of individuality and collectivity within the realm of sustainable foods. This fed directly into consumers’ ideas of the role of the grocery store with regard to conscious consumption.

Lastly, the anticipated monetary concerns of consumers and how those might inhibit conscious consumption behaviors were addressed in my research, with most participants citing the costs of organic, fair-trade, and local foods as obstacles to their purchase. Interview participants consistently mentioned corporate and societal monetary concerns as having a significant and negative influence on the outlook of sustainable food production’s evolution.

Demographic data, while significant, did not provide fundamentally salient data concerning consumer engagement with conscious consumption behaviors. Rather, trends in
demographics seem to be more generally correlative or methodological results of this research. That is, demographic data correlates with the survey location, with UNR participants being younger and more highly educated than co-op participants, who in turn had higher income levels and were generally more knowledgeable about conscious consumption than their UNR counterparts.

**Personal & Environmental Health: Organic Foods**

Many of the precepts of organic agricultural production (the avoidance synthetic pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, fertilizers, growth hormones, and antibiotics (Raynolds, 2000)) overlap in their significance concerning nutrition/personal health (Gastol et al., 2011; Chang, 2013; Bjorklund et al., 2014) and the health of the environment (FAO, 1999; Raynolds, 2000; Gomiero et al., 2011; Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld, 2013). Data collected for this research indicates a greater percentage of research participants are motivated by personal health instead of environmental concerns when purchasing organics.

As demonstrated in the data tables of Chapter 4, 81% of respondents at UNR and 76% of respondents at the co-op who had previously heard of organic food indicated that health reasons were a primary motivating factor in their purchase of organics. Concerns for personal health in terms of conscious consumption were largely contained to the organic food sector, though a portion of co-op participants (67%) indicated that their purchase of locally produced foods was health-motivated. This trend was reflected in the interviews as well:

- Oliver: I think all people are becoming more aware of the health impacts of pesticides, insecticides, etc… and now they’re making wiser choices.
• Lucy: I don’t want my family eating something with pesticides and insecticides and hormones or genetic modification... Choosing organic in the store is definitely a health choice for me.

• Arnold: I think organic food is to improve people’s health.

By comparison, 58% of UNR respondents and 72% of co-op respondents cited “environmental concerns” as a motivating factor for their purchase of organic food products. Some survey participants also mentioned environmental concerns as playing into their consumption of local food products (50% of UNR participants and 67% of co-op participants). Interview participants mentioned concerns for sustainability, yet only one (Judith) really stressed this aspect of organic food production:

• Judith: I think organic is super important in environmental terms—to lessen or to not use as many pesticides and herbicides as a conventional farm or larger, big-business farms, if you will. The most important ramification for that is environmental.

• Candice: I think organic... foods just mean a greener production chain. Everyone is concerned about pollution, animal treatment...

• Vivienne: For organic, I’d say [the main significance of the movement is] eating healthier and keeping the Earth clean. You can boil it down to the chemicals.

Juxtaposing consumer concerns for personal health and consumer concerns for environmental health is not to say that conscious consumer behavior is fundamentally grounded in only one or the other. As George said in his interview,

“If your motivations [for conscious consumption] are for social justice, you’re going to lean toward that. If your motivations are economic, you’re going to lean
towards that. If your motivations are health or environment, you can lean towards that; and they’re not mutually exclusive.”

While the concerns for health and environment are not singular and exclusive, there is a stark difference in consumer conception of how these food movements, especially that of organic food, affect consumers in terms of health or environment; These differences speak to the profundity of consumer perceptions of organic foods. Organic foods in particular are marketed in such a way that promotes them as belonging to the realm of economic upper-echelon consumers—one interviewee, Astrid, mentioned prominent health-oriented consumers of organics such as Gwenyth Paltrow and their common association with the movement. This was a socioeconomic theme common throughout all survey and interview participant discourse that plays directly into the prices of organic food and how their economic accessibility affects consumer engagement in conscious consumption—something we will examine further in our discussion of the price of organic, local, and fair-trade foods. It is this notion—that people who can afford organics are not buying them out of concern for the environment, but concern for themselves because they can—that leads to a variety of misperceptions of organic food and the entire organic agricultural movement, foremost among them the idea of “organic foods” as only a health trend rather than “organic food production” as a sustainability-focused necessity. Ironically and in contrast to consumer perceptions, both academics and governmental/non-governmental authorities assert that environmental concerns and sustainability are the primary focus of organic agriculture (FAO, 1999; Raynolds, 2000; IFOAM, 2010; Middlemiss, 2010; FAO, 2013). The concerns for health and nutritional analyses of organic foods come secondary to this focus on sustainability, though they are closely intertwined. These alternate perceptions of the organic food movement carry extensive ramifications for how organics need to or should be
marketed to the public in order to increase awareness, and how dialogue concerning sustainability—rather than personal aspects of the consumer—can be successfully achieved in the public realm.

**Environmental Health & Social Justice: Local Foods**

While we’ve touched on survey participant perception of the environmental focus present in the local food movement, we will now explore that aspect of local food more fully. As aforementioned, 50% of UNR survey participants and 67% of co-op survey participants cited environmental concerns—mainly “food miles” and environmentally synergistic growing processes—as motivating factors for their conscious consumption of local foods. However, interviewees tended to mention environment in relation to the local food movement much more frequently than survey participants:

- Lucy: Choosing local food is more of an environmental concern.
- Lawrence: People get involved in [local food initiatives] for different reasons. For some people… [the food] is not coming from so far away so it’s not as impactful on the environment.
- Arnold: For local food, maybe [the main significance is] getting food fresher, reducing the carbon footprint from transportation costs…
- Eugene: There are enormous energy savings in local food compared to regular food.
- Candice: I think… local foods just mean a greener production chain.

However, socio-economic concerns formed the bulk of consumer perceptions and motivations of buying local foods: 81% of UNR respondents and 96% of co-op respondents indicated that supporting local/small-scale economies was a motivating factor for consuming
local food products. Seventy-seven percent of UNR respondents and 100% of co-op respondents indicated that supporting local/small-scale farmers was a motivating factor for consuming local food products. And 38% of UNR respondents and 83% of co-op respondents indicated that “connecting to the community” was a motivating factor for their consumption of local food products. This concern for local social and economic relationships was reflected in the interviews:

- Lucy: I think it’s… important to have your food come from your local source, your local farmer—who’s usually using organic practices—to support your community.
- Lawrence: For some people, [buying local] is about supporting the local community.
- Vivienne: [The significance of] locally grown food would be to help support small businesses and local farmers—community.
- Eugene: To me, local food has all kinds of community implications—bringing farmers into the community, keeping money in the community…
- Judith: I tie local food to the economy, supporting local communities, and ensuring that there’s food security, really.
- George: When I’m looking at whether I can get vegetables grown [locally] versus vegetables grown in Chile or China, to me that’s an economic choice—I want to keep my money here and support my local economy and the people who live around here.

It is clear that, while the sustainable focuses of the local food movement fall into the realms of both environmental concerns and social concerns, there is a huge tendency for
consumers to perceive the ultimate meaning of the local food movement to be grounded in community connections and people’s social and economic relationships with one another. While the local food movement does not have as explicitly defined social goals as the fair-trade food movement, consumer engagement in the purchase of local foods is very much informed by desires to connect with one’s food community (i.e. farmers, ranchers, etc) and desires to keep money local for community benefit.

**Social Justice: Fair-Trade Foods**

The fair-trade food movement is founded in social justice (Raynolds, 1999; Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld, 2012), and, despite the lack of general knowledge about fair-trade (47% of UNR respondents had previously heard of fair-trade foods, compared to 88% of co-op respondents), respondents and interviewees familiar with the movement were aware that fair-trade occupied its own social sphere of sustainable focus quite separate from organic and local foods:

- Lucy: I think [fair-trade is] probably more of a global concern, since fair-trade markets tend to be in other countries where people are working for really cheap wages and are subject to social injustice.
- Vivienne: fair-trade is about the people; you would be trying to help some people who might be working in unsafe conditions or getting a terrible wage try to live a better life while making this product.
- Eric: Fair trade… is focused more on the social environment of food.
- Judith: Fair trade is for these products from other countries where corporations run their business freely where it’s super important for us to buy products that ensure that that workforce is being treated fairly and paid fairly and all these other things.
Concerning the fair-trade food movement, there was also a high awareness among survey participants of its various social-justice based precepts. At UNR, 79% of respondents indicated that ethical production standards motivated their purchase of fair-trade foods (74% at the co-op). 79% of UNR indicated that supporting local/small-scale economies was a motivating factor for their purchase of fair-trade items, with 71% indicating that supporting local/small-scale farmers was a motivating factor. By comparison, 74% and 68% (respectively) of co-op participants cited these factors as informing their motivation to purchase fair-trade food items.

Other motivating factors as indicated by respondents at each location were fair wages (71% at UNR and 79% at the co-op), no forced/child labor (64% at UNR and 74% at the co-op), and no pay discrimination (64% at UNR and 68% at the co-op).

It is interesting to note that while the co-op had a much higher percentage of participants who reported themselves as both being familiar with the fair-trade food movement and making an effort to purchase fair-trade, the distribution of participant agreement with motivating factors toward the purchase of fair-trade items as listed on the survey varied between UNR and the co-op and followed no clear pattern. This may be due to the generally higher education level of UNR respondents, though the co-op’s specialization in organic, local, and fair-trade foods and the presumed knowledge base of the people who shop there would suggest all-around higher percentages as an indication of motivating factors for conscious consumption. However, this was not the case.

**Conscious Consumption: Individual versus Collective**

Related to these consumer conceptions of the organic, local, and fair-trade food movements in terms of personal health, environmental health, and social justice are consumer perceptions of these movements in terms of individuality or collectivity.
As shown in table 10 in Chapter 4, UNR respondents consistently out-ranked the coop in each of the organic, local, and fair-trade movements as being more grounded in individual, rather than collective, action. The co-op, on the other hand, tended toward notions of those food movements as either collective or both collective and individual. As evidenced in the interviews, notions of individuality ultimately came down to moment-of-purchase conceptions of consumer engagement with conscious food movements. That is, the role of the consumer is primarily defined by his/her individual act of buying an organic, local, or fair-trade food product:

- Vivienne: Ultimately I think it comes down to the individual making the choice [to buy those products]…

- Arnold: I think individual people are motivated by their own values and they’re going to seek out and do what they want to do as individuals…

However, perceptions and understandings of what realm the movement fell into—personal health, environmental health, or social justice—played into consumer ideas of individuality and collectivity. Fair-trade foods have a greater public perception of collectivity due to the social focus of the movement:

- Vivienne: I definitely think it’s collective in fair-trade and locally-grown products, because with local products they have to talk to people, they have to create these farmer’s markets; it’s a lot of work to create a community. As with fair-trade, if people weren’t screaming at [food companies] for these better [labor] standards, I doubt that any company would ever go fair-trade because it’s not as profitable…

- Lucy: As far as fair-trade goes, I think it’s more of a collective issue, because when you buy something that’s fair-trade, you’re making a value-based decision
with your money. You’re supporting that coffee company that uses fair-trade practices.

A majority of interview participants, however, tended to conceptualize the conscious purchase of organic, local, and fair-trade foods in both individualistic and collective terms, with particular inclination toward collectivity.

- Joan: I think it’s both… I think an individual choice impacts the collective group. I mean, it’s when a bunch of individuals come together making those choices that form the collective aspect of it, so you become a part of that collective aspect.

- Astrid: It’s both. I think that there are a lot of foodies who don’t really care about the ethics behind [organic, local, & fair-trade foods]… So I think that comes down to more of an individual choice. Whereas I think that there’s a huge cross-section of purchasers that are more part of this collective mindset.

This tilt toward collectivity was most likely due to interviewees’ specialized knowledge base (as mentioned in Chapter 3, a majority of interview participants were somehow embedded in the sustainability community of Reno as farmers, professors, etc). Deeper understandings of the complex chains of production and the connectedness of food and community in consumption patterns that come with personal investment and involvement in the sustainable food movements tended to deeply inform consumer perceptions of conscious consumption in terms of collectivity.

George is a perfect example of this:

“First of all, you have to have the farmers who are willing to do this… It takes lawyers and politicians and defenders of these standards… There are activists involved who are politically active and knowledgeable about this stuff and who work toward sustainability. And then of course you have the consumers who have
to educate themselves, and there are the grocers and the whole supply chain that has to exist between the farmer and the consumer. All those people have to be willing to maintain the traceability and the identification and all these different parts about sustainability. And in the case of the grocers, they have to say, ‘Here’s why we’re selling this, here’s why we’re promoting this product’. I think without any one of those legs, things would just collapse.

Further, whether or not individual participants’ personal conceptions of the nature of sustainable initiatives were grounded in ideas of individual or collective action did not tend to significantly inform what kind of role they viewed grocery stores as having in promoting conscious consumption and sustainability as a whole. Discrepancies between percentages of respondents who conceptualize sustainable food movements as individual or collective and data percentages of the store-perception focused Likert-scale portion of the survey exist—these are discussed in the following section.

The Role of the Grocery Store in Conscious Consumption

The inclusion of the last portion of the survey—a series of statements concerning grocery stores and consumer purchasing behaviors, on which consumers rated their level of agreement with those statements on a Likert-scale from 1 to 5—was meant to (1) quantitatively assess consumer perceptions of the role of the grocery store in relation to conscious consumption and (2) draw out parallels and discrepancies in overall consumer conceptualizations of the organic, local, and fair-trade food movements—especially in terms of individual and collective action.

At UNR, a majority of survey participants (more than 50%) who had heard of organic, local, and fair-trade foods tended toward conceptions of conscious consumption in terms of the individual (with the exception of fair-trade). A majority of survey participants at the co-op (more
than 50%) tended toward conceptions of conscious consumption in terms of collective action—
either alone or more comprehensively, i.e. in conjunction with individual action. However, these
percentages were not accurately reflected in the Likert-Scale responses.

At UNR, a majority of respondents (65%) noted that they “believe it is up to me, the
consumer, to make smart decisions about buying organic, fair-trade, and local foods.” This is in
parallel to the majority of UNR respondents indicating that they think of the organic and local
food movements in terms of the individual (54% and 50%, respectively). As previously
discussed, fair-trade foods were the exception to this majority conceptualization. In addition,
only 48% of respondents indicated that they “feel a sense of solidarity with a store in which I
purchase organic, local, and fair-trade foods,” furthering the trend toward notions of individual
action in conscious consumption among UNR participants.

However, a majority of UNR respondents (62%) also noted that they believe that “it is up
to the store to make smart decisions about carrying organic, local, and fair-trade foods.” Further,
67% of UNR respondents indicated that they “believe stores and consumers are partners in
accomplishing the goals of the organic, fair-trade, and local food movements.” Where does this
disparity between self-reported conceptions of individuality in the knowledge-behavior
assessments and in collectivity in the store-perception Likert scale come from?

There are several possibilities, and none are definitively conclusive. First, there are the
semantics of “individuality” and “collectivity”. It is possible that consumers have notions of
what “collective action” entails, yet within the realm of conscious consumption, these notions
may not be explicitly defined. Further, despite the option on the survey for explicitly indicating
that the organic/local/fair-trade food movements are both individual and collective, the inherent
inclusion of the individual in notions of “collectivity” may inform Likert-scale responses in
which the individual ("I believe it is up to me...") and the collective ("I believe it is up to the store..."); "I feel a sense of solidarity"...; "I believe stores and consumers are partners...") are kept explicitly separate. In addition, there may have been too many items on the Likert-scale inventory that referred to collective action. In future research, limiting the amount of choices available for respondents to choose from may provide more concise data patterns. However, all of this may boil down to the fundamental issue of awareness in conscious consumption—a recurring theme of this research that will be discussed fully in Chapter Six: Conclusions.

Second, the group of respondents who completed the "individual vs collective inventory" portion of the organic, local, and fair-trade knowledge-behavior assessment was not the same group of respondents who completed the store-perception Likert scale. The latter group was comprised of all survey respondents, while the former group was comprised only of those who had both heard of organic/local/fair-trade foods and make an active effort to purchase those foods. This likely affected the balance of respondents who hold particular notions of individuality & collectivity in each survey portion, and may have skewed the results toward individual action due to a difference in awareness of participants.

As for the co-op data: a majority of co-op respondents indicated that they think of the organic, local, and fair-trade food movements in either collective or both individual and collective terms (see Table 10). This was reflected in co-op responses to the Likert scale responses: 62% of respondents indicated that they believe "it is up to the store to make smart decisions about carrying organic, local, and fair-trade foods"; 100% of respondents indicated that they believe stores and consumers are partners in accomplishing the goals of sustainable food movements, and 84% of respondents indicated that they feel a sense of solidarity with a store in which they purchase sustainable food products.
There was, however, one interesting discrepancy: 92% of respondents indicated that they believe “it is up to me, the consumer, to make smart decisions about buying organic, local, and fair-trade foods.” This may, once again, come down to consumer awareness of the dynamics of food production and what the organic, local, and fair-trade food movements entail. Putting stress on the responsibility of the individual in consciously consuming sustainable food products and understanding the individual consumer’s situatedness at the end of a long chain of production are not mutually exclusive. If anything, increased knowledge and awareness of organic, local, and fair-trade foods may suggest not only an emphasis on collectivity within sustainable food movements as an abstract conception, but an emphasis on the importance of the individual in furthering the goals of those food movements as well. This is an idea reflected in the interviews; most participants stressed the importance of consumers in sparking change and creating demand that otherwise profit-driven grocery stores then respond to—only after that exchange takes place can the grocery store and the consumer move forward together in furthering the goals of sustainable food movements.

- Vivienne: [Stores] should definitely start pushing [organic, local, and fair-trade] products as much as they can; I think it’s their responsibility to start carrying them. But they’re not going to carry them if a consumer doesn’t ask for them first… it’s the consumer’s responsibility to ask for it, and then it’s the grocery store’s responsibility to provide options.

- Arnold: Ultimately it’s a business and it’s [the stores’] decision to do what they want to do… I think they have an ethical responsibility, but in a free market, they also have a fiscal responsibility. There’s a trade-off. I think ultimately, change takes place with
individuals. If everyone stopped going to Wal-mart and instead went to the food co-op, then you know stores would adapt and start selling different things.

One last point of note in the Likert scale responses was consumer agreement with the statement that “grocery stores could do more to educate customers and the community about organic, fair-trade, and local foods.” The final percentages were surprising—94% of UNR respondents agreed with the statement, while only 77% of co-op participants did. This is unexpected considering a majority of interviewees who also shop at the co-op did not consider people to be adequately educated about organic, local, and fair-trade foods. When outright asked whether or not consumers thought people were adequately educated about sustainable food movements, they responded:

- George: No, but I think they can be.
- Arnold: No.
- Oliver: No, and it really comes down to education. You have to educate people…
- Candice: No…

This discrepancy can be due to a multitude of things. Co-op respondents may think grocery stores already do an adequate job of educating customers, which is unlikely. However, this opinion may be true in co-op respondents’ consideration of the co-op itself. This local community food co-operative is unique in that it partakes in extensive educational outreach for the benefit of its customers. The co-op holds food and sustainability-related workshops and seminars, organizes field trips to local farms, and hosts local food and agriculture events such as seedling street fairs (de Jong, 2014).

Alternatively, this may once again be a reflection of co-op respondent emphasis on the individuals, not grocery businesses, as catalysts for all important forward propulsions in
sustainable food movements. Still, given that a great majority of participants did not consider the public to be adequately educated about organic, local, and fair-trade food, this is an interesting correlation that warrants further investigation.

The theme of consumer perceptions of grocery stores as profit-oriented businesses first, and sustainable food landmarks second, continues in consumer discussion of the overall economics of organic, local, and fair-trade foods.

**The Economics of Conscious Consumption**

A discussion of the many economic facets of sustainable food production would be lengthy, and the boundaries of their full extent were beyond the scope of this research. As such, our exploration of these facets is limited to the following: (1) a discussion of the immediate purchase price of organic, local, and fair-trade foods, (2) consumer perceptions of the organic, local, and fair-trade food movements as expensive, and (3) how that perception plays into sustainable food movements’ cultural image and how that may be exclusionary.

For all three realms of sustainable food production (organic, local, and fair-trade) and at both research locations (UNR and the co-op), survey respondents consistently indicated more than 50% of the time that better prices would motivate them to buy more or start buying those products. This was especially true for organic foods: on the UNR campus, 86% of survey participants responded by citing “better prices” as something that would help in facilitating their conscious consumption patterns. This dialogue continued in almost every interview—money and economics were themes that came to define not only the tone of our conversation, but participants’ deeper mental conceptualizations of the sustainable movement as well:
• Lawrence: Sometimes [organics] are way too expensive compared to non-organics… I would venture to say that most people are concerned about money, and are thus limited by their lack of disposable income to spend on food.

• Candice: People see a store that sells organic and automatically think, ‘Oh, they sell organic food? Everything’s going to be expensive there,’ and it’s like, I really enjoy shopping for organic stuff but it’s like, double the price.

• Arnold: I’m motivated economically to not buy [sustainable] products… I’m price driven… I think the price inhibits people from buying organic food. Or at least the perception that it’s more expensive.

• Eric: I used to not buy organic, because I didn’t have the money for it.

However, common complaint about the price of organic food is somewhat unwarranted. As Eric mentioned in his interview, we spend a much smaller portion of our income today on food than we did in the past. According to Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld, “Households today spend less on their daily food than ever before, in the order of 10-15% of their total net income… while this was over 40% in the 1950s” (2012). This is partly due to changing priorities, but mostly due to economic policy implementations in conjunction with agribusiness corporate practices. The current prices of food are artificially low due to extensive government subsidies to big-business conventional agricultural corporations (Holmes, 2013). These low prices are commonly considered to be the actual, normal price of food. Thus, organic, local, and fair-trade foods, whose prices reflect actual costs of producing actual food and paying actual living wages to food producers (de Jong, 2014) are often thought of as outrageously expensive as evidenced in the survey results and by participant interviews.

This public perception of sustainable foods as too expensive has developed into notions
of organic, local, and fair-trade foods as consumption “status symbols”—creating very specific, and often exclusionary, cultural associations. Seventy-nine percent of UNR respondents and 73% of co-op respondents indicated that engaging in the purchase of sustainable food products has “a specific cultural image”, and 62 – 66% percent of respondents indicated that this image “excludes certain shoppers based on economic or other reasons.” As mentioned previously, consumers associate organics and other sustainable food products as occupying a position in the upper echelons of food consumption—echelons within the domain of celebrities like Gwenyth Paltrow (see Appendix A). As interviewee George pointed out,

“…The main criticisms of organic food are almost class based. It’s like, well, you’re upper middle class, you can afford these products, you have the time and education to research these things, you know? You’re not the barely-English-speaking Hispanic mother of three who’s got to find things for her kids to eat and it has to be now and it has to be cheap—she’s going to go to a fast-food restaurant to accomplish that… and that’s a very true criticism”

Further, misguided conceptions of sustainable food production in terms of personal health (particularly in the case of organics) feed into this cultural image—over 62% of participants at both UNR and the co-op indicated that they think “other consumers’ purchasing decisions are influenced by the image of the grocery as a ‘health food store’” (see Table 11). However, only 44% of UNR respondents indicated that their own purchasing decisions are duly influenced, while 73% of co-op respondents indicated such. This disparity may be due to various issues: UNR respondents tended to be younger and of a lower income level bracket, which would thus limit their food purchases to more financially viable products and stores. Perhaps semantics are once again at play: people may not consider the passive inhibition of buying sustainable goods
(via the association of health food stores with high price) to be an “active influence.” The wording of the statements on the Likert scale inventory may suggest a positive, additive influence (i.e. consumers are more likely to shop at a “health-food” store because of its cultural image). This may be the case with co-op shoppers, who, due to their commitment to sustainable food products, may actually be more likely to shop at a “health-food” store because it would have a higher likelihood of carrying the products those consumers would want to buy, regardless of price. In any case, deeper investigation is warranted.

The cultural and economic constraints on the purchase of organic, local, and fair-trade foods that we have been discussing are not obstacles that cannot be overcome. Consumers, depending on the theoretical ethical commitment to something like conscious consumption, will find ways to create a harmonic, rather than dissonant, interaction between their ethics and the behavioral manifestation of those ethics (De Pelsmacker et al., 2005; Hudson et al., 2013; Long, 2010). That is, consumers will purchase items in line with their (personal, environmental, or social) ethical beliefs. Interviewees—such as Judith, George, Lucy, and Joan—consistently mentioned “values” as guiding and informing consumer purchasing behavior (see Appendix A). As Eric said in his interview:

It’s all about prioritizing what’s important to you. I used to not buy organic, because I didn’t have the money for it. And it’s not that I’ve since come into money, but I’ve reprioritized where my food is at… but in the past year, I’ve been buying every single thing organic. Price is not an issue because it’s that important to me… Like, I make way less money than most people who say they can’t afford organic. But I’ve prioritized that over having a TV, cable, or fast Internet, you know?
The level of consumer investment in organic, local, and fair-trade foods directly impacts the level of consumer engagement in conscious consumption. And, as we’ve seen, awareness of the precepts of organic, local, and fair-trade foods undercuts both investment and engagement in conscious consumption. As such, our discussion of the demographic results of the survey will center on how demographics—and their associated levels of accessibility—factor in to the awareness of sustainable food production and how that informs these research results.

**Consumer Demographics**

As mentioned earlier, no salient trends in the demographic data of conscious consumption as ascertained by this research were identified. Rather, demographics seemed to fall in line with what was expected given the research locations; they also varied widely, especially among survey participants and interviewees actively engaged in conscious consumption. Lastly, some demographic trends may be a result of this research’s methodology.

At UNR, participants (with the exception of professors) tended to fall between the ages of 18 – 30 (78% - see Table 1). This was an expected age range on a college campus. At the co-op, participants were more evenly distributed across all age brackets.

At both UNR and the co-op, respondents tended to be female (68 and 61% respectively—see Table 2). At the co-op, this may be due to grocery shopping as still belonging in the “domestic” realm—though by researcher observation, females did not comprise a significant majority of total shoppers at the co-op while research was being conducted. This, combined with the tendency toward female respondents at UNR, suggests alternative reasons. The trend toward female participation may have been due to the gendered willingness to engage in conversation with strangers and in rapport-based conversational style (Speer, 2005; Tannen, 1990). I myself as a researcher—young, male, a minority—as well as my appearance in terms of personal style and
hygiene may have also informed the (voluntary) social interaction that participants engaged in (Holmes, 2013).

Agricultural background of participants tended to shape their views and engagement in conscious consumption—it increased the previously discussed awareness of sustainable food production methods, and thus also increased consumer engagement in conscious consumption. Though agricultural background—in the form of occupation or family occupational history—was deeply correlated with knowledge of and engagement in conscious consumption, participants with agricultural backgrounds represented less than 30% of total participants (see Table 3).

Respondent education level fell into the expected brackets, with respondents at UNR all having at least “some college” education. However, education levels at the co-op fell into more evenly distributed brackets, from high school to graduate degree-level education (see Table 4). However, both knowledge about sustainable foods and engagement in conscious consumption were higher at the co-op, suggesting a deeper and more influential common denominator among actively conscious consumers beyond education level. I argue that this common denominator is awareness of sustainable food production, which is independent of formal education. However, as we have discussed (and as George mentioned in his interview), education can in fact facilitate consumer access to information about sustainable foods, which directly impacts consumer awareness of those modes of sustainable food production.

Income level similarly affects access to both the purchase of organic, local, and fair-trade foods and access to information about those food movements. However, participants’ income level was distributed widely across all brackets, with those whose annual household income fell below $39,000 forming the majority of participants at both UNR and the co-op. Further, we have already seen that economic barriers to engagement in conscious consumption can be overcome
by depth of personal ethical investment to sustainable food movements. Once again, this data speaks to another force that unites consumers across all income brackets: an awareness of organic, local, and fair-trade food movements.

Political affiliation data were also recorded, with UNR participants tending toward liberal political beliefs (see Table 6)—an anticipated trend at a college campus. Co-op participants also tended toward liberal political beliefs, though there was a higher instance of respondents identifying as “other” here than at UNR (see Table 6). However, political affiliations were almost never mentioned in interviews or casual conversation with participants, and this item on the demographic inventory was not elaborated any further in any other part of this research. As such, this data was not analyzed in depth, though it warrants deeper investigation.
CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions

Again, the purpose of this study was to achieve a holistic, anthropological understanding of the external forces that drive individuals to partake in conscious consumption through the purchase of organic, local, and fair-trade food products. In doing so, we may critically address, both socially and politically, the growing need for sustainable food systems. These alternative modes of food production may then carry more weight in their consideration in the public arena, pushing them closer to their ultimate goals of widespread environmental and social sustainability.

Overview

As we saw in Chapter 5: Discussion, Analysis, and Implications, respondents’ reasons for conscious consumption fell into three categories: concern for personal health, concern for the environment, and concern for social justice. Organic, local, and fair-trade foods each connect to these areas of concern. These three facets of sustainable food production may be rephrased as personal health, environmental health, and social health. Therefore, “health” or “wellness” as an abstract ideal encapsulates the core theme of sustainable concerns. It becomes clear that, ultimately, concern for the wellness of the Earth and its inhabitants forms the impetus upon which sustainable initiatives are based. This concern for wellness is the core motivating factor toward consumer engagement in conscious purchasing behaviors, although, as demonstrated in the quantitative data, respondents did not tend to self-report their motivations in these terms.

Public perceptions of organic, fair-trade, and local foods simply become clouded by the superficial and peripheral—though valid—aspects of conscious consumption, such as association
with socio-economic status and depth of concern with the nutritional significance of organics, etc. It is with these peripheral facets of conscious consumption that people define themselves as conscious consumers, especially under the realm of organics as having more nutritional value than conventional foods (as discussed in Chapter Five).

A common theme throughout this research and its ensuing discourse was awareness of sustainable food production in the form of the organic, local, and fair-trade food movements. This awareness directly informed all aspects of conscious consumption. The higher respondents’ awareness of the precepts and processes of sustainable food movements was, the greater respondents’ ultimate concern for “wellness” was. With higher levels of awareness came more comprehensive understandings of the importance of sustainable food movements—the categories of personal health, environmental health, and social justice became less meaningful in their separation and more salient as specific manifestations of a deeper concern for wellness.

Awareness of the processes of conventional food production and the precepts of the organic, local, and fair-trade movement that provide alternatives to those processes also informed participant conceptions of conscious consumption in terms of individual versus collective action. While limited awareness and engagement (as evidenced by UNR survey respondents) influenced conceptions toward individuality, extensive awareness and engagement (as evidenced by co-op respondents and interviewees) offered a more comprehensive view of individual situatedness within an extensive structure of multiple players in food production: farmers, producers, corporations, politicians, activists, and other conscious consumers. This view lent a tendency toward consumer conceptions of conscious consumption and sustainable food movements to be collective, or both collective and individual.

Notions of individuality and collectivity then, in turn, somewhat informed consumer
perceptions of the role that grocery stores play in both facilitating conscious consumption and furthering the sustainable goals of the organic, local, and fair-trade food movements. Especially at the co-op, despite an understanding of the collectiveness of conscious consumption, participants emphasized individuals, not grocery businesses, as catalysts for forward propulsions in sustainable food movements. Participants stressed the importance of consumers in sparking change and creating demand that otherwise profit-driven grocery stores respond to—only after that exchange takes place can the grocery store and the consumer move forward together in furthering the goals of sustainable food movements.

Awareness and its effects on consumers’ levels of engagement with the purchase of organic, local, and fair-trade foods also affected the economics of conscious consumption. Those respondents with a higher knowledge base concerning these sustainable modes of food production were less misguided in their assessment of the relatively high price of organic, local, and fair-trade foods, as they understood that these prices are reflective of the actual, sustainable production costs of food rather than the artificially low prices of conventional agricultural products, as discussed in Chapter Five. Further, the level of consumers’ ethical commitment to sustainable food movements, as reciprocally affected by their level of awareness of those movements, directly affected how they approached economic barriers to purchasing sustainable food items. It comes down to values: as both Joan and Eric mentioned in their interviews, consumers prioritize what’s important to them, and Eric in particular was explicit in describing his forgoing of modern amenities such as television and Internet in order to be able to fully engage in purchasing organic, local, and fair-trade foods. This type of behavior is reflective of the cognitive and behavioral harmony that results from high levels of ethical commitment to a cause, as described by De Pelsmacker et al. (2005) and Long (2010). I argue that a strong
prescription to ethical beliefs concerning sustainable food production is grounded in consumer awareness of those movements’ precepts and processes.

This theme of awareness also directly undercuts the demographic results of my research. The wide range of conscious-consuming research participants in everything from age to education level to income level at both research locations, even after accounting for research-location-based confounding trends (like the high percentage of highly-educated individuals on a college campus), speaks to greater forces uniting these individuals in their commitment to conscious and sustainable food consumption: ethics and awareness concerning organic, local, and fair-trade foods.

This information concerning how consumers perceive themselves to be situated within sustainable food movements allows us to generate a more comprehensive understanding of how to address the growing social and political needs for sustainable food systems in our modern, globalized world. The purchasing actions of consumers have direct repercussions on our food supply; an increase in sustainability-focused education and public awareness of sustainable food systems would fundamentally alter the ways in which we grow, produce, sell, and purchase foods with respect to personal health, environmental wellness, and social justice. The progression of the organic, local, and fair-trade movements (along with the policies and regulations surrounding them) up to this point is a reflection of the power of consumers to both establish and define, through their purchases, the course of inter- and intra-national food systems.

Reflections & Limitations

There are several areas of my research and methodology that warrant some reflection. First is the small sample size: 58 total participants. For a more accurate representation of the public motivations and perceptions of conscious consumption that my research sought to
address, a much larger sample (especially of survey respondents) would lead to more accurate
and salient results. Second is the nature of each of the research locations—the University of
Nevada, Reno and a local community food co-op—as contributing to the self-selection of
research participant groups. On a college campus, participants tended toward being younger in
age, lower in overall income, and students in occupation—participant aspects that deeply inform
food consumption behavior. In parallel, participants at the co-op—as a community center that
both specializes in the sale of organic, local, and fair-trade foods and promotes sustainable foods,
consumption behaviors, and overall lifestyles—were in possession of a highly specialized
knowledge base and did not necessarily reflect the “average” consumer in Reno, Nevada. For
future research, administration of surveys and interviews at a variety of grocery stores to both
obtain a larger overall sample size and a greater variety of participants may afford new and
interesting data and perspectives. This was, in fact, an original goal of this research project,
though explicit anti-solicitation bylaws of a number of conventional grocery stores prohibited
such an endeavor.

Semantics of language used in multiple aspects of my research may have also guided or
skewed the data. As discussed in Chapter Five: Discussion, Analysis, and Implications, the use
of arbitrary and structured language options through which consumers were meant to convey
their beliefs and conceptualizations of conscious consumption poses limitations in the accuracy
of reported information. Deeper extractions of such beliefs and conceptualizations in the form of
the extensive discourse and participant-observation characteristic of more traditional
anthropological research would be useful in reaching more accurate and comprehensive
understandings of the individual and cultural forces that act upon consumers in their conscious
consumption of sustainable food products. This may be an informative goal of future research on
the subject.

Further, as discussed in Chapter 3: Methodology, participant elicitation methods may have confounded participant selection. Participation in the research was completely voluntary, but a sign reading, “Are you a conscious consumer? What do you think of organic, local, and fair-trade foods?” was used to advertise my research. This may have somewhat dissuaded people who were not familiar with organic, local, and fair-trade foods from participating and encouraged people who were familiar with those food products to participate, thus influencing data gleaned. Interviews with survey participants were also voluntary, and their time commitment (as well as subject matter) posed an obstacle for many potential participants. Thus, only one interview with a regular customer at the co-op was obtained, and interviewees as a whole tended toward those already both interested and invested in conscious consumption.

Lastly was the role of the researcher. Especially in the social sciences, and particularly in anthropology, it is always important to retain a reflective and reflexive perspective when conducting research. Both the position of the researcher as a reflection of his/her cultural heritage and the researcher’s physical appearance can deeply affect interactions and discourse with research participants (Holmes, 2013). In the case of this research project, my qualities of being a young, male minority individual as well as my appearance in terms of personal style and hygiene may have informed the (voluntary) social interaction in which participants engaged with me, particularly in the case of a vast majority of research participants being female. In future research, the use of multiple researchers to ascertain differences in participant response and interaction may be an interesting avenue.
References


Interview Questions

1. Have you heard of organic, fair-trade, and local foods?

2. What do you think is the significance of these products and the movements behind them?

3. Think back to your most recent grocery trip. Which products did you tend to buy organic? Fair trade? Local? Why?

4. Would you say you’re more motivated ethically or economically to buying those products?

5. When you think of engaging in conscious consumer behavior, do you think of it in individualistic terms or as a collective movement? Could you see awareness and emphasis on organic, fair-trade, and local foods becoming a greater cultural phenomenon?

6. Do you think people are adequately exposed to or educated about organic, fair-trade, and local foods?

7. What do you think of the role the store plays in relation to the organic, fair-trade, or local foods they stock and how/why people buy them?

8. What are your thoughts on the “boutique” or “high-end” image of certain health-food stores?
Interview Respondents

Note: All respondent names have been changed, and precise ages have been approximated in concordance with survey age bracket response. The following respondents and interview transcriptions represent a salient portion (13) of total respondents and interviews (18). Inclusion was determined based on either (1) representativeness of general respondent sentiment or (2) exceptional non-representativeness of general respondent sentiment (in terms of either conscious-consumption-related knowledge or the lack thereof).

1. George. Male. 47. Member of UNR’s sustainability committee. Background in environmental toxicology.


3. Lucy. Female. 32. UNR Secretary. Involved at an urban farm.

4. Lawrence. Male. 43. Member of UNR’s sustainability committee.

5. Astrid. Female. 34. Shopper at local community food co-op.


7. Megan. Female. 22. Undergraduate biochemistry student at UNR.

8. Candice. Female. 18. Undergraduate student at UNR.

9. Vivienne. Female. 21. Undergraduate art student at UNR.


12. Judith. Female. 29. Employee at local community food co-op.

13. Joan. Female. 36. Community health sciences professor at UNR.
Selected Interview Transcripts

Note: Interviewer speech within a conversation is denoted with italic font.

1. **What do you think is the ultimate significance of organic, local, and fair-trade food products and the movements behind them?**

   (a) **George:** “I would actually have to say it’s the awareness that it raises in people… it makes them aware of where their food comes from and what the ramifications of it are. In that sense I think it touches a lot of things—and it depends on what each individual’s primary motivation is. If your motivations are sort of social justice, you’re going to lean toward that. If your motivations are economic, you can lean towards that. If your motivations are health or environment, you can lean towards that; and they’re not mutually exclusive. So I think it’s that awareness thing, it’s that thinking about food that Americans have not done in the last few decades. But we’re starting to, and I think that’s a good thing.

   (b) **Oliver:** I think all people are becoming more aware of the health impacts of pesticides, insecticides, etc. Based upon that, and based upon movements from the EPA and CDC to educate the people—which is really the key—that that information is going out into the public and they’re now making wiser choices.

   (c) **Lucy:** For organics, I think it appeals to peoples’ sense of values and what they put in their food. But I think it’s also been something that companies try to use—the label of ‘organic’—because they know it appeals to people as ‘healthier’ and some people probably don’t actually know what organic means; they just know it’s healthier somehow and that it’s supposed to help. So I think there’s a lot of marketing and advertising towards organic. For me it’s more value-based. I know I don’t want my family eating something with pesticides and insecticides and hormones or genetic modification… I think for fair-trade it’s probably more of a global concern, since fair-trade markets tend
to be in other countries where people are working for really cheap wages and are subject to social injustice, so… I think for local food—local food is probably more important for me. Beyond organic, I think it’s more important to have your food come from your local source, your local farmer—who’s usually using organic practices—to support your community.

Would you say that for you, organics are more about health than environmental concerns?

Yeah. Choosing organic in the store is definitely a health choice for me, whereas choosing local food is more of an environmental concern. I will buy veggies from my local farmer, and I don’t care if he’s certified as an organic farmer. But if we talk to him, we know that he uses organic practices—because it costs a lot for local farmers to get certified.

(d) Lawrence: My impression is that—if you want to call organic food a ‘movement’—it’s to get stuff out of food. To make the food more pure, and to get rid of the chemicals, the hormones, all that stuff, so that what you’re getting is just food. For fair-trade, it’s about making sure that everybody, from the people who are growing the food, to the people that are harvesting it, to the people that are packaging it get a fair deal out of the price that’s paid for it. I think local food initiatives—people get involved in that for different reasons. For some people it’s simply a matter of tasting better because it’s fresher. For other people it’s not coming from so far away so it’s not as impactful on the environment. For other people it’s supporting the local community—or a combination of all these things.

(e) Astrid: I think that as a culture, we’ve become pretty separated from our food source—and pretty okay, a little too okay maybe, with being uneducated and not seeing that connection. And I think that these movements demand more of a conversation with your food source, wherever that may be.
(f) **Arnold:** I think organic food is to improve people’s health. For local food, maybe getting food fresher, reducing the carbon footprint from transportation costs… and I think a lot of them market themselves as organic. I don’t know about fair-trade.

(g) **Megan:** I think that someone one day decided they were against GMO and, you know, they decided that organic food was it; or that it could be some popular thing, which is what it’s become, you know, and people use it to market their food products. I feel like that could have stemmed the ‘let’s go organic stuff’ in people. Or somebody might have actually done research and could have found some significant difference between organic food and conventional food. I think it was either personal preference or they thought it was some good, marketable thing to do.

(h) **Candice:** Well I’ve never even heard of fair-trade. I think organic and local foods just mean a greener production chain. Because everyone is concerned about pollution, animal treatment, and even economy—you don’t want to buy from Walmart because these are mass-produced foods that aren’t going to taste as good and aren’t as good quality.

(i) **Vivienne:** For organic, I’d say eating healthier and keeping the Earth clean. You can boil it down to the chemicals. Locally grown would be to help support small businesses and local farmers—so community. And fair-trade is about the people; you would be trying to help some people who might be working in unsafe conditions or getting a terrible wage try to live a better life while making this product.

(j) **Eric:** I think everything starts out as an ideal, and organic food started out with wanting to eliminate herbicides and pesticides and all that, but then big business jumped on the bandwagon and now with organic standards, a lot of them are only meeting the minimum requirements of those standards so it’s not living up to the original ideal. And so now a lot of people have responded to that by moving past organic and moving into local, and I think that’s where local food came in. For example, we’re not certified organic, but we
use practices that are way better than the bare minimum for that. And then fair-trade’s entirely its own thing, and is focused more on the social environment of food.

(k) Eugene: To me, local food has all kinds of community implications—bringing farmers into the community, keeping money in the community, and it has a lot to do with bringing people fresh, nutrient-dense foods that are grown here. Some people say ‘eat your view’. Wouldn’t it be nice to look out and instead of seeing a parking lot, you’d see an urban farm? Or somebody’s backyard that’s growing, you know, urban vegetables? There’s also enormous energy savings in local food compared to regular food.

(l) Judith: I think organic is super important in environmental terms. To lessen or to not use as many pesticides and herbicides as a conventional factory farm or larger, big-business farms, if you will. The most important ramification for that is environmental. And of course I think it plays into what people are consuming in terms of their endocrine disruptors and things like that that you hear about with antibiotics and hormones. I tie local food to the economy, supporting local communities, and ensuring that there’s food security, really. Not only from a financial perspective, but also like, heaven forbid if California were to fall off the face of the Earth—having Nevada have a really strong food system and network is important. Right now—I don’t think people realize how insecure we are. We don’t have a chicken processing plant, so you can’t even process local chickens. There’s only one local organic meat processing facility in Northern Nevada… I think there’s a raised awareness that needs to happen to help people understand how disconnected we are from our food system and where we get our food. And for fair-trade—that’s for these products from other countries where corporations run their business freely where it’s super important for us to buy products that ensure that that workforce is being treated fairly and paid fairly and all these other things.
2. Think back to your most recent grocery trip. Which products did you tend to buy organic? Fair trade? Local? Why?

(a) George: I personally buy close to a hundred percent of my groceries if not a hundred percent of my groceries organic, fair-trade, and especially local. I think for a lot of people there are choices based on what motivates them and what drives them; what they’re really after. And maybe also availability…? If somebody goes into a store and says, you know, ‘I need a red onion’ and oh, they only have conventionally grown ones then you’ll buy that I think. So I would say availability has got to be one driver… I also think there’s a lot of misinformation about which products you should buy organic and can get away with buying conventional, like with the ‘clean fifteen’ [the fifteen types of produce that tend to carry little trace of pesticides] … It’s more about the chemical it’s used than it is about the particular fruit. There are two types of pesticides—you could characterize them as surface and systemic. So there’s the stuff that you just blast onto the surface and it just stays there and in that case when you, for example, peel the rind off an orange and eat the inside, you’re getting an extra layer of protection from that rind, that’s true. But then there are these so-called ‘systemic’ insecticides that actually get absorbed by the tree or the plant or whatever, and they work against the pests from the inside out of the plant in a sense, in which case it doesn’t matter whether you eat the inside or outside. I was always told never to eat conventional apples or strawberries because of the types of chemicals and how they use them on those fruits… they use some really nasty things on those; they inject these—these sterilants into the soil that just kill everything, very broad spectrum insecticides. I don’t worry about a lot of the nuts that I purchase, whether or not they’re organic, again because of the way they’re grown and the type of insecticides they tend to use—very surface-based ones, and the nuts are actually inside a shell inside of something else; they’re really actually quite protected—but I’m a little out there with my knowledge
base because of my education in environmental toxicology and environmental chemistry… I don’t know if a lot of people—if that’s knowledge available to them, if that’s something they’re interested in, you know, if they want to get into it or not, so I think the safe bet for most of those people is to just buy organic.

*What about fair-trade?*

I buy as much as I can based on availability but I think that’s an interesting… almost conflicting thing, because there are a lot of products that you cannot get locally—one of my favorites is coffee. I mean, we don’t grow coffee in the United States so you’re going to be getting it from Central or South America, Africa, some other areas of the world where they have the right climate to grow coffee. In a lot of those places in the world, I feel—and I know worker exploitation happens in America, don’t get me wrong, I know that’s true. But I also feel like there’s more of a voice here…? I mean if you stand up and speak for worker rights in the United States, you’re not going to end up in jail somewhere. You can speak out freely and safely. Some of the workers may not feel that way, they may be undocumented; but worker advocates can, I feel like in some countries of the world, worker advocates are themselves put in danger, which they’re not here. And so in that case, when I’m looking at things like chocolate and coffee, which we don’t grow in the US—that’s where it’s more important to me to look for fair trade because I do think it’s more of a voluntary thing. And so it’s the companies, the producers, the middle-men people that are standing up and saying ‘No, we’re going to abide by these rules and we’re only going to buy from these ethical places and we’re going to give farmers a fair price for their product.’ Those kinds of things become a more positive and more progressive way of looking at what you’re buying than otherwise. So to me fair-trade is for very specific products.
Lawrence: I didn’t look specifically for any organic or fair-trade; I probably bought some organic berries, and to be honest with you I couldn’t tell you for sure if what I bought was local or not. I should probably say that I didn’t make any conscious effort to buy local last time I went shopping.

Why is that?

Well, it depends. Sometimes they’re way too expensive compared to non-organic, sometimes they’re not available. I would venture to say that most people are concerned about money, and are thus limited by their lack of disposable income to spend on food.

Vivienne: I bought all my fruits and vegetables organic; there seems to be a lot less local food available than the others but in the summer I’ll probably go to the farmer’s markets; and I think of fair-trade as things like rice and coffee and things grown in other countries and I don’t buy a lot of that, but I did get some sugar that was fair-trade and I buy fair-trade whenever it’s available.

3. Would you say you’re more motivated ethically or economically to buying those products?

George: I think it depends on what it is… again, if I’m looking for something like fair-trade coffee—that to me is a more ethical choice than anything. But when I’m looking at whether I can get vegetables grown in Fallon versus vegetables grown in Chile or China, for god’s sake, to me that’s an economic choice—I want to keep my money here and support my local economy and the people who live around here. So there’s almost more of that there, because if it were really just purely about the kind of health issues and stuff, then it wouldn’t matter if it comes from Mexico or Chile. But if you talk about Chile then you get into environmental things like long-distance transport… but even that really depends, because if you’re from somewhere, say, like Maine and you’re looking at organic products from California versus products from Mexico, then honestly the travel
distance there is not a huge difference. In that case you have to be looking for organic vegetables grown in Virginia or something if you really want to make that decision.

(f) **Arnold:** I’m motivated economically to *not* buy those products. It just comes down to economics; I’m price-driven. Being honest, we shop at Costco, Walmart, Scolari’s, etc. We like fresh produce, but you go to a farmer’s market and when it costs 50 to 70% more, you make a decision not to do that; you have other, competing needs. I think the price inhibits people from buying organic food. Or at least the perception that it’s more expensive.

(g) **Vivienne:** I would say 70% ethical, 30% economical. I would be lying if I said that economics didn’t have something to do with it; I mean, it depends on whether I go grocery shopping right after I get my paycheck, things like that.

(h) **Eric:** It’s all about prioritizing what’s important to you. I used to not buy organic, because I didn’t have the money for it. And it’s not that I’ve since come into money, but I’ve reprioritized where my food is at… but in the past year I’ve been buying every single thing organic; price is not an issue because it’s that important to me. Food has become a really big part of my budget—I’m sure you’ve seen the numbers, in the sixties people used to spend X percentage of their budget on food and now it’s like down to six or seven percent*; it’s amazing. And for me it’s a very significant chunk of what I buy. Like, I make way less money than most people who say they can’t afford organic, but I’ve prioritized that over having a TV and having cable, and fast internet, you know.

(m) **Joan:** I would say ethical. I think our treatment of animals in this culture is just very indicative of just our behavior in general and how we treat each other, and it just bothers

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*According to Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld, “Households today spend less on their daily food than ever before, in the order of 10-15% of their total net income in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCED) countries, while this was over 40% in the 1950s.” (2012)*
me. I just know how animals are treated in the mass-production factories. And ethics also entails a responsibility to the Earth and a philosophical questioning of why we’re here on Earth—are we here to destroy it just because of the power of the dollar? There are priorities in whether or not you want your car and your house and your toys versus the quality of your food and the time you spend with other people. I find the latter way more important.

4. When you think of engaging in conscious consumer behavior, do you think of it in individualistic terms or as a collective movement? Could you see awareness and emphasis on organic, fair-trade, and local foods becoming a greater cultural phenomenon?

(a) George: I think of it as collective… I think it takes a collection of people. First of all you have to have the farmers who are willing to do this—organic growing is more work in many cases… It takes lawyers and politicians and defenders of these standards… There are activists involved who are politically active and knowledgeable about this stuff and who work toward sustainability. And then of course you have the consumers who have to educate themselves, and there are the grocers and the whole supply chain that has to exist between the farmer and the consumer. All those people have to be willing to maintain the traceability and the identification and all these different parts about sustainability. And in the case of the grocers, they have to say, ‘Here’s why we’re selling this, here’s why we’re promoting this organic product’. I think without any one of those legs, things would just collapse. ‘Organic’ labelling has strict standards that you have to meet, as opposed to the word ‘natural’ which they can just put on whatever, you know, it has no meaning. So it takes all these people willing to do that and uphold that. If I just stood up and said, ‘Hey, I want to buy organically grown local produce,’ but no one was willing to do that, then I don’t have anything. It really can’t just be an individual thing.
Do you think—in the face of modern, industrialized, corporate agriculture—that these types of sustainable growing conditions and conscious purchasing behaviors can become a cultural norm?

I would hope so… But the main criticisms of organic food are almost class based. It’s like, well, you’re upper middle class, you can afford these products, you have the time and education to research these things, you know? You’re not the barely-English-speaking Hispanic mother of three who’s got to find things for her kids to eat and it has to be now and it has to be cheap—she’s going to go to a fast-food restaurant to accomplish that, you know? And I recognize that, and that’s a very true criticism. But I think that part of it is that if there’s not a leading edge of any kind of movement, then there’s not going to be a follower. If there isn’t something to start a campaign—if I think back to the seventies, smoking was incredibly prevalent; it was everywhere. And now UNR is going tobacco-free; that just blows my mind! It’s phenomenal. They used to allow smoking on airplanes, and I bet you can’t even imagine an airplane with smoking allowed. No smoking now is everywhere. And there needed to be that bleeding edge, those people who could see that smoking was bad. I think the same kind of thing is going to happen with sustainability stuff. The leading edge is going to push, and then society is going to follow; I really think that is going to happen.

(f) Arnold: Both. I think Individual people are motivated by their own values and they’re going to seek out and do what they want to do as individuals. But I think some people who have those interests align themselves with people who have similar interests and it becomes perhaps more of a social or interactive thing.

(g) Lucy: With organic, I say both. Individually it’s important to me for the health reasons, but collectively, the more people there are that form the demand for organic food, the more producers are going to take on organic practices. We’ve all seen, in the last five or
ten years, and increase in the amount of organic foods being available, so I think that collective demand has increased the availability. As far as fair-trade goes, I think it’s more of a collective issue, because when you buy something that’s fair-trade, you’re making a value-based decision with your money. You’re supporting that coffee company that uses fair-trade practices. And with local food… I say both, but for me it’s really personal, because I shop locally and am really involved with local-food people in the community—I’ve met and talked with farmers and with the people who I buy my beef from—so for me it’s an important personal value for me to do that. But I think local food could have that same kind of impact as organic food—the more people are educated about it, the more demand will increase, which will increase support for farmers, which will allow them to produce more.

(h) Megan: Because it is kind of trendy now, I do think it’s more individual. But I believe it started as a collaborative and collective thing. Farmers wanted to support each other or people who wanted to support that were together… But now because of the trend, it’s more of an individual thing like, people think it’s healthier so they just do that.

(i) Judith: That’s a really good question—I’m sensitive to being like, pious, and so I try to really respect what other people value and my husband has very different values than me, and so it makes me more aware of different people and their choices and very respectful of those people and their choices. I try to do it myself and I try to inspire other people to do it through education and raising awareness—I really, really respect that education piece, and I think the most important part is providing that information for folks and then completely respecting people’s own decisions from there.

(j) Vivienne: I definitely think it’s collective in fair-trade and locally-grown products, because with local products they have to talk to people, they have to create these farmer’s markets; it’s a lot of work to create a community. As with fair-trade, if people weren’t
screaming at them for these better [labor] standards I doubt that any company would ever
go fair-trade because it's not as profitable… But with organic, I feel like that’s a little
individual because I think it would cost farmers less to use less pesticides and they’d
probably feel better about it anyway, so I think that’s more of an individual thing. But
ultimately I think it comes down to the individual making the choice [to buy those
products]… but the work that goes into the side before it even gets to you is more
significant in locally-grown and fair-trade foods.

(k) Astrid: It’s both. I think that there are a lot of foodies who don’t really care about the
ethics behind [organic, local, & fair-trade foods] but they know that it tastes better. So I
think that comes down to more of an individual choice. Like, I’ll want an organic local
tomato because I know it’s not going to have been sprayed with anything. Whereas I
think that there’s a huge cross-section of purchasers that are more part of this collective
mindset. That said, I think that doesn’t account for some of the people who might really
have that mindset but are in an economic position where they just can’t make that
decision—they don’t have the freedom or the free mind-space to even be thinking about
that stuff. There’s a full spectrum there. And fair-trade I don’t feel like is quite as
individual—I don’t think people notice any taste difference as much, maybe. It more
comes down to the worker’s rights so I feel that if you are buying fair trade you do have
some knowledge about, a collective, you know, humanity.

(l) Joan: I think it’s both… I think an individual choice impacts the collective group. I mean,
it’s when a bunch of individuals come together making those choices that form the
collective aspect of it, so you become a part of that collective aspect.

5. **Do you think people are adequately exposed to or educated about organic, fair-trade, and
local foods?**
(a) **George**: No, but I think they can be. It’s just a matter of implementation; especially because America’s sort of food slogan is that it has to be fast, cheap, and good-looking. And you lose something, I think, when you go down that path, but it makes combating that difficult. But I think a lot of it just comes down to awareness, and knowing what other people are doing. You can learn about local foods or organic foods through stores like the co-op or in magazines or from your friends… but I think there has to be something of an initial desire to learn more and know more and go down that path. I don’t know if there’s another way, really, to be able to do that… there has to be some kind of institutionalization of this into education or something along those lines.

(b) **Arnold**: No. Because especially organic means different things to different people. When you see organic, it does not mean that it was not grown without pesticides. It means that it met certain federal standards that the USDA set, and those standards may not be the standards that you think they are*. So I think a lot of folks think that things grown organically are inherently healthier for you, and that may be. But I don’t think they always understand what that really means. It doesn’t explicitly say on the label ‘Raised without X or Y’. It says organic. So if you meet those standards, whatever they are, you can put ‘organic’ on your label.

(c) **Oliver**: No, and it really comes down to education. You have to educate the people from reliable sources—you go on the Internet and there are thousands of different subjects with thousands of different people saying do it this way, do it that way. Most of them either don’t have a scientific background or have minimal scientific background. So getting the information out to the general populous on more than just on a cursory level

*While differing organic-certifying agencies do have different standards for organic requirements (Pogash, 2009), the use of synthetic pesticides is, actually, explicitly banned (IFOAM, 2012; USDA, 2013)
that [organic, local, and fair-trade] foods are better has to be done on an agency standpoint and then filtered down through the community, including grocery stores and food suppliers doing a better job in education.

(d) Candice: No, but I think a lot of people around here [the UNR campus, Reno in general] are, because I know a lot of people who are into eating healthy here. I think it depends on your background. If you’re around college kids at UNR then yeah, you’ll get it, but if you’re still in high school then you’re probably not going to hear about it. It’s kind of just like when you start shopping for your own food, and you make smart decisions about what you put in your body.

6. What do you think of the role the store plays in relation to the organic, fair-trade, or local foods they stock and how/why people buy them?

(a) Arnold: That’s a tough one. You’re not talking about the producer—you’re talking about the actual retailer. Ultimately it’s a business and it’s their decision to do what they want to do. And people will vote with their feet—if they don’t like the way the big box stores sell food, they’ll go somewhere else… I think they have an ethical responsibility, but in a free market, they also have a fiscal responsibility. There’s a trade-off. I think ultimately, change takes place with individuals. If everyone stopped going to Walmart and instead went to the food co-op, then you know stores would adapt and start selling different things.

(b) Oliver: I think right now, stores’ main motive is profit. Not saying that’s right or wrong, but right now that bottom line profit margin is what drives them to buy whatever products they get, including organic. They’re responding to customer concerns, to supply and demand… I don’t think they’re coming from a place of saying ‘We know that organic is the absolute best way to go, we’re going to go to all organic’. They’re maximizing product availability to get the most profit, I think.
(c) Candice: I think personally that if a store gives off an image of being organic, then the demographic that shops there will like, I’m sure you can imagine, stereotypically go there and maybe make other people avoid the store at the same time. And at the same time people see a store that sells organic and automatically think, ‘Oh, they sell organic food? Everything’s going to be expensive there,’ and it’s like, I really like shopping for organic stuff but it’s like, double the price.

(d) Astrid: Well, I think stores like [the co-op] become this kind of oasis of people who want to talk about [conscious consumption] and want to learn more about it, so if there is a space for it, that knowledge and that conversation grows exponentially. I think that mainstream stores, like Safeway or something, will sometimes have fair-trade items but maybe in their natural-foods sections, I think that they could be more responsible in the sense of having a placard up in every section that says, “Fair-trade is blah blah blah” and so then the mainstream shopper would be more educated, because I don’t expect a lot of mainstream shoppers to be reading things like Natural Living… And if the product is a dollar or two dollars more and they don’t understand why, then they won’t buy it.

(e) Vivienne: I think they should definitely start pushing these [organic, local, and fair-trade] products as much as they can; I think it’s their responsibility to start carrying them. But they’re not going to carry them if a consumer doesn’t ask for them first, so. A huge part of the whole problem is availability—Reno’s not San Francisco where there are huge weekly farmer’s markets, just because there’s not as large of a buyer base. So I think it’s the consumer’s responsibility to ask for it, and then it’s the grocery store’s responsibility to provide options.
7. Do you think the “trendiness” of “going green” or eating organic/fair-trade/local is conducive to the movements’ goals? Do you see this developing into a wider cultural phenomenon?

(a) **Arnold:** See, when I think of organic—because I’m from the hippie generation—I think of it as having a specific cultural image, but not necessarily in terms of trendiness. I think of where it started. Organic foods grown on communes, on co-ops. So I think there’s definitely a correlation in people’s minds of organic food’s image with political persuasion, lifestyle, diet, along with all kinds of other things. I think people think of the roots of the movement as opposed to how it’s actually permeating society. ‘Cause first impressions linger, you know? Someone who’s twenty years old and sees ‘organic’ everywhere doesn’t realize that it had specific connotations twenty-five years ago, when it was rare. That’s why I lean that way; because I’m old.

**Do you think that image is detrimental to the goals of the movement?**

No, I think it’s just a legacy; I don’t think it’s necessarily detrimental. I think people have a life and a paycheck and you’re going to spend money on what’s valuable to you. Some people buy fancy cars, and some people buy really nice foods, and some people buy iPads, you know? And I think organic food is increasing in prevalence, but at the same time you see genetically modified food increasing as well. So I think there’s a parallel track between organic and big agriculture; I don’t know if I see organic becoming the norm.

(b) **Vivienne:** I think it’s detrimental, because people will probably just write it off when they hear it, you know, and discount it as a trend. But a lot of things are trends, like global warming awareness was a ‘trend’ but now oh, we can look outside and see that the weather’s changing and now it’s an actual thing and not a trend, you know? So I think it can grow from that and spread into mainstream culture.
(c) **Astrid:** Yeah, I do think that image and those associations are detrimental. But in some ways it could also be helpful; I think it could be a double-edged sword. Because there might be some sorority goals that aspire to be like, I don’t know, some of the celebrities that are well-known for buying only organic and fair-trade—

*Like Gwyneth Paltrow or something.*

Yeah, exactly! And like, I read Goop [Gwenyth Paltrow’s blog]; I love Goop. So that makes total sense to me. I’m in public relations and that’s one of the tools we use—we attach ideas to people who inspire others. So it can raise awareness.
Conscious Consumerism Survey
Andrew Zoll | Department of Anthropology | University of Nevada, Reno

Demographics

1. I identify my gender as: □ Male □ Female □ Other

□ 31 – 40 □ 41 – 50 □ 51 – 60
□ 61 – 70 □ 71+

3. What is the highest level of education that you have completed? □ Less than high school □ High school (or GED) □ Some college □ College □ Graduate or professional degree

4. Do you or anyone in your family have any background in agricultural work or education? □ Yes □ No
Please explain: __________________________
________________________________________

4. What is your total household income? □ Under $20,000 □ $20,000 - $39,000
□ $40,000 - $59,000 □ $60,000 - $79,000
□ $80,000 - $99,000 □ Over $100,000

5. What is your political leaning? □ Very liberal □ Somewhat liberal □ Very conservative □ Somewhat conservative □ Moderate □ Other
Conscious Consumerism Survey
Andrew Zoll | Department of Anthropology | University of Nevada, Reno

Organically Grown Food

1. Have you ever heard of organically grown food? □ Yes □ No
   (If no, skip to number 7)

2. What does “organic” mean to you? ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

3. Do you make an effort to buy organically grown food? □ Yes □ No
   (If no, skip to number 8)

4. In your most recent grocery trip, what percentage of your groceries were organic products?
   □ 0 – 20% □ 21 – 40% □ 41 – 60% □ 61 – 80% □ 81 – 100%

5. Which of the following are reasons that you buy organic food? (please check all that apply)
   □ Health reasons
   □ No synthetic pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, hormones, or antibiotics
   □ Non-GMO
   □ Protest large food corporations
   □ Help local/small-scale economies
   □ Support local/small-scale farmers
   □ Better treatment of animals
   □ The food tastes better
   □ Ethical production standards
   □ Environmental concerns
   □ No chemical fertilizers
   □ No synthetic pesticides, herbicides, or fungicides
   □ Other: _____________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

6. Is purchasing organic food simply a matter of individual preference or is it part of a collective activity done by people with shared values and concerns?
   □ Individual Please explain: _________________________________________________
   □ Collective
   ____________________________________________________________________________

7. Organic food can be defined as: food products that are produced without the use of pesticides or genetic modification (and in the case of animals, antibiotics and artificial hormones).

8. Which of the following would motivate you to buy more or start buying organic foods? (Please check all that apply)
   □ Better product variety
   □ Better product quality
   □ Wider availability
   □ More information about “organic” foods, the organic movement, and what it entails
   □ Better prices
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Fair-Trade Foods

1. Have you ever heard of fair-trade foods? □ Yes □ No
   (If no, skip to number 7)

2. What does “fair-trade” mean to you? ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

3. Do you make an effort to buy fair-trade food products? □ Yes □ No
   (If no, skip to number 8)

4. In your most recent grocery trip, what percentage of the products were fair-trade?
   □ 0 – 20% □ 21 – 40% □ 41 – 60% □ 61 – 80% □ 81 – 100%

5. Which of the following are reasons that you buy fair-trade food? (please check all that apply)
   □ Ethical production standards □ No forced or child labor
   □ Environmental concerns □ Protection of forests & wildlife habitats
   □ Safe working conditions □ Reduce synthetic fertilizers & pesticides
   □ Fair wages □ Protesting large food corporations
   □ Democratic representation of farmers and producers □ Help local/small-scale economies
   □ No labor/pay discrimination □ Supporting local/small-scale farmers
   □ Other: __________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

6. Is purchasing fair-trade food simply a matter of individual preference or is it part of a collective activity done by people with shared values and concerns?
   □ Individual Please explain: __________________________________________________________________________
   □ Collective __________________________________________________________________________

7. Fair Trade is often defined as: a system of trade that guarantees favorable prices to producers, community development funds for producers, and environmentally friendly production practices.

8. Which of the following would motivate you to buy more or start buying fair-trade foods? (Please check all that apply)
   □ Better product variety □ Better product quality
   □ More information about “fair-trade” foods, the fair-trade movement, and what it entails
   □ Wider availability □ Better prices
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Local Foods

1. Have you ever heard of locally grown & raised foods? □ Yes □ No
   (If no, skip to number 7)

2. What does “local food” mean to you? ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

3. Do you make an effort to buy local food products? □ Yes □ No
   (If no, skip to number 8)

4. In your most recent grocery trip, what percentage of the products were local?
   □ 0 – 20% □ 21 – 40% □ 41 – 60% □ 61 – 80% □ 81 – 100%

5. Which of the following are reasons that you buy local food? (please check all that apply)
   □ Health reasons □ The food tastes better
   □ Protest large food corporations □ Environmental concerns
   □ Help local/small-scale economies □ “Food miles” (air pollution from the transportation of foods over long distances)
   □ Support local/small-scale farmers □ Environmentally synergistic growing of foods in the proper season (reducing nitrogen-based fertilizer use)
   □ Connecting with the community □ Other: _____________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

6. Is purchasing local food simply a matter of individual preference or is it part of a collective activity done by people with shared values and concerns?
   □ Individual Please explain: ____________________________________________
   □ Collective ____________________________________________

7. Local food can be defined as food that’s been grown close to where it’s sold.

8. Which of the following would motivate you to buy more or start buying local foods? (Please check all that apply)
   □ Better product variety □ Better product quality
   □ Better prices □ More information about local foods, the local movement, and what it entails
   □ Wider availability in stores □ Getting to know the farmer who produces your foods
   □ More farmer’s markets
## Store Perception Questions

Please use the following scale to mark your level of agreement with the following statements with a number ranging from 1 to 5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>disagree</td>
<td>somewhat disagree</td>
<td>impartial</td>
<td>somewhat agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. ___ I do not limit my grocery purchases to a single grocery store.
2. ___ I buy certain organic, fair-trade, or local foods at certain stores.
3. ___ I prefer some stores over others for the variety of organic, fair-trade, and local foods they have.
4. ___ I prefer some stores over others for the quality of organic, fair-trade, and local foods they have.
5. ___ I believe it is up to me, the consumer, to make smart decisions about buying organic, fair-trade, and local foods—it’s not completely up to the store to carry those products.
6. ___ I believe it is up to the store to make smart decisions about carrying organic, fair-trade, and local foods—it’s not completely up to the consumer to be aware of those products.
7. ___ I believe stores and consumers are partners in accomplishing the goals of the organic, fair-trade, and local food movements.
8. ___ I feel a sense of solidarity with a store in which I purchase organic, fair-trade, or local food.
9. ___ My purchasing decisions are influenced by the image of a grocery as a “health food store”.
10. ___ Other consumer’s purchasing decisions are influenced by the image of a grocery as a “health food store”.
11. ___ Buying organic, fair-trade, or local foods is marketed in different ways than conventional foods.
12. ___ Buying organic, fair-trade, or local foods has a specific cultural image.
13. ___ This image excludes certain shoppers based on economic or other reasons.
14. ___ My purchasing decisions regarding organic, fair-trade, and local foods are influenced by the price of the products.
15. ___ Stores could do more to educate customers and the community about organic, fair-trade, and local foods.
PLEASE READ THIS INFORMATION SHEET CAREFULLY BEFORE PARTICIPATING

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to anthropologically investigate and identity peoples’ motivations in engaging in “conscious” consumer behavior: that is, buying organic, fair-trade, and local foods.

Participants
You are being asked, as a member of the grocery-shopping population of Reno, Nevada, to participate in this study so as to assess your knowledge and behaviors regarding organic, fair-trade, and local foods.

Procedures
If you decide to participate, you will fill out a short, completely anonymous paper survey. This survey includes demographic information; an assessment of knowledge regarding organic, fair-trade, and local foods; and a store-perception assessment. This survey will take approximately 5 – 10 minutes of your time.

Researchers may also ask you to participate in a short interview. The interview may take anywhere from 15 – 25 minutes.

Privacy
Participation in both the survey and interview portions of this study is COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY & ANONYMOUS. You may refuse to participate. Your personal identity will not be linked to any reports or publications that may result from this study.

If you agree to participate in an interview, you may be audio-recorded. At no time will your name be included in the recording.

Questions
If you have questions about this study or concerns related to being in this study, please contact Andrew Zoll at (702) 343-5192 at any time. You may ask about your rights as a research participant or talk (anonymously if you choose) to the University of Nevada, Reno Social-Behavioral Institutional Review Board, telephone number (775) 327-2368. If you prefer, you may write to the Chair of the Board, c/o UNR Office of Human Research Protection, 218 Ross Hall / 331, University of Nevada, Reno, Reno, Nevada, 89557.