“Growing It My Way”:
A Qualitative Analysis of Rural Organic Growers

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This research focuses on the domination of the massive food industry that our society is faced with. In order to fully discuss this domination, I discuss the history of food production first to show how society has changed in food production. From the creation of industrial agriculture, I then discuss the domination of using GMOs and pesticides in our food and the health and environmental risks that result. Organic food production is discussed as a way to shift the attention back to prior industrial agriculture by discussing the non-existence of pesticides and GMOs. Organic production is also used as a tool to fight against industrial agriculture. The theoretical framework that I have decided to use for my research is a critical approach. In this critical approach I analyze the work and motivations of organic growers under dependency theory. My methodology consists of semi-structured interviews that capture the meanings behind organic growers. In my analysis, I have found that there is both a macro and micro level of analysis to understand these motivations. The macro level is that growers grow organically as a way to resist the corporate dependency and model of food production.
The two sub-themes were resistance of pesticides and resistance of GMOs. At the micro level, I found that organic growers wanted to be “good stewards of the land”. The three sub-themes that emerged from this micro theme were they wanted to use nature as their tool, they wanted to practice proper soil diversity, and they wanted to value their work.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Masanobu Fukuoka once said, “the ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings” (Fukuoka, 2009). Fukuoka, who was both a farmer and philosopher, wanted to develop a system of natural farming without the use of pesticides and chemicals. His main goal was to create a farming system that would be beneficial to the world. Fukuoka was influenced to better the world through more sustainable agriculture when his homeland of Japan was industrialized during the 1950s. As a result, Japan no longer farmed themselves, but bought food that was being mass produced (Fukuoka, 2009).

Japan is not the only country to experience this transformation. Rather corporate control of food production is global. In order to produce food for the growing population, industrial agriculture was established in the United States. Since industrial agriculture has to provide for everyone, extreme measures are used for growing and producing the food, which include the use of genetically modified organisms (GMO) and pesticides. These methods ensure that the same crop yield is produced each year.

Although there are many different ways to produce food, organic growing is one particular alternative. Farmers and gardeners using organic methods do not use pesticides or GMOs. Therefore, the main purpose of this research is to study and understand the motivations behind organic growers a society that is dominated by industrial agriculture.

Chapter 2 provides the historical background showing how food has been produced since the 1700s. Around the 1950s, the United States experienced industrial
agriculture. Later in the chapter, I discuss GMOS and its environmental and health effects. After discussing GMOs, I discuss organic production of food. During the 1970s, organic agriculture became popular so it could be used to create food that was of better quality. I discuss basic the historical background for organic growing, what organic growing is, and the health benefits.

In Chapter 3, I provide a literature review of previous research on the motivations of organic growers. I have decided to use critical theory as my theoretical approach to show the inequality that industrial agriculture has created by its power. Specifically, I choose dependency theory, which claims that there is a basic distinct relationship between a core and periphery. Within this relationship, the periphery has a resource that the core wants, so the core exploits the periphery in order to achieve these resources. For the purposes of this research, I discuss rural areas as periphery areas and urban areas as core areas to show that rural communities have become dependent upon this food system.

Chapter 4 presents the qualitative methodology used in the present study because it captures the subjective meaning behind the organic growers. In order to find suitable respondents for this research, I used snowball sampling so each respondent could refer me to another respondent. In depth semi structured interviews were conducted with eight rural organic growers. They varied in age, education, and gender. None of them were certified as organic growers because they only produced food for themselves and family. I asked them about their life, motivations for growing organic, how they do it, views on industrial agriculture, and environmental impacts of industrial agriculture.

Chapter 5 consists of my analysis of the interview data. During the course of my interviews, each respondent had their own story to tell about their organic growing
methods. From these stories, two main themes about organic growers motivations emerged. The first theme demonstrated their resistance consumers’ dependency upon agribusiness. From this, two sub-themes emerged regarding the use of pesticides and the presence of GMOs in their food. At the micro level, respondents said they wanted to be “good stewards of the land”. From this three sub-themes emerged, namely using nature as their tool, wanting to practice soil diversity, and valuing their own work.

Chapter 6 provides my findings of the research and my closing. I also discuss how important it is continue research on organic growers. Since research on organic growers is very limited, more research is needed about the motives of organic growers. Then we can start to see how industrial agriculture is a major problem for consumers in our society and that we can learn from organic growers and their sustainable approach to food production.

**Manifesto:**
**The Mad Farmer Liberation Front**
By: Wendell Berry

Love the quick profit, the annual raise, vacation with pay. Want more of everything ready-made. Be afraid to know your neighbors and to die. And you will have a window in your head. Not even your future will be a mystery any more. Your mind will be punched in a card and shut away in a little drawer. When they want you to buy something they will call you. When they want you to die for profit they will let you know. So, friends, every day do something that won't compute. Love the Lord. Love the world. Work for nothing. Take all that you have and be poor. Love someone who does not deserve it.
Denounce the government and embrace the flag. Hope to live in that free republic for which it stands.
Give your approval to all you cannot understand. Praise ignorance, for what man has not encountered he has not destroyed.
Ask the questions that have no answers.
Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias.
Say that your main crop is the forest that you did not plant,
that you will not live to harvest.
Say that the leaves are harvested when they have rotted into the mold.
Call that profit. Prophesy such returns.
Put your faith in the two inches of humus that will build under the trees every thousand years.
Listen to carrion -- put your ear close, and hear the faint chattering of the songs that are to come.
Expect the end of the world. Laugh.
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful though you have considered all the facts.
So long as women do not go cheap for power, please women more than men.
Ask yourself: Will this satisfy a woman satisfied to bear a child?
Will this disturb the sleep of a woman near to giving birth?
Go with your love to the fields.
Lie down in the shade. Rest your head in her lap. Swear allegiance to what is nighest your thoughts.
As soon as the generals and the politicos can predict the motions of your mind, lose it. Leave it as a sign to mark the false trail, the way you didn't go.
Be like the fox who makes more tracks than necessary, some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection.

(Berry, 1998:87-88)
Chapter 2: Historical Background

The History of Food Production:

Food production is a basic human necessity. Today’s food production methods are very distinct from the nomadic gathering methods 8,000 years ago. At that time, hunters relied upon their own skill and intelligence for hunting and gathering. This lifestyle existed until humans found ways of growing their own food, giving them the ability to produce more food than what was offered in nature alone (McKenzie, 2007). At this time, humans were also starting to domesticate animals for food purposes, creating less need for hunting. Learning new methods of growing their own food led to a population increase and longer life spans (McKenzie, 2007).

Since the population had begun to increase from improved food production, more land was needed. This increase in land use required different methods of growing food than previous methods used (McKenzie, 2007). It was not until the 11th century that humans used draft horses and plows in order to keep up with production and population growth. The farmers that used these tools to produce food learned and gained more information about how to maintain proper production and soil fertility (McKenzie, 2007).

This method of production was very useful and productive for the people that existed at that time. The more advanced food production became, the greater population increased (McKenzie, 2007). In the 1700s, population increased to a level where food production and agriculture became highly organized. Organized agriculture led to higher prices and greater availability of food. At the end of the 1700s, the world’s population had increased to nearly one billion. In order for production to keep up with this growth, a
change was needed. Beginning in the early 1800s agriculture changed due to the mechanization of farm equipment. In order to acquire the amount of food needed, farm equipment became more mechanized (McKenzie, 2007). Throughout the 1800s, farms expanded, resulting in greater production coming from larger farms. Since food was coming from larger scale farms, small farms could not compete with them. With the advent of larger scale farms, agriculture was viewed and maintained as a science in order to feed the population (McKenzie, 2007).

At the beginning of the 1900s, another change in agriculture occurred when the population rose to nearly two billion (McKenzie, 2007). At this point chemicals became a part of food production. Specifically, nitrogen-based fertilizers used as pesticides. In almost 60 years, the population had rose to nearly 3 billion people supported by industrial agriculture. Industrial agriculture started to become the norm for food production as chemicals were used in order to produce food, at which time chemically intensive production began to skyrocket (McKenzie, 2007). At the time of its development, industrial agriculture was viewed as a technological triumph that modernized farming.

CAFOs (Confined Animal Feeding Operations) were also established at this time in order to raise massive amounts of meat products for a fast growing population. These methods consist of harboring thousands of animals at a time in factories for human consumption (Farm Sanctuary, 2013).

**Monoculture Farming**

Industrial agriculture is distinct because of its monoculture production (Hewitt, 2012). Monoculture farming was, and remains, a process that attempts to make production of food more efficient by growing one particular crop in one large area at a
time. In order for this process to properly work, pesticides and synthetic fertilizers are used on the crops. This is because growing one product, such as corn or soy, in one area overtime starts to deplete the nutrients of the area in which the farming is done (Hewitt, 2012).

The birth of a monoculture farming system created more food than what was previously thought possible. The main purpose of this system was to feed a massive population, but it was not without negative effects (Hewitt, 2012). Previous production of diverse crops allowed for healthy nutritious soil that gave multiple crops the ability to thrive. With the use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers, this soil and ecological diversity started to become damaged. According to Miguel Altieri (2004: 171) “As agricultural modernization progressed, the ecology-farming linkage was often broken as ecological principles were ignored or overridden”. This destruction was ignored which, over time, has led to damaging the natural ecological system (Altieri, 2004).

Monoculture farming also took farming out of the hands of the individuals and put it into the hands of capitalists (Altieri, 2004). When individuals farmed, they employed crop diversity and rotation systems. However, the industrial system did not. Farmers need crop diversity in order to maintain the nutritional value of the crops. They would create their own ecosystem in order to ensure each crop received its natural nutrients. Since diversity was such a valued characteristic of farming, pesticides and synthetic fertilizers were not used. Since the natural environment survived and maintained itself this way, so did the farmers (Altieri, 2004).

The diversity that was once valued had more benefits than just soil fertility. Crop diversity allowed farmers to be sustainable both economically and nutritionally
A farmer was able to sell multiple crops to the rural communities where he/she lived. The creation of monoculture agriculture, sustainability was taken to the extreme, but not for the farmers. Growing one particular crop on one farm, took away farmers chances for sustaining themselves anymore (Berry, 1995).

“The farmers have not benefited—not, at least, as a class—for as a result of this agenda they have become one of the smallest and most threatened of all our minorities. Many farmers, sad to say, have subscribed to this agenda and its economic assumptions, believing that they would not be its victims. But millions, in fact, have been its victims—not farmers alone but also their supporters and dependents in our rural communities” (Berry, 1995: 3)

This quote by Wendell Berry (1995) captures what happened to farms in rural communities that once sustained themselves. Farming used to be the individual work of the farmer. That work was valued. Now the food that is being produced is being taken out of the rural communities without anything brought back into it (Flora and Flora, 2013). Industrial agriculture began to transform the human, social, and financial capital of rural life. Farmer’s human capital was affected by taking away farmers ability to have the skills and potential to remain sustainable (Flora and Flora, 2013). Limiting the collective identities of rural life affected the social capital. This collective identity was once based upon a sense of working together within the community to farm and produce food for each other. The financial capital was ended as farmer’s assets were drained from these rural communities (Flora and Flora, 2013).

Modernization of food production

The modernization of farming was damaging to rural communities. The message was a “get big or get out” (Berry, 1996). If the rural communities did not succumb to the needs of the industrial farming methods then it would only end in destruction of rural life.
This new capitalistic approach to food production started to take the “culture” out of agriculture by replacing it with a business model, resulting in an “agribusiness”. The economic goal of industrial farming started to become the only focus for capitalists. The power that industrial agriculture had and its effects on our society was so drastically different from what rural life once offered because it created a monopoly within rural communities. Consumers had to begin to adapt quickly to the needs of the system (Berry, 1996).

Urban consumers adapted more quickly than rural residents because these areas had already become modernized. The development of industrial agriculture resulted in greater exploitation for rural areas and farmers (Berry, 1996). Industrial agriculture made production faster, resulting in cheaper abundant food. Moreover, the new methods of farming were based on the use of synthetic chemicals in order to produce food faster and in large quantities using nonrenewable fossil fuels that resulted in more environmental threats (Berry, 1996).

Modernization has affected farmers as much as it has affected the actual value of the food. Since industrial farming dominates our food production, so does the use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers (Gottlieb and Joshi, 2013). However, our dependence upon synthetic fertilizers and pesticides in industrial agriculture was not enough to fully maximize their production and profits. The industrial system needed something more in order to fully ensure efficiency and predictability in their production. Agribusiness’ answer was the birth of GMOs (Gottlieb and Joshi, 2013).
The Creation and Dominance of GMOs

A genetically modified organism (GMO) is considered to be any animal or plant that has been modified genetically to disrupt its natural methods of growth (Non-GMO Project, 2012). By genetically modifying this organism, the new version is able to grow much better in new environments and under adverse weather conditions that it wasn’t able to do prior. Through modification, a process called splicing, the genes of the organism can be added or deleted to form new organisms (Non-GMO Project, 2012).

The history of GMOs dates back to 1952 when James Watson and Francis Crick discovered the structure of DNA was a double helix (Chassy, 2007). This scientific discovery opened the door for genetic modification. It was not until 1972 when two scientists, Stanley Cohen and Herbert Boyer, developed the first technique to perform splicing the structure of genes. Their discovery made it possible to cut codes of DNA at specific places to be joined by other strains of DNA. During this time the advancements in science gave scientists the ability to splice genes to cross breed organisms (Chassy, 2007). Once the scientists had the ability to do this, they started to put their knowledge to use in productivity. At this time, their hypothesis was that each part of a cell had its purpose in making the traits of each organism. In other words, each cell had its own function (Chassy, 2007). The science of molecular biology was created to further the research in this field. What these scientists were doing was literally performing a simple “cut” and “paste” method on the genetic code of each organism. This process became known as genetic engineering and at the time it had its useful applications (Chassy, 2007).
Genetic engineering creates new versions of the organism. The results of this process have many beneficial effects for industrial agriculture including reduction in cost of production and quicker methods for growing larger amounts of food (Phillips, 2008). Even though using GMOs gives industries an economic advantage for developing a more sustainable way to produce food, it has negative effects on the environment and the health of the human consumers (Phillips, 2008).

In 1980, GMOs became patented by the industry and in 1982 it received its approval by the Food and Drug Administration (Woolsey, 2012). The success of the genetic engineering in new products paved the way for the first genetic engineered crop, which were soybeans (Chassy, 2007). At that time, this research gave the industry the scientific knowledge and ability to start putting this method of breeding organisms into a sustainable crop industry making soybeans 70% of all genetically modified crops (Chassy, 2007).

GMOs did not hit the shelves of the grocery store until 1992. The industry received another FDA approval for GMOs to be used for the sale to the public (Woolsey, 2012). An example of this was genetically modified tomatoes that resulted in a longer shelf life than natural organic tomatoes (Woolsey, 2012). The popularity of GMOs in food did not dominate the worldwide crop market until 1999. The rate that companies started using GMO technology was skyrocketing. This advancement in GMO attention in the food industry completely reshaped the way that we perceived and produced food. Soy and corn began to dominate the business that resulted from using GMOs in food and has continued to dominate our food industry today (Woolsey, 2012). The 2013 statistics from the Internal Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) show
that 95% of our sugar beets, 94% of soybeans, 90% of the cotton and 88% of our corn all come from GMOs (ISAAA, 2013). Since the majority of soybeans, cotton, and corn results from the use of GMOs, the majority of products that we buy and consume are created by GMOs (ISAAA, 2013).

Products that are created by GMOs are used as top ingredients in almost every food on the shelves today; this is why the GMO process now has such a substantial effect on the food industry (ISAAA, 2013). This began when corporations began buying up these genetically modified core ingredients across the globe in a response to making cheaper products. From the low costs of genetically modification, the food industry began to transform. Corn is the leading universal ingredient in food products (USDA, 2013). According to USDA, corn production leads grain production by 95.3% of all grains being produced (USDA, 2013). One of its popular uses is in the creation of high fructose corn syrup as a sugar substitute, which is made using GMOs. Other uses for corn in food are making cornstarch, cornmeal, and many types of commercial cereals. This substitute gives the food companies a cheaper way to use corn. These products are used in creating numerous food products globally making genetically modified food very difficult to avoid (USDA, 2013).

**The Health and Environmental Impacts of GMOs**

GMO research on the long-term effects on human health and the environment is limited. A study conducted at the University of Minnesota showed that the foods that contained GMOs started to show short-term allergic reactions, but the severity was minimal because at the time of the first studies, GMOs were not as common as they are today (Weller, 2013). The study concluded that people would start to experience greater
allergic reactions as GMO tainted food became a greater part of our diet. A second short-term effect was that GMOs affected the toxicity of persons using them. This was a subjective effect, meaning that the modified organism affected each particular person differently (Woolsy, 2013). Finally, GMOs have less nutritional value than do the products without GMOs. Once the organism’s genetic makeup becomes altered, then the organism’s nutritional value is reduced. Thus, the minor effects found did not give the FDA a sufficient reason to ban the use of GMOs in the food industry (Weller, 2013).

Long-term research on the human health effects is still being conducted today (Philpott, 2013). Researchers are still unable to give an exhaustive list of the human effects from GMOs because the studies have not had time to be properly researched. At the present time some of the long-term effects are excessive cell growth in our bodies and infertility (Philpott, 2013). Also, the funding for GMO safety studies is very low right now. Last year the USDA gave $1.8 billion to the Biotech industry but only 1 percent of this funding went to the study of health effects of GMOs (Philpott, 2013). Even though this research is poorly funded, public and academic concern persists. However on July 15, 2013, the department of General Commission for Sustainable Development launched a long-term study on the risks of GMOs and our health (Collet, 2013). Their main focus is to develop knowledge in hopes for changing public policy on GMOs in food. The study is still being conducted (Collet, 2013).

Even though the studies for GMOs on health effects have been limited, the environmental impacts of GMOs are not. In 1996, the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) released a report that concluded that GMOs pose six threats towards the environment (Mellon and Rissler, 2003). As referenced earlier, at this time the GMO
industry was just starting to hit grocery stores and food products. The human effects of GMOs were not yet known but the environmental effects were evident.

The first impact was that GMOs could grow with undesirable effects meaning that the weeds, which GMOs could possibly grow into, might have an impact that would kill trees and negatively affect the ecosystems within the given area. Furthermore, the UCS found that these modified cells could transform themselves into other naturally growing organisms (Mellon and Rissler, 2003). These organisms could potentially grow into the same weed and in the long run, transform the natural environment into a genetically modified one, taking over future ecosystems completely. Additionally GMOs could produce viruses into the ecosystems. These viruses could also become widespread, affecting the ecological system as a whole (Mellon and Rissler, 2003).

The UCS found that GMOs also had the ability to affect organisms that were not genetically engineered (Mellon and Rissler, 2003). This did not just mean other plants, but species such as mammals and insects. The monarch butterfly was at risk because the pollen from genetically modified corn could transfer the disease to the monarch butterfly. Lastly, it was found that these effects could spread through an ecosystem and damage it in an unpredictable way. Since the genetically modified genes were not natural, the UCS claimed that we might not be able to fix the widespread effects. In other words, the effects of GMOs on the environment are irreversible. Finally, GMOs threatened crop diversity (Mellon and Rissler, 2003).

The dangers of GMOs got the attention of scholars and the public (Mellon and Rissler, 2003). The negative environmental impacts of GMOs were just being discovered. The UCS concluded that GMOs could completely disrupt the vegetation of
various ecosystems. This impact is also an issue from a study that was conducted by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (Boyd, 2013). This study found that salmon containing GMOs are much larger than the natural salmon in an ecosystem. This method is a perfect example of how the exploitation of a certain species for the gain of capital profits. Besides the exploitation, this served as an ecological impact because if the genetically modified salmon were to somehow blend into the natural ecosystem then it would alter the genetics of the natural salmon forever. The natural salmon would start to decline in size and death rates would rise (Boyd, 2013).

The concern over environmental and human health effects from GMOs has bred much attention for alternate methods of production. Monsanto, a company notorious for their GMO production, even states on their website of possible options consumers can do in order to ensure that GMOs are not present in their food (Monsanto, 2013). The two options provided is to either buying food with a certified “Non-GMO Project” label on it or buying food with a “Certified Organic” label (Monsanto, 2013). The next section will discuss organic food.

**Organic Food**

Organic food represents a return to the traditional pre-industrial agricultural methods of growing foods. In order for a food to be organic, it has to be produced without pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, radiation, and most importantly, without GMOs. In terms of animal based food such as meat, eggs, and dairy, the antibiotics and growth hormones would be eliminated from production (Organic, 2013). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) gives strict guidelines in order for a product to
contain a “USDA ORGANIC” label. These guidelines do not allow the use of GMOs (Organic, 2013).

In the analysis of food production, two classic books have influenced the movement towards organic food. The first book was “The Soil and Health” by Sir Albert Howard and “Silent Spring” by Rachel Carson. The interesting part about “Soil and Health” was that it was written in 1947; around the time industrial agriculture was gaining its power. Howard saw at this time that this new system of agriculture was damaging the very nature of food production (Howard, 2006). He believed that industrial agriculture disrupts our natural balance and damages the soil to the point of radical degradation. According to Howard (2006: 22) “The soil is, as a matter of fact, full of live organisms. It is essential to conceive of it as something pulsating with life, not as a dead or inert mass”. If chemicals were used to create food, then the soil that is filled with life will all cease to exist. Food production cannot function without proper healthy soil so Howard calls for our attention to restore the health of our food and soil for future generations because we cannot sustain ourselves on the effects of chemically enhanced agriculture (Howard, 2006).

As previously discussed, around this time our food and food production changed drastically. The quality of our food was starting to decline rapidly from the use of pesticides and GMOs. In 1962, writer Rachel Carson published “Silent Spring”, a classic work that launched the environmental movement and organic food production (Caron, 2002). Carson informed the public about the dangers of industrial agriculture. In her book she criticized the misrepresentations about how food is produced. Carson revealed that industrial farming used (2002: 7) “five hundred new chemicals to which the bodies
of men and animals are required somehow to adapt each year, chemicals totally outside the limits of biologic experience”. The overproduction of chemicals had grown to the point to where humans and animals could not adapt quickly enough to accept this new method of production. Carson also discussed the myths about pesticide and chemical use as necessary for our farm production. In sum, industrial agriculture continues to overproduce food for economical gain (Carson, 2002).

In the 1970s, the organic revolution was a result of Howard and Carson’s collective influence. People were encouraged to adopt organic methods of farming and gardening (Sligh and Cierpka, 2007). Organic agriculture was viewed as challenging the dominant industrial agricultural system. This resistance soon turned into strong overt activism attacking the industry and governmental policies that allowed industrial agricultural practices. During this time, the organic revolution or “back to the land” movement began to gain credibility and importance within society. As this movement gained its credibility, people no longer saw these farmers as ‘kooks’ but began to label them as ‘hippies’ and in turn alternative stereotyping organic methods as ‘hippie farming’ (Sligh and Cierpka, 2007). The cultural values of organic farming were gaining the attention of both urban and rural residents via the birth of food cooperatives or “co-ops”. A “co-op” was based on the idea that food should be sold in the community where it was grown. This organization of co-ops gave communities the ability to purchase local food by farmers and gardeners seeking to sell their own products. Localizing food production was becoming valued again (Sligh and Cierpka, 2007).

During the 1970s, organic farming had become more than just a movement due to the rise of organic research organizations, such as The Rodale Institute. Their main focus
was to advance knowledge about organic farming and to raise public awareness about the benefits of organic methods (Rodale Institute, 2014). The institute also created scientific guideline for producing organic food. In 1976, the Louis Bolk Institute was developed to promote organic methods by studying the social issues that were linked to sustainable agriculture (Stinner, 2007). Other research institutions also began to grow rapidly. Today, organic organizations now study many different aspects of organic farming such as soil ecology, nutrition, natural control of pests and insects, and food quality (Stinner, 2007).

There are numerous benefits to growing organic or even purchasing organic foods. Growing or purchasing organic food guarantees that the product has been produced free of genetic modification (USDA, 2013). Such a product can be free of genetic modification and still be non-organic, but if a product is truly organic then it means that it must be completely free of all genetic modification (USDA, 2013). Also, this type of farming/gardening returns to the original methods of soil diversification. The soil receives nourishment from the agricultural product that is being grown. Without the use of pesticides the soil becomes healthier, and it can trap more nutrients (Organic, 2013). Also, healthy soil means that it has the ability to trap carbon, resulting in less environmental impact. Bringing back this harmony with nature and using nature as your ally, builds a healthier environment. It also creates a healthier rural community because production is back in the hands of the farmers in local rural communities contributing to the development of their natural and social capital (Flora and Flora, 2013). Natural capital is enhanced while social capital is maintained because it brings the community together with a common goal (Flora and Flora, 2013). We saw that industrial agriculture
continued to damage rural communities as family farms declined and mass-produced corporate farms took over. Organic farming can reverse this trend by promoting family-owned farms, restoring once declining rural communities (Flora and Flora, 2013).

Along with environmental and social benefits, buying and producing organic products also has human health benefits. First, you are not consuming pesticides or GMOs. These products more than likely contain pesticides due to the overuse. Natural methods of food consumption will also help your immune system, heart health, antibiotic resistance, and raises your antioxidant capacity (Organic Facts, 2013).

In modern society, the advocacy for organic farming and gardening methods continues. One step in this direction has been the implantation of the USDA National Organic Program, previously discussed. Another fairly new program, which began at The Natural Grocery Co. in Berkeley, for organic methods, is the “Non-GMO Project” that labels food created without GMOs (Non-GMO, 2014). Even though a product can be GMO free and still be non-organic, the desire to change current food production is there. For example, from 1999 organic agricultural land has grown from 11 million hectares (metric unit of area of 10,000 meters) to 37 million hectares (FiBL, 2012). This rapid increase is a result of the 1.6 million organized organic producers or farmers that are organic certified. Moreover, this number does not include every organic farmer because not every producer is going to report his or her production as organic because a person must only be organic certified if they intend to sell their product (FiBL, 2012). The overall number for organic producers is most likely higher because you must take into account gardeners who garden for their own personal desire and need. Therefore, this study will study the experiences and lifestyles of mainly gardeners. The next chapter will
contain my literature review and theoretical perspective that will be used for this particular study.
Chapter 3: Literature Review And Theoretical Perspective

Literature Review

Environmental sociology was developed in the early 1970’s in response to the widespread concern over environmental issues (Dunlap and Catton, 1994). Sociological inquiry into issues such as energy use and pollution contributed to its development as a distinct specialized field. President Jimmy Carter’s sponsorship of environmental issues helped give environmental sociology the push it needed. During 1979 the ASA section on environmental sociology grew to 321 members (Dunlap and Catton, 1994). By the end of the 1970s it seemed that environmental sociology was here to stay.

However, this promising future soon began to wane during the early eighties Dunlap and Catton, 1994). President Ronald Reagan’s administration rejected the reality of ecological limits, as free enterprise was allowed to grow without environmental protection (Bell, 2012). Meanwhile, environmental sociology course enrollments declined and the nations awareness for ecological issues reduced. This slow period for environmental sociology continued until the late 1980s and early 1990s (Dunlap and Catton, 1994). As the discipline revitalized, environmental sociologists began to study more complex problems of human made pollution. At this time, it was apparent that this human-environment interaction needed to be studied in different ways (Dunlap and Catton, 1994).

In the 1990s, sociologists began to conduct more studies about organic production. Although research during the 1970s is scarce, research from the 1980s is even more rare. This response to industrial agriculture resulted in a wide range of issues
for environmental sociologists to study. Research on organic food has become vast but research on personal motives and experiences remains limited.

Early research on organic growers attempted to study and determine the different demographic factors that drive this lifestyle. During the “green revolution” one qualitative study was conducted on 100 organic farms that concluded that gender was a factor in adopting organic methods (Fischer, 1982). They found that women were more likely to be caregivers for their family and therefore would care more about their family’s health and nutrition. Although this research found that women were more likely to adopt organic growing methods, empirical evidence today on gender remains scarce (Padel, 2001). Along with gender, education was studied to determine its relationship with organic growers. According to Suzanne Padel (2001), organic growers with higher education were more likely to adopt organic growing methods. Having more formal education gave the growers more acceptance and credibility in their communities and allowed them to be regarded as leaders (Buttel, 1990).

Researchers have also focused on the grower’s motivations and desires. According to Torjusen, Leiblein, Wandel, and Francis (2001), there are seven goals that motivate organic growers. The first goal is to produce high quality food. The second is to interact with the natural systems and cycles in a way to enhance their life. The third is to maintain genetic diversity by protecting plant and wildlife. The fourth is to use renewable resources for the use of local production systems. The fifth is to develop and maintain a harmony between crop production and animal husbandry. The six is to give and allow all livestock the basic aspect and conditions of life. Lastly, the seventh is to

The diffusion of innovation theory has received some application in studying the motives and experiences of organic growers. The diffusion of innovation theory states that over time, a certain idea will gain popularity and then be diffused through the population (Boston University, 2013). By this diffusion into the social population, the idea is then adopted. This adoption is treated as new or innovative, but over time becomes the norm. In this process, there are five different groups of people who help with this process. The first group is the “innovators” who want to be the first to try the innovation and introduce it to the population. The second group is called “early adopters” because they begin to raise awareness about the innovation via their political or leadership roles. The third group is called the “early majority” because they will be the ones who start to catch on before the average population does. Next, the “late majority” are the ones who adopt the innovation once the “early majority” has experienced it and adopted it successfully. Last, the “laggards” are the final people who adopt an innovation because they are so bound by tradition (Boston University, 2013).

Since industrial agriculture has become the norm, the diffusion of innovation theory has been used to explain the innovation behind organic growing methods. For example using this theoretical approach to studying organic growers. Padel (2001) claims that organic growers resemble “innovators” or “early adopters”. She found that the two main reasons for the diffusion of organic methods were personal and/or farming related (Padel, 2001). Personal motives consist of personal and family health problems and economic reasons. Personal motives may be supported by concerns of food quality,
conservation, environmental care, rural development or stewardship. Farming related motives coincide with husbandry and technical reasons. These reasons may consist of their livestock’s health and a way to create healthier soil and fix erosion problems. Growers may also be motivated by finances and for securing the financial future of the farm, cut down on costs and premium marketing. Padel found that financial reasons were more important than husbandry or technical reasons because their main aim was to secure personal food production and the future of the farm (Padel 2001).

Shanahan, Hooker, and Sporleder (2008) also used the diffusion of innovation approach to study organic growers. They claim that since organic methods are, to some degree, small-scale, that organic producers are to be treated as “innovators” and “early adopters” in the diffusion process. Their quantitative study tested the magnitude and factors that contribute to the flow of this innovation diffusion (Shanahan, Hooker, and Sporleder, 2008). They found that non-certified organic growers adopted more organic products than certified organic farmers did. Since non-certified organic growers have adopted more organic products, these growers are beginning to influence more certified-organic farmers to do the same. Therefore, non-certified organic farmers are able to diffuse this process into certified organic farming methods (Shanahan, Hooker, and Sporleder, 2008).

A.H. Kaufman (2012) also wanted to know why some organic farmers adopt organic methods (Kaufman, 2012). This study focused on the connectedness that organic farmers have with nature. In order to do this, Kaufman focused his research on organic farmers in Thailand. He concluded that the organic farmers in Thailand developed strong ties and relationship with the land. This long-term relationship with nature has helped to
formulate strong environmental values. Their farming methods “feed the soil”, which helps to develop healthy soil fertility (Kaufman, 2012). As discussed in Chapter 2, these organic farmers in Thailand are practicing proper soil management, which is what Howard (2006) advocated. In developing healthy soil and fertility they were able to grow a larger crop of legumes and rice than before. One respondent from the study claimed: “I see nature all over my farm, green, animals, and it brings me peace and happiness” (Kaufman, 2012). His overall evaluation is that by working together with each other to create organic food, the Thailand farmers developed a “collective eco-consciousness” (Kauffman, 2012).

Brittany Brown (2010), at Tennessee State University, also wanted to determine the factors that influenced the adoption of organic food methods (Brown, 2010). Her study consisted of surveying 50 farmers within 20 countries located in Tennessee. One of the first themes that she found was that 48% of her respondents claimed that organic farming gave them a feeling of individual merit or performance. When asked on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree, she was able to quantitatively evaluate their opinions based on several questions. A majority agreed that organic agriculture is better for society (4.78). Also, a majority agreed that there is an increasing demand for organic agriculture (4.58), if organic farming is a way of life (4.20), and that farmers have a responsibility towards the environment (4.30). But a majority disagreed (score of 2.8) with the idea that organic production is ideal for large-scale production. She concludes that even though organic farmers have strong beliefs and attitudes for what they do, they still believe it is not meant for large-scale production (Brown, 2010).
According to researcher Sarah Ann Wheeler (2007), adoption of organic growing methods is not only influenced by finances and issues of productivity but as a rejection of the industrial agriculture (Wheeler, 2007). Stemming from this belief that industrial agriculture professionals continue to discourage organic growing practices for their own interest. Organic growers complain that industrial agriculture professionals have little knowledge about organic growing methods. They also claim that if only industrial agricultural professionals’ would become educated on organic production, then it would change their attitudes (Wheeler, 2007). Taking this claim, Wheeler conducted a study to determine exactly what influenced industrial agricultural professional’s views towards organic food production. She concluded that knowing more about organic agriculture leads to having a more favorable view. The industrial agriculture professionals that had more knowledge about organic methods believed that organic methods produced better quality of food and was more environmentally friendly. The industrial agriculture professionals that had little to no organic knowledge were more likely to have negative views and attitudes towards it. These respondents claimed that organic farming was a threat to their profits and business (Wheeler, 2007).

Kara L. Griffin (2000) conducted her research on determining the personal experiences and stories of organic growers at Prince Edward Island. In order to achieve this goal, she conducted interviews with seven organic farmers (Griffin, 2000). What she found was that each farmer had a unique story to tell. In these personal stories, a major theme was their independence in their production of food. Since organic farming methods are not as popular as industrial agriculture methods, organic farmers receive little to no government assistance or support. They also do not receive any support from
major food corporations. Her informants talked about troubles with their crops, such as potato blight (Griffin, 2000). Although this was a problem for some respondents, some of the respondents enjoyed the independence that organic farming afforded them. For example, one respondent claimed that his family was able to save money by being self-sufficient. Another theme was that organic farmers built a strong relationship with one another in their production. This strong relationship was built out of the fact that they are independent. From this strong relationship, the farmers were able to work together to produce their food (Griffin, 2000). Another major theme that she found was that these farmers believed that the corporate control of food production was unjust. One of her respondents claimed that he produced organic food in opposition to the corporate control and dependence on food (Griffin, 2000). From evaluating their experiences, Griffin advocates for more local support for organic farmers instead of relying upon industrial agriculture (Griffin, 2000).

Rojusen, Leiblein, Wandel, and Francis (2001) set out to better understand consumer attitudes for buying organic food and exactly how these attitudes helped to formulate consumer’s views of organic growers. Their hypothesis was that consumers considered the ethical, environmental, social, and health aspects of organic food (Rojusen, Leiblein, Wandel, and Francis, 2001). The quantitative study found organic consumers wanted to know that there were no additives or GMOs in their food. Also nutrient content, animal welfare, quality in food, and taste were other factors contributing to consumer’s views. They also found that the consumers’ views influenced organic farmers desire to produce healthier food for the local community. Finally they also found
that organic farmers wanted to take care of the environment and animals more ethically 
(Rojusen, Leiblein, Wandel, and Francis, 2001).

**Theoretical Approach**

In my inquiry into the organic growers in rural communities, a critical approach is 
most appropriately used in this study. The critical approach is useful when studying the 
power structures within society and how these power structures affect certain individuals 
(Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). Many different cultural, social, political, and/or economic 
forces shape the effects of these power structures. Since these power structures are going 
to affect each individual differently, social inquiry must study the subjective meaning 
behind the oppression of individuals. These different subjective meanings are going to 
lead to different forms of oppressions depending upon race, class, gender, or sexual 
preference. In studying these power structures, critical theory looks both at the macro 
and micro levels of analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013).

From the work and analysis of critical theory, it is evident that elite groups exploit 
certain subordinate groups via these power structures and systems. Karl Marx’s 
theoretical approach was based upon economics within society and it claims that the 
oppression of a group is best explained in terms of the elite’s benefits from capitalism 
(Marx, 2008). According to Marx, inequality is a necessary function of the capitalist 
system because the system is based on unequal ownership of the means of production 
(Dillon, 2010). In order for the elites to have capital gain there must be inequality that 
results in exploitation. From this unequal distribution, it creates two different social 
classes: the bourgeoisie and proletariat (Marx, 2008). The bourgeoisie are the ones that 
own and monopolize the means of the production (Marx, 2008). Corporate CEOS,
managers, or local elites are all going to be examples of bourgeoisie. The proletariat works for the bourgeoisie and create their commodity for economical gain (Marx, 2008). Factory workers, miners, or farmers are all examples of the proletariat.

Marx believed that we, as humans, are inherently productive, making work a necessity and an important aspect of our lives (Marx, 2008). Humans are born to work and to be productive with one another socially. This work is unique and creative towards the worker. This belief of humans naturally being productive is what Marx discussed as being our “species-being” (Ritzer, 2011). In Marx’s critique of capitalism, he saw that the structure and nature of Capitalism was taking away our “species-being” because it takes away the true meaning of who we are as humans. The labor, in a capitalist system, only works for a means to an end, which is for economical gain. Since humans exist and function in this capitalist system, then the result is a feeling of alienation (Ritzer, 2001). This feeling of alienation is one of separation from the relationship between our labor and human nature. Capitalism creates this feeling of alienation by the work and labor that is being manufactured within the system. This feeling of alienation, according to Marx, alters our human nature to fit the demands of this system (Ritzer, 2011).

Since the labor and work that is being done is no longer one's own labor, but is now the demand or order from the bourgeoisie, the creativity of work is shattered. Alienation makes people more susceptible to having a false consciousness (Ritzer, 2011). This type of alienation through labor isolates the worker from their productive activity because the capitalists own this production. Additionally, alienation can be evident from one's separation of the product itself. Even though the workers will create the commodity
themselves, the commodity is still owned by the capitalists, creating alienation between the worker and their product (Marx, 2008).

Another component of alienation is that workers are alienated from their co-workers (Ritzer, 2011). In a factory setting, workers may work side-by-side without much interpersonal communication because they may be too busy or it is restricted by the system. It is here that the focus shifts from the quality of social relationships to the quantity of item production (Ritzer, 2011). Competition occurs because the relationship between workers is detached, which allows capitalists to create strife in order to speed up productivity. Creating this competitive environment, it gives the worker needed encouragement to overcome their fellow worker, resulting in more profits for the company (Marx, 2008).

The fourth and last effect of alienation is that it alienates us from our human potential (Ritzer, 2011). This transformation of isolating humans from their innate desires into an industrial capitalist system results in the worker not performing at full potential. Working less than one's true potential creates a robotic-type labor system that function like a machine and less like humans. This microanalysis of alienation helped Marx to create his macro analysis of the class conflict that exists between the two classes (Ritzer, 2011). Since this alienation is so dominant within a capitalist structure, the surplus value of the entire commodity goes to whoever owns the means of production. This creates a divided line of “haves” and “have nots” resulting in class conflict (Ritzer, 2011).

Over time, the capitalist system will continue to expand and grow. Marx saw the power that capitalism had and knew that this expansion would develop. From this
expansion, he discussed that two aspects would contribute to this development. The first aspect was the fundamental importance of technological progress (Bottomore, 1985). With more advanced technology, the quality and production speed of the commodity is to increase. The second aspect is that the increase scale of production will result in the growth of capitalism. The two share a dialectical relationship because with more technological advances, the more consumers will want to consume (Marx, 2008).

Michael Bell (2012) also discusses this in terms of the relationship between “treadmills of production” and the “treadmills of consumption”. The drive of capitalism moves towards more money through economic growth (Bell, 2012). In order to create economic growth, the capitalist system creates the “treadmill of production”. The “treadmill of production” gives them the ability to produce more and more. The “treadmill of consumption” gives us, as consumers, the ability to consume more and more. These two work together simultaneously because one cannot survive without the other. A modern example of this would be the yearly release of Apple’s production of iPhones. Apple keeps producing as we keep consuming. Bell discusses that these two treadmills are often run without regard towards the social and environmental consequences (Bell, 2012).

Marx also envisioned that as capitalism continued to grow, it would change in three distinct ways (Bottomore, 1985). First ownership of the means of production would become more concentrated to fewer hands. From this the power would become transformed into social power of production, instead of direct producers. Private property and private labor would be abolished. Third, the capitalist system would soon form itself into a global market resulting in a global economy. Even though we can see evidence of
all three of these results, the global economy is one of the most prominent and dominating forces in modern society (Bottomore, 1985).

Even though Karl Marx gave his contributions to sociology, the nature of capitalism in Marx’s day differed significantly from that of today. In Marx’s day, the power of capitalism was not as massive as it is today. Today, the power of capitalism has even become fused with the political world. Today, our world is run by the power elites consisting of the fusion of political, military, and corporate power (Mills, 2000). The influence of capitalism has grown to the level of global interactions. This evolution of capitalism has resulted in Marx’s theory receiving criticisms for failing to have the proper tools to solve today’s problems. Even though Marxist theory is not a theoretical approach to study the world as a whole, his concepts and ideas has gave rise to different formulations of his theory (Ritzer, 2011). From these criticisms, many neo-Marxian theories have been developed.

**World Systems Theory**

One particular neo-Marxian theory that explains the dominating power of capitalism at a global level and one that is beneficial to my analysis of organic growers is world systems theory. World systems theory is a very macro-scale approach to studying the effects of globalization on our society (Wallerstein, 2004). Sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein developed this theoretical approach to explain and trace the rise of this new global order. World systems theory uses countries as the basic units of analysis in studying this international division of labor. Like Marx, Wallerstein believes that this global growth of capitalism is detrimental to human nature and society based on the
exploitation by corporate global powers represented in the relationship between core
countries and periphery areas (Wallerstein, 2004).

The difference between core and periphery countries resembles the dialectical
relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat because core countries are the
“haves”, while periphery areas are the “have-nots” (Wallerstein, 2004). The core
countries are also going to be controlled by bourgeoisie, whereas the periphery areas are
going to have a high level of proletariats that are used for labor and exploitation. Core
areas are defined as the most economically wealthy and powerful countries. They are
going to have strong governmental systems that control the bureaucracies and the military
(Wallerstein, 2004).

Core countries are also going to be highly industrialized through technology, such
as the United States, Western Europe, and Eastern Asia. The periphery countries are
going to be the areas that are less economically diversified, weaker governments, and less
industrialized (Wallerstein, 2004). The periphery countries are going to have a higher
population of poor individuals and high levels of inequality such as countries located in
the Middle East in some countries in Africa. There is exploitation of the periphery areas
because they have “next to free” labor or resources that the core wants. As quoted by
Wallerstein (2004):

“Some countries were stronger economically than others
(the core) and were therefore able to trade in terms that
allowed surplus-value to flow from the weaker countries
(the periphery) to the core. Some would label this process
“unequal exchange”. The analysis implied a remedy for the
inequality: actions by the state in the periphery to institute
mechanisms that would equalize the exchange over the
middle run.” (Wallerstein, 2007: 12)
According to Wallerstein (2004), the core nation has the ability to become a dominant force over the periphery areas when three forms of economics dominance have occurred (Wallerstein, 2004). The first is productivity dominance that allows a country to produce commodities that are of greater quality and cheaper than the periphery. Once a country is able to achieve this production dominance, trade dominance occurs that allows this country to become dominant because they are the ones that the other countries want to trade with. Once this happens, financial dominance becomes apparent because more money is coming into the area then going out. Over time, this domination helps to reinforce the distinction between core and periphery because the core has more resources. This also creates the periphery’s dependency on the core (Wallerstein, 2004).

**Dependency Theory**

Since world systems theory is a very macro approach to understanding the exploitation from capitalism, its application can be viewed at a micro level as well. The application of this relationship at the regional level, which is experiences by individuals, is discussed as dependency theory (Goldfrank, 1988). Dependency theory will be used in the analysis of organic growers in rural areas because core and periphery can also be discussed as urban and rural. Both world systems theory and dependency theory propose that the main cause for the “backwardness” of the poor is their position and relation to the core/urban areas. Also, since we live in an economy that continues to expand, different models are needed to explain different levels. World systems theory discussed this economic exploitation at the global level of analysis. Dependency theory studies the economic effects from the division of labor at the regional level (Goldfrank, 1988).
Since the industrial revolution, a difference between developed regions and underdeveloped regions emerged. In order to understand underdevelopment, one must understand what development is (Goldfrank, 1988). The rapid growth of capitalism started to bring rapid industrial and economic growth to regions to become developed. Since rural areas are viewed as underdeveloped, then this economic exploitation can be explained through the relationship between the two regions. The economic relationship that exists between these two regions is a result of the capitalist system (Goldfrank, 1988).

This “development of underdevelopment” was studied and discussed by Andre Gunder Frank, who was one major contributor to dependency theory. Gunder Frank believed that as the capitalist system, expanded, this “development” would begin to penetrate the undeveloped parts of our society (Frank, 1966). This penetration would begin to affect many levels of undeveloped areas such as their economies, cultures, and their social and political spheres. Once this begins, the developed regions begin to exploit the capital outside of their regions for their benefit. Capitalists outside of the region exploit resources within the peripheries. According to Gunder Frank, they are all going to share one characteristic, which is the historical process that has allowed the generation and development of capitalism (Frank, 1966). Over time, the capitalist system creates a monopoly in the area that causes inequality, uneven development and dependency. Undeveloped regions become dependent on developed ones. This economic dependency is a result of external forces outside of the underdeveloped regions. According to Vincent Ferraro (1996:2) “dependency can be defined as an explanation of the economic development of a state in terms of the external influences—
political, economic, and cultural”. This theoretical approach differs from modernization theory that states that the problem with underdeveloped regions is the forces within the region (Ferraro, 1996). Modernization theory discusses that the problem from these regions is with the lack of modernization of values and institutions within. Dependency is different because it recognizes that forces outside of the region are at fault for the problems of the region (Ferraro, 1996).

For example, an economist by the name of Paul Salstrom used dependency theory to explain the region of Appalachia (Salstrom, 1994). Although his theoretical framework was used to explain Appalachia, the framework can be applied to any region being threatened with dependency from outside forces. In Salstrom’s dependency theory, there are always forces outside of the region that create dependency. The dependency is established when the periphery becomes dependent on the core. In the case of food production, the core will be viewed as developed urban communities, while rural areas are the underdeveloped. What the urban area does is find a single resource found in the rural area that the core could develop to its benefit. The core then moves into the periphery area to pull out these resources that are to be brought back towards the core without anything left behind for the rural areas. To justify the capitalist’s movement into the rural areas, the development of underdevelopment takes place to pull apart many cultural aspects of the periphery. These cultural aspects may contain education, economics, religion, or even family (Salstrom, 1994).

In creating dependency, these traditional cultural aspects are destroyed (Salstrom, 1994). Once the cultural aspects are destroyed then the core has the control necessary for pulling the resources out of the area. Salstrom focused on miners in Appalachia but the
same can be applied to growers in rural areas as well. The reason is because once these values are replaced, there is no returning to them. The capitalist system has severely changed the region. When the power structures begin to take away traditional ways of farming then dependency is created by a powerful industrial agricultural system.

Fredrick Buttel (1980) maintains that dependency damages rural areas in three ways. First, the large amount of processing is done once the food leaves the region. Second, once the food has left the region, most of that food is consumed outside of the region that it was produced. Third, this food dependency creates capitalist markets that modify and damage the food by the use of pesticides and GMOs. Buttel understands that this dependency is based on the capitalist ownership of food production (Buttel, 1980).

Thus, Buttel offers six changes that must take place for proper food production. The first is eliminating corporate ownership. The second is protecting small, family sized farms. The third is de-mechanization of technology used to farm. The fourth is organic agriculture. The fifth is localizing this production and consumption. The six is self-sufficiency within agriculture. Once these six changes take place then rural communities can start to bring back traditional methods of growing food (Buttel, 1980).

For the purpose of this study and analysis, the concept of agrarianism will be used to explain why and how organic growers resist the dependency created by the corporate food industry through their personal motivations and food production technologies and products. Agrarianism is more than just rural living and food production. It is a spirit of moral orientation and economic practices. This lifestyle based on the belief that everyone everywhere is part of the land community (Freyfogle, 2001). One major tenet of agrarianism is that by being in direct contact with nature gives
the individual a sense of moral integrity (Landfilm, 2014). Another belief of agrarianism is that farming offers complete independence and self-sufficiency. Community is another important belief of agrarianism. As we see in Chapter 5, this movement and belief system is evident among organic growers, whether they are farmers or gardeners. Despite the dependency on the capitalist system stemming from different aspects of rural life, this concept is used to show how one particular group of people attempts to resist it (Landfilm, 2014).

The following analysis chapter will show how the organic growers understand that this dependency operates. They understand how that these macro forces affect their lives by creating food dependency, which they now challenge. These organic farmers and gardeners also understand and take to heart the six changes and advocate for them fully in their resistance against corporate control of food production. Also, within my analysis, I discuss rural organic growers as living with a periphery that is exploited by the core. They are trying to take back their control over the food they produce and consume. The next chapter will focus on the methodology I used in this research.
Chapter 4: Methodology

The Debate Between Qualitative And Quantitative:

Critical theory is the preferred theoretical approach for this research because it is focused on critiquing the main processes of society to uncover and reveal the social structures that create and maintain social power. The goal of a critical research is to understand the power that exists in society to help bring change to social policy and practice. This chapter will discuss the qualitative methodology that I used in my research.

The differences between quantitative and qualitative research and inquiry are vast, making each type a separate field of inquiry in its own right (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). Even though the differences between the two fields can be broken down and discussed on many different occasions, the three major differences that define the two differently are the debate on ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Each field of inquiry holds its own beliefs on each of the three debates as a way of guiding the researcher into their research process or “doing sociology” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011).

When studying society and its members, the first major assumption that guides what type of research you conduct is your ontological belief of the nature of reality. Each debate on the nature of reality is between a macro level objective approach of reality or a micro level subjective one. If reality is located at the objective level, the researcher believes that there is one fixed reality. If there is one fixed reality for everyone objectively then our job, in social inquiry, is to locate and study this objective truth.
This type of research is conducted and achieved by a quantitative approach. Since a quantitative approach studies this objective reality, the use of numbers and strategic statistical analysis is taken to capture the picture of society. This approach attempts to study the “social facts” about our reality. The use of numbers and calculations make quantitative methods viewed as more scientific towards academic community. Since this type of approach studies the objective nature of reality more scientifically it is one of the reasons that quantitative research is regarded as the more dominate approach to research inquiry (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011).

The other side to this debate is that the nature of reality rests at the more micro level of analysis. This means that the nature of reality consists of many different realities that are constantly being created by individuals living in it. Qualitative methods give credit to holding these beliefs about the nature of reality because they reject the idea of an objective truth about reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). Their ontology rests on the idea that in order to study society, you must capture the story from the individuals. This gives the researcher the ability to understand individuals on their own terms via a subjective reality. Thus, qualitative methods are used to this end (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011).

The next debate is the debate of epistemology. Epistemology concerns the nature and grounds that knowledge is achieved, its limits, and the validity of the knowledge. This debate is about the relationship between the researcher and the known world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). Also, how the researcher is supposed to receive this knowledge and what counts for valid knowledge falls into the debate of epistemology. The quantitative side will focus their attention on scientific explanation for what counts for knowledge. Since the nature of reality is objective then finding these objective facts
about this objective world in a scientific way counts for valid knowledge. The knowledge that is gained is used to generate patterns of human activity with the aim of creating social laws. From this perspective of knowledge the researcher also has the ability to generate cause and affect relationship by adding more variables into the equation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013).

Since these facts about the world are “in fact” objective then we can generate objective truths about the world. Qualitative research disagrees with this statement in that their belief rests on an epistemology debate that argues for gaining knowledge through the experience and interactions of the people within society (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2012). In quantitative research, the purpose is make generalizations to the population from what was found. Qualitative researchers do not believe that you can gain knowledge from which one can generalize about the entire population because of the subjective nature of reality. What counts for knowledge to a qualitative researcher is understanding these interactions and experiences by the people within the society and from there it helps to explain a certain particular phenomenon or event. This is because the person being studied is the best source of knowledge of his or hers own experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013).

In order to gain this information and knowledge from research a certain methodology is needed. Since quantitative and qualitative both seek to find out different answers, then each is going to have different views on methodology. Since quantitative research seeks social facts and generates patterns from these social facts then the methodology is going be different than a qualitative approach (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2012). The quantitative approach puts emphasis on finding variables in the social world
and from these variables measurement is required to test hypothesis. The methods and ways that a quantitative researcher finds these variables in the social world is by collecting data through survey research. This survey research gives the researcher the ability to achieve numbers that can be computed through statistical analysis. This statistical analysis can give the researcher support for or against their hypothesis. The type of methodology that is practiced by quantitative research mimics the hard science methodology of using deductive reasoning to arrive at a conclusion (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013).

On the other hand, qualitative researcher uses an inductive approach to research (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2012). Since their belief is that the most important information that we can know as researchers is the experiences of the people being studied, then their methodology is going to revolve around finding these subjective meanings. One of the most popular techniques for finding this subjective meaning is by receiving the respondent’s story. By interviewing the respondents, the researcher is able to find exactly how a respondent experienced that particular phenomenon. This type of research gives the researcher the ability to immerse themselves within the culture of the people that they choose to study. This participation within the culture and society gives the researcher the ability to capture the image of the many experiences of the group. Interviewing the participants is only one way that qualitative research can be achieved. Other ways include case studies, analyzing historical documents or natural observations. These types of methods allow the researcher to think critically because their methods are going to change in different settings and situations (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2012).
Critical Theory In Qualitative Research

The three major paradigms within qualitative research are critical theory, constructivism, and participatory action research (PAR) (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2012). The three major paradigms that exist within qualitative research have different core assumptions ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically. However, all share the same belief and action of moving away from the positivistic and post-positivistic approach that is the foundation for quantitative inquiry. The main belief that is shared between all three paradigms is the belief of studying society in a subjective manner by studying the knowledge received for human respondents about their consciousness (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2012).

To achieve this goal, a different set of assumptions regarding ontology, epistemology and methodology must be present. Critical theorist’s ontology is to study the subjective nature of reality, but also to look at the historical knowledge by different interpretations across this subjective reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). This historical realism looks at a reality that is constructed and formed by the social, political, cultural, economic, and gender values that has exists across time. Since a critical theorist will have the ontological belief that reality is at the subjective level, then reality is going to change across individuals and how they interpret these historical forces. These historical forces are also going to change over time because of these different interpretations by different people. These historical insights help to uncover the meanings that people attach to these social forces. The belief here is that human nature is constructed and operates in a society that is based on struggle for power. Since society is operated on struggle within it then these interactions of struggle create oppression and inequality from
different gender, class, race etc. The way that our society views these different interactions must be taken into account because it is the only way to truly uncover how these forces exist and act upon the individuals within a society. Since society is driven by its power structures, then the research should study these social structures (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013).

Since the historical insight supports studying the nature of reality from its subjective level, it also supports in the epistemology belief of a critical theorist (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). The focus is to study and receive knowledge about these social structures by looking at historical insights. Knowledge is achieved by studying these historical insights with regard to the people within the society. The focus and drive of this research is break apart and understand how these forces affect different aspects of social life. The knowledge that is achieved should attempt to find and revise how these historical forces affect society. In doing this, the knowledge that is achieved helps to produce and advocate social change within the society that the researcher is studying (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013).

The way that a critical theorist views the nature of reality and how knowledge is achieved helps shape the methodology that is used (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). The methodological approach by a critical theorist gives the authority to the oppressed individuals by studying how they interpret these power structures that affect their lives. Since a critical theorist takes the belief that knowledge is constructed socially, then the methods of research are directed to the eyes of the respondents to understand their reality they experience. This methodology is one of the core beliefs of qualitative research because it gives the researcher information that is unique to the individual. The data that
is achieved by a critical theorist does not have to fit in one particular way because data is achieved through different methods and perspectives. Since society works in a subjective way then the interpretations of the historical forces are going to change from person to person and from time to time. This difference in interpretations is going require the researcher to “think outside the box” in their research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013).

The researchers of critical theory judge the quality of their inquiry by its ability to create a more fair and just society. Since the main focus of a critical theorist is to call for social change through their research then the data that is collected should serve a purpose towards this social change (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). If the information and data helps to advocate this social change then the judgment of their research is to be valuable. As it was discussed above, the inquirer posture or the point of view of how the researcher operates their researcher is from an activist perspective. This point of view gives the researcher a view of helping to create social change. To achieve this social change and this type of research then the training that critical theorist has involves both qualitative and quantitative approached to fully understand the macro and micro level of analysis. The use of history and social sciences help to understand how these social functions have affected society. This training all helps in understanding how the researcher can empower the oppressed and results in their liberation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013).

Since dependency theory is a perspective that branches from critical theory the meta-theoretical assumptions of dependency theory bridges the macro and micro levels of analysis. Thus, dependency theory will be used in my analysis. For the purpose of this research, using macro and micro levels of analysis is useful explaining the motives of
rural organic growers. Using qualitative methods, specifically in-depth semi-structured interviews, allowed me to collect necessary data for analysis purposes.

**Methodology**

My research of organic growers was conducted from September of 2013 to March 2014, after receiving the approval of Morehead State’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Because there was no list of organic growers available, I selected respondents using snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a qualitative sampling technique that is used for gathering respondents through the identification of one respondent who provides other respondents (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, and Lio, 2004). It is very useful when there is no other way to find respondents to study. I was referred to one organic grower from a faculty member and from there, that one respondent gave me a list of names and methods for contacting them. Eight respondents were interviewed within the rural communities around Morehead, KY. Even though, there were demographic differences (see Appendix 3 for demographic table) between respondents, they all shared the common characteristic of growing food organically for their own consumption, for sale, or both.

Once I contacted the respondents, I either traveled to their home, workplace, or interviewed them by telephone. Before each interview began, I gave the respondents the opportunity to sign an informed consent form that promised that they could stop at any moment in the interviewing process, their identity would be hidden for the study, and anything they said to me would not be harmful to them in any way. Additionally, I asked them if I could record the conversation for future analysis. All of them agreed. I also took pictures of two of the respondent’s garden (See Appendix 2).
Interviews were conducted with all eight respondents. In-depth interviews are a certain type of conversations between the researcher and the respondent that requires questions and listening (Hessey-Biber and Leavy, 2012). In-depth interviews are used best when the goal of the research is to achieve a meaningful relationship between the researcher and the respondent. In order to conduct these in-depth interviews, I asked the respondents a list of questions that consisted of their reasons of choosing organic, their farming experience, what organic meant to them, troubles with organic production, if they had any contact with the USDA, their belief if we are dependent upon the food industry, if they used pesticides, awareness/knowledge of GMOS, environmental effects of not using organic methods, and what we can do, as a society, to bring more organic food production. The list of questions was used as a guideline when conducting the interview (See Appendix 1). Even though it was used in every interview, each interview began to bring up new questions through the conversation, which allowed me to probe for more information.

Eight respondents were chosen until I reached a point of redundancy in my interviews. A point of redundancy or saturation occurs when the researcher starts to hear the same themes from respondents in their research (Hessey-Biber, and Leavy, 2012). I started to hear the same responses from each respondent, from which themes began to emerge to be analyzed and discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter 5: Analysis Of Interviews

The analysis of qualitative data based on my interviews focusing on the personal stories and motivations of eight organic growers will be presented in this chapter. Even though each particular grower had their own story to tell, two main themes and subthemes emerged from the data. Specifically, one major theme was their concern for the dependency that people have on industrial agriculture. This macro theme was discussed as either a dependency upon pesticides or a dependency upon GMOs. On a more micro level of analysis, a second major theme was that the organic growers wanted to be “good stewards of the land”. Subthemes related to wanting to be “good stewards of the land”, were respondents wanting to use nature as their tool, practice proper soil diversity, and valuing their own work. I have listed these as sub-themes under “good stewards of the land”. A discussion of these themes and subthemes follows.

Resisting Corporate Dependency

The most recurrent theme to arise from my interviews was a widespread concern and resistance against industrial agriculture and the corporate dependency that comes with it. Each respondent conveyed strong disdain for corporate control on our food. The corporate control of food, has led them to feel that rural communities are now dependent on this food system. This dependency is maintained through the core and periphery relationship. During our discussion, each brought up issues about dependency on genetically modifying food and pesticide use. Each of these issues came out of our
discussions of corporate hands in food production and how large the food industry has become. All of the respondents agreed that we were grossly dependent on industrial agriculture.

**Frank**

The first respondent I talked to, Frank, who strongly believes that our society is too dependent, claimed that the majority of people do not even know what they are eating. He then discussed how corporations have just simply become too powerful within our country and that they are one of the major causes for the power of “big agriculture” in our food production. When I asked Frank if this was why he grew food organic, he told me that it was in the form of resistance against this corporate power. Growing his own food in the way that he chooses gives him the ability to have a say in the way that he wants to eat. He said, “So now a days, you can stress a lot of political and philosophical actions through your purchases”. He continued saying that he rarely shops for food at a grocery store because he is almost self-sufficient growing his own food.

**Katie**

Another respondent, Katie, is a public school teacher who also shares the belief that corporate involvement in our food has damaged the nutrition and quality of our food. She lives with her husband and newborn son on a 400-acre farm where they have the ability to grow their own food organically. When I asked her why she chose to grow her food organically, she claimed that it was out of respect for her newborn son, who she wanted keep safe from the food that is being produced from industrial agriculture. She claimed that one of the most rewarding aspects of organically growing your food is that you do not have to succumb to the corporate model for food. From growing your food
this way, you have the ability to just walk outside and retrieve it. I could tell a constant fear in her voice every time we discussed the way food is produced at a mass level. Once she had her son, she became so scared of the health risks from modern food. She then learned how to grow organic food from her family, books, and other source material so she could provide healthy food for her son. In her resistance to the corporate food industry she said that she hopes to be completely self-sufficient one day.

Darryl

Darryl, another respondent who discussed consumer’s dependency of our corporate food system, lives on open land in the hills of Appalachia, allowing him to have complete control over how his own food is produced. In part, Darryl grows organic food because of family traditions but he also said that it is his way of resisting against the corporate food industry. He expressed his concern that he does not know what is in his food and how that scares him. Darryl critiqued the industrial food industry as being too quick and fast, when food production should take value and time. By producing food quickly, this shows how capitalism’s main desire is to produce only for a means to an end, referenced in Chapter 3. When I asked him if was able to sustain himself completely from corporate food, he claimed that at one time he was, but age is catching up with him and he is not able to like he used to be.

Carol

When I met and discussed these issues with Carol, she said that one major reason she grows organically was because she is able to do it her way. She also is afraid of what is going into our food from industrial farming. She expressed concern that she doesn’t like not knowing what is in her food and so she grows her own. When I asked her “why
organic?” she replied that it was how she was taught. She told me that previous growing methods of gardening are what we call organic today. The only reason that we call it organic is because of the impact that the industrial food system. Looking back to Chapter 2, industrial agriculture created food that was so unlike traditional methods or producing food. Therefore, food that was produced traditionally was called organic. From her methods of growing, she resists to many purchases of food products from a grocery store because her sustainability on her own production is almost enough to feed her entire family. She said that her family goes to Kroger for everything else that they can’t grow on their land.

**Lucy**

Lucy also voiced strong concern for the way that food is produced today. She claimed, just like the other respondents, that you just simply do not know what is in your food anymore. Lucy said that our society has become so complex and has moved away from traditional ways of living so much that the majority of people are not even able to have a garden to grow their own food. She said that this was one reason why people are so dependent upon the system. To help end this dependency she has helped co-create a local community organization that allows people to buy a plot in a community garden so they can grow their own food. The community garden must be organic and free from pesticides. She is not able to stay completely sustainable from this but she says that it is one step of removing people from this corporate dependency.

**John**

When I interviewed John, who is a part of a particular Kentucky farming organization, he had a lot of say about consumers’ corporate dependency upon food. He
claimed that industrial farming’s main concern is sustainability in profits, instead of quality. Looking back to chapter 3, this is an example of the capitalist system only focusing on quantity instead of quality. Through this sustainability of food, it creates people who like cheap food without caring for the future health costs. John believed that industrial farming had its place within society in creating food for the entire population but he believed that it is managed and operated in a greedy way. Even though John is apart of this farming organization, he has his own organic garden at his home that helps to sustain him and his wife in produce. John said that that buying and producing local should be the first concern in our food. Organic food should be the second concern. He then went on to say that the two together are best.

**Rick and Carl**

Rick and Carl were father and son who lived on a farm where they raised their own cattle organically. When I asked them why they chose to do this organically, they both claimed that they did not like the way that the animals were treated and the antibiotics that go into them from industrial agriculture. Out on his farm, he and his son let the cattle have an open space to graze. Both of them told me that they only feed their cattle organic feed. When I asked them why they chose to do this, Rick told me that he wanted to give the people better quality of meat then you could buy at the grocery story. When we discussed the society’s dependency upon industrial agriculture, he claimed that by doing this he is able to have a contribution towards ending this dependency because he gives his local community a place buy quality fresh beef.
Dependency: Genetically Modified Organisms In Food

Carol

From my interviews, another subtheme emerged about GMOs. Whenever I brought up the issue of GMOs in our food, each respondent knew what GMOs were and the harmful effects of them in our food. Carol told me that that society is too dependent upon GMOs because labeling is not required. Voicing her opinion, she declared with a laugh, “I think GMOs suck”. Throughout our interview she told me about her strong religious views and through her religious practice, she prays for even political issues. She told me that since the issue of GMOs is such an important political issue for our society, she even prays for the impact of GMOs on our nation and even third world nations. She quotes, “They (her weekly prayer chain) said that the nutrition value is so reduced that the third world countries are so dependent upon it that they are not getting the protein and nutrients they did before”. This is a perfect example of Marx’s vision for the evolution of capitalism. Globally, third world countries are beginning to experience the dominating forces of capitalism.

Lucy and Katie

Both Lucy and Katie expressed strong opinions about how fast GMOs are moving how country away form our traditional ways of life. They spoke of the natural process of life and how it is dangerous to genetically modifying the structure of an organism we eat. Lucy expressed her opinion blaming corporations for dominating the market with products that are not natural. She said the seeds used in her community garden had to be
GMO free and that each person must buy their seeds from a designated seed provider that sells non-GMO seeds. Katie agreed, but said she was more concerned with the health risks behind GMOs. She knew studies for the health risks of GMOs are limited and that terrifies her. Katie asked me rhetorically, “how can you put a price on health?” in regard to how cheap GMOs products are compared to natural organic produce.

**Frank**

Frank was fearful about how GMOs were going to affect future generations. He critiqued society by how we only look at profits instead of the future. He told me that the Native Americans have this saying of “make every decision based on seven generations ahead”. The GMOs in our food is a very dangerous game to play because we do not look far enough into the future for future generations. He claims that anything unnatural or toxic should not enter the natural environment or market place. Frank expressed major concern in how this will affect our future generations. He quotes:

“Well, the genetic modification is dangerous on a new level. It is disrupting the natural process that has existed and in balance for billions of years. Once you start going down that road, the unintended consequences are beyond imagination. Once you tip natural balances with organisms that have never existed on the planet before, you simply do not know what direction they are going to go and what they are going to do. It is a nightmare situation and something that I truly believe is too dangerous to be pursuing”.

**Darryl**

Darryl’s main concern was how large industrial agriculture has become and how we just do not have a say in our food production anymore. Since we do not have a say, dependency is maintained. When I asked him about GMOs, he did know how dominating they were in society and he told me that if we continue to do it then the price
we will have to pay down the road is cancer and other illnesses. During our interview, he showed me the difference between a commercially purchased apple and an apple that he grew free of genetic modification. The natural look of the apple grown at his home was incomparable to the “waxy” look of the commercial apple. He told me that it is sad that people who shop at grocery stores have to adapt to this new type of modification of food and only the strong will survive in the future of our planet. Darryl wished that people didn’t have to succumb to the demands of industrial agriculture.

**John, Rick and Carl**

During my discussion with John about GMOs, he told me that GMOs are a result of two things. The first is the need for sustainability in food production. The second is because of the massive population increase around the globe. He told me that sustainability is one of the most important aspects of farming but he was unsure if GMOs were the answer to proper sustainability. He believed that the trade off is that we distance ourselves from what is natural. Distancing us from what it natural will increase the risks to human health. Similarly, Rick and Carl’s mission is to raise GMO free cattle. They both said that they want to give consumers better quality of beef because we are too dependent on GMOs.

**Dependency: Pesticide Use In Food**

In Chapter 2, I discussed how the food industry uses pesticides to sustain their products. After interviewing the eight organic growers, I found a common belief between each that pesticide use is very dangerous for the environment and us. I began each interview asking the respondent, “What does organic mean to you”. The responses
that I received where that organic meant free from genetic modification and free from pesticide use.

**Katie**

Katie told me that it was better for their family to just let the produce grow free of pesticides. She called it “natures way” of doing it and claimed that it is the best way to possibly grow your food. In order to sustain growth of their food without the use of pesticides, she uses lime and proper soil fertility to move away from the use of pesticides in her food. I asked her, other than not using pesticides, what types of methods do you do to make sure that a product is organic. Her response was “nothing, we really don’t do anything to it. We pull the weeds and till it up. We get all the weeds but we normally just let it go”. She explained to me that by not using pesticides and by letting nature takes it course, their food was healthier and tasted better.

**Darryl**

Darryl voiced his strong concern against pesticides in our interview by telling me that it is just not the proper way to do things. Darryl used to be a farmer when he was younger where he had to use pesticides on his products to make sure he produced enough each year. Later in his life, he moved away from farming and wanted to move to smaller-scaled gardening. This was when I asked him why he decided to make his garden organic and not his farm. He responded, “Gardening if for yourself, farming is not”. The garden was only meant to sustain his family without needing to provide for a bigger business. Growing produce was much easier for him because he did not have to use pesticides on such a smaller-scale. He mentioned that not enough people garden anymore and instead get their produce from corporate farms that use large amounts of pesticides.
Gardening is becoming rare, he said, which is a result of our cultural aspects becoming destroyed from dependency.

When I was discussing these issues with Darryl, he told me an interesting story about when he was a full time farmer. There was a popular type of pesticide that only needed to be sprayed about 10 feet around a fruit tree. What this does is seep through the ground where it makes its way up through the roots, through the trunk of the tree, and into the apples. I remarked that this was dangerous because the toxins could get inside the apple. He agreed but also said sarcastically that he had heard that it was “supposed to not enter the apple”. Darryl said he didn’t believe that for a minute because he felt like it was a way for the manufacture of that pesticide to make it sound safe.

**Frank**

Consumer’s dependency upon pesticides was also a central motivation for Frank to grow organic food. Just like Darryl, Frank told me that he used to use pesticides on his garden, particularly the brand “Sevin”. “Sevin” is an insecticide, made by Bayer, which is intended to kill over 65 insects and pests (GardenTech, 2014). When he was using pesticides at first, everything seemed to be fine. It wasn’t until a couple of years later that he started to notice that the cell structure of the vegetables did not look as healthy as they had. He attributed this to the overuse of pesticides in his soil since it was apparent that the soil was losing its nutrients. This was when he decided to move to organic growing because he knew he was damaging the natural soil around him. Now, Frank and his wife use organic compost, which allows multi-organisms to help with the process.

Towards the end of my discussion with Frank, I asked him about consumer’s dependency upon pesticides in our food. He told me that a big problem with our society
is that many people simply do not know what is in their food. Frank advocates for more research comparing nonorganic and organic foods. Since our society does not have this type of knowledge, then people just continue to eat whatever is put in from of them. He told me that he is certain that if more studies were to be conducted then we could scientifically prove that people who eat organic food are a lot healthier than people who do not. Through our purchases of food, we do not factor into what we buy and eat. We do not factor in the health costs that come along it.

John

When I asked John how he felt about pesticides, his remarks were the same as his GMO beliefs. He believes that pesticides are just another answer to try to create sustainability in agriculture. He also expressed his views on localizing food production more because it would limit the use of pesticides. Through having our food not localized anymore to one region, our food must take drastic changes to travel many miles to get from one spot to the next. John’s concern was corporation’s external force on the rural communities. This is a major component to maintaining dependency because the resources (food) are no longer localized. John said that since we do not localize food anymore then more pesticides are needed in order to create more food for everyone all across the country. In his garden, he does not use pesticides because he does not need to in order to produce the quality of food that he wants. His critique of our dependency upon pesticide use is because we simply allowed food production to be moved outside of communities. Since we have allowed food to move outside of regions by practicing monoculture agriculture, pesticides are the result. Through his organic gardening he advocates for localizing food by moving away from this dependency.
Rick and Carl

Rick and Carl both said they do not use feed for their cattle that have been produced with pesticides. The son, Carl, told me that without pesticides in your cattle, the meat is healthier, more natural, and organic. They also do not use pesticides in their garden because it is simply not needed. Their garden sustains the both of them, their mother, and sisters. They like to grow their food organically because they don’t have to worry about getting food at a grocery store that has been tainted with pesticides.

Lucy

When discussing Lucy’s community garden, the topic of pesticides came up. She said that a part of belonging to the organization meant that you must agree to not using pesticides on your particular plot. Moving away from pesticides was one reason that she helped co-create the community garden. She told me a story about how her Dad, once a farmer, used pesticides on his produce and then began to not use them anymore because he saw that it was killing too many worms. Lucy had always grown up around organic methods of growing food throughout her life and doesn’t understand why greed and money play into the creation of our food. I asked her why she thought we were so dependent upon industrial agriculture and pesticide use, which she replied by telling that me that money is always involved. She said, “It’s sad. It’s all the fault of big government and big agriculture. Even though we think we are free, we don’t have the control we would like to have”. This shows the fusion of political and corporate power, discussed by C. Wright Mills in Chapter 3 (Mills, 2000).
Carol

This was the same type of response I received from Carol who claimed that our government is funding big agriculture businesses, like Monsanto, who use pesticides on every product. Carol’s blame was with the government/corporate relationship instead of practicing true democracy. Carol goes to many food conferences across the country and told me about a particular one where Monsanto was present. She said that when Monsanto talked, they claimed to spray their produce every week to kill insects that may harm the produce. According to her, this statement made her roll her eyes. When I asked her what she thought about spraying every week she said: “They have lost the quality of it all. That, to me, is a lack of integrity. We should have integrity in everything we do. If you are going to grow food and sell it to someone then it should be the best that you can make it”.

Recall that Marx (2008) suggested that capitalist involvement would create high levels of inequality (Marx, 2008). This inequality would establish a “haves” and ‘have-nots” relationship (Ritzer, 2011). Whether it is viewed as “have”/”have-nots”, bourgeoisie/proletariat, core/periphery, or urban/rural it is understood that this relationship has created and maintained dependency. For the purposes of this research, I have decided to focus upon the urban/rural relationship to show how dependency is maintained on the rural communities. Overtime, the system has created a monopoly for rural consumers to purchase food. Through the expansion of capitalism, rural communities have become dependent upon the urban communities.

Rural communities have become dependent upon the urban communities because the urban communities have resources that the rural communities do not. This
domination helps to reinforce inequality. Since capitalism is only focused on profits, then pesticides and GMOs have become the norm for producing food. It was not until the mid 1990s that our food production was controlled and damaged by corporate hands (McKenzie, 2007). Previous to that time, production of food was kept within the rural areas. Through my analysis of organic growers, I have found that rural organic growers do not want to succumb to this corporate model of food. They want to resist corporate dependency upon industrial food anyway they can and producing their own food allows them to do that.

“Being A Good Steward Of The Land”

A second theme that emerged was “being a good steward of the land”. Frank, Darryl, Carol, Lucy, and John all used the phrase “good steward of the land” when I asked them what motivates them to grow their food organically. Katie, Rick, and Carl all said similar answers, but did not use that exact phrase. Before furthering my discussion about being a good steward of the land, my analysis of this of theme reflects Marx’s belief of “species-being” (Marx, 2008). While living within a capitalist world, we start to loose our natural way of living. In other words, capitalism robs us from what the natural way of living by making us alienated from our natural way of living. From talking to these organic growers, I received the feeling that these growers understand that industrial agriculture has taken away our ability to create out own food and they want to practice the natural way of living.

Even though this is a more micro reason for resisting dependency, this theme was shown to be on a more personal level then the first theme was. Each organic grower took
pride and personal satisfaction into knowing that they have created something with their own hands instead of buying it at a store. All growers have the ability to be private at their own property to achieve this personal gain. From “being a good steward of the land” different sub-themes occurred, such as using nature as your tool, soil diversity, and having value of their labor.

**Using Nature As Their Tool**

**Frank**

All of the respondents had a lot to say about the issue of environmental impacts from pesticides and GMOs. Frank told me that we are playing God when we are introducing GMOs and pesticides into the natural environment. By disrupting the natural process that has existed for billions of years, we have run a high risk of damaging the natural environment in ways that we are not capable of ever fixing. The natural environment, he said, has existed for billions of years of blowing seeds through the wind to achieve reproduction. Since this is the natural process of how our planet exists, then it cannot tell the difference between seeds that have been laced with pesticides and GMO seeds. Since they can’t, the wind will pick up these seeds and introduce them into the natural environment. This is a perfect example of GMO salmon in disrupting the natural environment (Boyd, 2013). Frank told me that this is serious global issue.

When I asked Frank how he grew his food without pesticides and GMOs he looked me and said: “Let me tell you something, there are two ways to do this. One is with nature and one is against it”. His words were powerful. He continued saying that
gardening with nature is the more natural and working against nature represents the way food is produced by the methods used by industrial agriculture. This was discussed in Chapter 2 by the many environmental threats from industrial agriculture. He explained that he actually uses the natural environment around him, for example, by adding praying mantises and ladybugs (which are natural predators) to his garden to help with the bugs that would potentially eat his produce. The only problems he faces are natural viruses that come into contact with his plants. He told me that by working with nature he becomes a “good steward of the land” and brings balance to everything around him. This was something he told me gave him a sense of doing right towards the natural environment.

**Darryl**

Similarly, Darryl told that the natural environment is damaged overtime by the use of GMOs and pesticides and how he did not want to be a contributor to this. Again he used the term “being a good steward of the land” when he was discussing how and why he did organic growing. Darryl’s process of organic growing has allowed him to create his very own ecosystem around his house. For one, he has built bird nests around his garden that attract birds that eat bugs that may damage his plants. He also places any praying mantises, frogs, or green snakes that he finds within his garden. Also, his chickens, that are free range, help by eat any bugs on the plants. He told me that you “can” put pesticides on the products but why would you when you have nature on your side. I asked him where he learned all of this and he said just by years of watching the natural process of the earth.
Katie

Katie, who was fairly new to organic gardening, found it difficult at first to grow produce without the use of pesticides. Over the course of her experiences, she also came to the same conclusion that it is more beneficial and productive to use nature as your tool. By being more natural in her growing process she told me that she has had more productive bean and tomato crop. She quotes: “It’s the natural way”.

Carol

Carol, practices being a “good steward of the land” through her growing because she understands that by using pesticides it has put the honeybee population at risk. Carol told me that we cannot put one chain link out of the link and not expect it to still remain in tack. What she meant was by killing one particular organism with pesticides, you can’t expect it to not affect other species in the natural order. Again, Carol was very prideful of her religion and told me that by balancing everything together through biodiversity is the way that God intended it. When I asked her how she uses nature as a tool she told me that the chicken picks off the bugs on the tomatoes, compost through cow manure, and having frogs in her garden help with the bug population. She adopted customs from Native Americans for inspiration in her growing food because she says that they are the ones that created the wheel, so why should we reinvent it? Using nature as her tool gives her a sense of pride in what she produces for her own family.

Rick and Carl

Rick and Carl both have a religious background where they told me that it was God’s calling for them to work with nature and to create balance. They both claim that by not doing things with nature, you loose a true sense of who you are in the process.
When I asked them how they both helped to use nature, they tell me that they move the cattle around the field everyday so they have fresh grass to eat. The new grass is grown from the manure of the cattle that was once in that particular spot. Rick and Carl have no problems in their cattle business and they praise God and through the balanced nature they have created.

**Lucy**

Lucy told me that it all boils down to respect and whom you give it to. She told me that we must respect our body, our food, and our land. Going back to her story about how her Dad previously claimed that the soil did not have enough worms because of how much he had damaged it from pesticides. She told me that worms are an essential component to having healthy soil. I asked her what she did to help create this biodiversity in her own organic gardening and she said that by not allowing pesticides and GMO seeds into her community and by letting nature take its course, her community garden is able to produce healthier crops. Also, she said that it allows her to build community amongst many people who feel the same about this issue.

**John**

John also told me that being a “good servant of the land” is a major contribution to how you grow food. By creating a bio-diversity and balance through nature then you are able to create a more ethical way of growing food for the planet. Since the use of pesticides can even make it into the plant structure, he says that simple washing these products is not good enough anymore. Since simple washing is not good enough anymore, then it gives him the feeling that pesticides are becoming an unnatural part of the environment. By using pesticides, we don’t value waiting for our food. Organic
growing takes longer to mature and this gives him the personal feeling that he has used nature as his own tool. Even though it may take longer, he knows that he has a sense of belonging within the natural environment.

**Proper Soil Diversity**

Another sub-theme that was common amongst the respondents was their desire to create proper soil diversity. Monoculture farming leads to soil damage and the loss of its nutrient value. Monoculture farming is widely used in industrial agriculture. Overtime, this damages the natural soil (Hewitt, 2012). Each organic grower that I talked to explained that one reason they choose to grow organic is because they bring better soil diversity for the planet. These discussions were brought up when they talked about “being a good steward of the land”.

**Frank**

Frank was the first to truly express his interest in creating proper soil diversity. I have already discussed how Frank used to use pesticides on his products and that overtime, he started to realize that his soil was just not as healthy as it once was. This was the initial response to what started him into his organic growing. Once he started to practice soil diversification through means of roll covers and compost, he was able to see a much better rate of produce. He told me that by adding more organic soil into the earth, he felt good knowing that he had helped to create a natural environment that allowed many different multi-organisms and fungi the ability to grow.
Darryl

Darryl’s previous farming experience led him to understand how monoculture farming effected and damaged the soil because you must put nutrients back into the soil. This is something that must be done or else the soil will be worn out through years of adding more and more chemicals. He commented on how amazing it is that commercial farmers will just plant the same crops year and year without rotating their crop. He said that this is very difficult on a large scale because the objective is to gain as much money as possible by feeding the world. When I asked him if this was why he chose to garden organically, he told me yes because he believed that damaging the natural soil was very unethical. He told me that if you want to be a gardener, you couldn’t be a lazy gardener. It takes time to properly manage the soil and natural environment around you. Speaking about the soil he quotes, “If you take care of it, then it will take care of you.”

Carol

Carol fears for the way soil is managed throughout the process of industrial agriculture. Her occupation is in the medical field and she claims that a major contributor to health issues is the damage that we have done over the past 50-60 to the soil. She hasn’t always lived on the property that she lives on now and she told me that she was thrilled to see that the previous neighbors had managed proper soil diversity. This allowed her to organically grow much easier and more efficiently. Carol also takes care of her nephew during the day and it makes her feel better knowing that he can play in the soil and not have to worry about any pesticides or chemicals getting into contact with him.
Rick and Carl

A major part of Rick and Carl’s venture into raising cattle was that they wanted to give the earth back healthy soil. Before buying their land they said that the soil was awful. According to them, the previous residents did not manage their land properly. In other words, they did not give back to the earth in the ways they should have. They could just tell that the soil was very dry and lacked nutrients. By allowing their cattle to free-roam, their manure gives back to the earth in the ways that it needed. I asked them if they believed that soil diversity was essential to a healthy environment, which they both agreed. They claimed that they were not happy with how industrial agriculture was managed and what it did to the natural environment. They both wanted a stress free environment to live in and that giving back to the earth was giving back to God.

Lucy

I have mentioned Lucy’s father’s issue with the depletion of his worms in his soil. Lucy told me that this was one major reason that she wanted to grow her good organically because she did not want to have a negative environmental impact anymore on the soil. She expressed her views on how soil diversity was essential to growing food and having a healthy environment. Without worms, the soil cannot have the proper nutrients that it needs to put into the food. After seeing the success that her father had from not using chemicals anymore, her family started to have gardens that were organic. She told me that they never used chemicals again because they simply did not need it.

Katie

Katie expressed her views on the subject through telling me that by using chemicals you are killing a living organism and chemicals cannot distinguish between the
unwanted organisms and the organisms that are needed to help sustain healthy soil. Her family owns a farm of 400 acres where they all help with proper soil diversity, so it is very easy for her to use the soil off her land for the production of her food. Again, she was worried about her son’s health from industrial agriculture food. She told me that since she doesn’t use pesticides and only uses healthy soil she truly feels that she has made a difference in her son’s health. She told me that if she did not take care of the soil then she would be taking away proper nutrients that are needed.

**John**

John spoke about the environmental impacts of improper soil diversity. He told me that by over using chemicals in the soil, it truly damages the nutrients within it. Since industrial agriculture rushes the process, the soil does not take time to develop a proper bio-diversity. What he advocates for is more long-term growing of food because it is so much better for the soil and the natural environment around us. I asked him how much longer he thought that we could continue to damage the soil and he told me that the unintended consequences are unknown but he knew that they would not be good. He told me that the natural environment works in a very long-term process and it will take the natural environment a long time to overcome the damages brought on by industrial agriculture. The only problem is that humans are not going to be able to wait the same time that the natural environment will take. He quotes, “Nature finds a way to get it self back, nature will endure”. He just believes that we, as a species, cannot. He told me that he feels more productive towards the environment, knowing that he produces food in his garden that is organically grown and practiced through means of proper soil diversity.
Valuing Their Work

John and Katie

The value of producing their own food was an essential part for why they chose to grow organic food. Marx (2008) believed that individuals are inherently productive. Capitalism alienates individuals from the commodity that they produce (Marx, 2008). They all expressed a feeling valuing their own labor in ways that buying food at a grocery store cannot give. John was one that told me that by hard work and independence in his own decisions he was able to have more of a control over his life. In other words, it created a sense of belonging and a strong work ethic. He told me that overtime we have lost this essential part of our lives and growing your own food can give you that back. Katie told me that she also valued her own work in growing food. She quotes: “I am working for what I am eating and I appreciate it more that if I just bought it”.

Lucy

Lucy also told me that by not growing your own food you lose an essential part or component towards you’re natural being. She told me that growing food is something that you should value. Lucy travels to China a lot and she commented on how much China values their food in ways that we simply do not. They have blocks of farmers market, she said, where they buy fresh produce everyday. She said that a major problem with this country is that we do not have individuals growing and valuing their own accomplishments anymore. Everything is quick and cheap today when it really should not be. I asked her how she felt about growing her own food and she told me that it gave
her purpose and a stronger work ethic towards the land. Also, by starting her community

garden, she hopes to spread this value and work ethic towards others in the community.

**Rick, Carl, and Carol**

Rick, Carl, and Carol were very out-spoken about their religious views when it
came to growing their own food. Rick and Carl told me that it gave them spiritual
purpose in their journey with God. Rick told me that it was Gods calling to get him to
become a cattle farmer and provide for the community. Rick and Carl both told me that
by doing God’s will, their actions of growing organic food valued by both themselves
and God. Carol told me that since God created Adam and Eve within a garden, our
natural state in a garden. She told me that by years of studying and reading the Bible, she
realized that being around a garden and growing your own food is something that God
values. Since God values it, then she finds value in her own hard work and ethic for
providing food for her family.

**Darryl**

Darryl finds value in his work through being with nature and helping it thrive. He
told me that he loves waking up knowing that he can do something productive today
instead of just going to the grocery store and buying it all. Even though he claims that
age is catching up with him and it is becoming more and more difficult to produce food
each year, he still takes pride in creating his own ecosystem around him. His value can
also be shown in his passion for his chickens. I asked him if he uses the chickens for
meat when they have produced enough eggs. The look on his face showed me that that is
something that he would never even think about doing. He claimed laughing “ Of course
not!” He said that the chickens have helped him through his gardening throughout the years and they are like family to him. He values their work just as much as his own.

Frank

Frank learned to garden from his grandmother when he was just a kid. From learning how to garden from his grandmother, he has always loved gardening. He even told me that a main reason why he moved from Chicago to Kentucky was because Kentucky was a better area to garden. He values the work done by gardening so much that he wanted it to be an essential part in his life. Kentucky gave him and his wife the rainfall and biodiversity needed in order to achieve this life-long goal. One part that Frank values the most out of organically gardening is having control and independence over knowing exactly what he is feeding himself and his wife. He told me that this type of value pride is something that you just cannot have by just simply buying food from a grocery store.

Within my analysis, I have discussed that there are two different levels of analysis to use when studying organic growers. The macro level of analysis shows a resistance against dependency with resistance against pesticides and resistance against GMOs as subthemes. At the micro level of analysis, I showed that organic growers want to be “good stewards of the land” with using nature as their tool, practicing soil diversification, and valuing their work as subthemes. Chapter 6 follows, which will discuss my final findings from the research and my conclusion.
Chapter 6: Findings/Conclusion

Studying the motivations of organic growers has allowed me to understand their motives at both a personal level and beyond. During my interviews and analysis, I have concluded that organic growing is much more than a simple act of gardening. Rather, to the growers in my study organic growing is a mean to resisting industrial agriculture of our food production. Moreover, for these growers, it is also a source of personal satisfaction knowing that they have produced food that is valuable, healthy, and environmentally friendly. Each grower I interviewed shared common views about dependency on food and being a good steward of the land.

Dependency theory was used to explain the relationship between periphery and core. The main objective was to show the same dependency-control relationship exists between rural communities (periphery) and the urban communities (core). Respectively food production was once in the hands of the rural communities because these communities were able to sustain their community by producing food for the community. Over time, the food production has been taken out of the grower’s hands in rural communities and placed under urban-based corporate control. In this study, dependency theory was also used to explain inequality due to capitalist food production and consumption. As food becomes mass-produced, consumers have become very dependent upon the corporate food system. Since the system itself has grown exponentially, industrial agriculture has damaged the quality and value of our food. Each respondent that I interviewed had some type of negative remarks about how traditional ways are lost with the invention of the capitalist control of our food.
Historically, rural communities sustained themselves by producing their own food using traditional methods of gardening or farming. With the establishment of industrial agriculture to mass-produce food for urban cities, rural areas become confused and dependent on the new system. This industrial system rests on the beliefs of establishing control over rural farmers by removing their ability to function independently and sustainably. With this capitalist control over food production rural farmers do not have control over their own production. Insuring profits necessitates the exploitation of the rural growers. Since the latter not have a say in food production anymore, they become dependent upon the corporations that do control the food system.

Their dependency on corporate food robs the farmer of the ability to choose how their food is produced. Since the majority of our food is created with GMOs and pesticides, then farmers and growers become dependent on this new method for producing food. Thus, farmers produce food on the capitalist’s terms. Essentially, they are forced to adopt methods or get out (Berry, 1995).

The organic growers that I interviewed all believed that the power that industrial agriculture has on our food system was not what society needs. I found that through their organic growing, they have found a tool that they can use to use against the power that industrial agriculture has on our society. According to Rhoda H. Halperin (2007) rural individuals from Kentucky resist corporate dependency as a way to revitalize their community, which is called “the Kentucky way” (Halperin, 2007). “The Kentucky way is a cultural idiom that refers to the complex relationships between economy, culture, and kinship” (Halperin, 2007:312). The organic growers I interviewed from Kentucky all agree that dependency exists through our food and they refuse to give into this
dependency. In expressing “the Kentucky way”, through positive resistance, they are able to have control over their own life within a capitalist world (Halperin, 2007). Learning how to grow food organically has given these growers a tool to use to stand up for their own beliefs. Accordingly, back to what Frank told me about how individuals express a lot of their philosophical belief through their actions. I believe that organic growers take this statement to heart.

Through my analysis, I found that organic growers valued their work. A result of dependency is alienation that comes from the capitalist system (Marx, 2008). Rural communities used to thrive on personal work ethic for themselves and the community in which they lived in. With the creation and domination of capitalism in our society, our natural ability to produce food is transformed. The food industry is so different because food is now produced just for profit via the formal rationalization of a corporate production system. Also, I found that the organic growers have a raised consciousness. Karl Marx discussed that our consciousness will become skewed while living in a capitalist world (Marx, 2008). In other words, individuals will develop a false consciousness about what is best for them. The organic growers that I interviewed all showed a raised consciousness about exactly how industrial agriculture exploits society and reinforces a false consciousness.

By studying organic growers’ motivations, I have found that they are able to grow it their own way using nature and not working against it. Whether this is through practicing soil diversity or valuing their own work, they are able to practice being good stewards of the land. Each grower was concerned that individuals do not get to experience what it is like to grow their own food because they just simply run to the
grocery store and purchase whatever is available. By growing their own food, they do not experience alienation form the capitalist system. In other words, growing food themselves gives them what comes naturally, what Marx called species being (Marx, 2008). In sum, according to the organic growers, there is something intrinsically valuable about growing your own food.

Whether this value is gained through knowing what is in your food, being one with nature, or just simply having work ethic to produce something yourself, it is needed for proper human development. In Chapter 3 I discuss the concept of agrarianism to show how these growers have found a way to bring back traditional growing methods. The results found in my research show support for the basic agrarian beliefs are alive and well in rural areas. Growing their own food gives them a sense of identity. Growing our own food is becoming a lost addition to our human nature.

The growers in my sample believed that growing their food organically gives them independence, value, and shows their responsibility towards the environment. During my time spent with organic growers I found that they all have a story that they wanted to tell. Making it clear to me that more research on organic growers needs to be done. The critical paradigm is based on the assumption that researchers should advocate for social change. I am a firm believer that research should acknowledge and solve social problems in society. What better issue to address then our food industry and to make people aware of their dependency on food that poses a danger to their health and well being. We can learn from organic growers that there is an increasing problem in our food production system. We can learn that we have allowed capitalism to gain so much control over what we eat. Food production should not be in the hands of corporations.
Food production should be in the hands of the individuals and communities with which they function. If we do not do more research on organic growers, then we will never get to hear their side. According to Rhoda H. Halperin (2007) one of their respondents quotes: “You must record “the Kentucky way” before it disappears” (Halperin, 2007: 312). Traditional rural lifestyles will start to disappear with more corporate dependency and the lives of rural and urban consumers will cease to be their own.

As a researcher, I wanted to listen to these stories. I hope my thesis continues their story. With more research, we could tell their stories to the rest of the world. Giving consumers these stories to hear, may change peoples minds about how food is produced and hopefully begin to end societies dependency. Organic grower’s knowledge about food production is so valuable for society. It is valuable and vital to our survival. I agree with the organic growers, in saying that I don’t know how much longer society can last producing food this way. Our society once saw a drastic change in the way food was produced and it needs another. We need traditional methods of growing food back before our health and environment is past the tipping point.
“UNLESS

someone like you cares a whole awful lot,

nothing is going to get better.

It’s not.”

-Dr. Seuss, “The Lorax”, 1971
Appendix 1. List Of Questions

1. Please tell me a little about your average farming experience.
2. Why did you get into organic growing?
3. What does organic growing mean to you?
4. What brought you to start growing organic?
5. What methods do you take to make sure that your crops are organic?
6. Do you have any troubles with growing organic?
7. Does the small amount/population of farmers around this area make it harder to farm or does it create a close relationship where you work together?
8. Has there been an increase or decrease in organic farmers? Why?
9. Do you experience any contact from Big-Agriculture? If so, then what type of contact is it?
10. Do you experience any contact from the USDA? If so, then what type of contact is it?
11. How dependent would you consider yourself in organic farming? Do you consider yourself, your own boss?
12. Do you use any pesticides on your products?
13. How do you feel about it when people do you use pesticides on their product? Do you think that it is necessary or damaging to the environment?
14. Are you aware of GMOs? (Genetically Modified Organisms). If so, then what are your views on using this type of farming for the mass?
15. Why do you think GMOs are so popular in our society? Does it have any link to making the products cheaper?
16. Do you think that we, as a society, are dependent upon this new food system?
17. Do you think that organic farmers are fighting this dependence that big business has given us?
18. What environmental impact do you think GMOs have for us?
19. Do you think that GMOs will completely take over one day if we do not fight this dependence?
20. Are GMOs damaging our food?
21. Is our food being destroyed?
22. How much longer can these new systems of food last?
23. What advice would you give future generations about organic farming?
24. Do you believe that soon people will start to realize the impact that GMOs have had on their food and they will fight back as well? In other words, do you think our society will move to being sustainable on organic farming?
25. What do you think we can do help further this process into making our society completely organic again?
Appendix 2. Photos

Frank’s Mushrooms (2.1)  Frank’s Garden (2.2)

Darryl’s Birdhouse (2.3)
Darryl’s Apples (2.4)
Darryl’s Garden (2.5)
Darryl’s Potatoes (2.6)
Darryl’s Bees (2.7)
### Appendix 3. Demographic Table

#### Table-1

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References


