

The local food movement seeks to create an alternative food system, which addresses social and environmental concerns through the rejection of large-scale, industrial agriculture. However, because of its emphasis on consumer purchasing power it is often criticized for being elitist, catering to a primarily white demographic of a high socio-economic class. This study attempts to characterize the local food community in Saratoga Springs, New York, identify perceptions of those both involved and uninvolved, and finally deconstruct the ways in which social culture, among other factors, contribute to both its accessibility and inaccessibility.

Local food community, culinary capital, perceptions, accessibility, farmers' market

“People who have a lot of opportunity, the affluent, love to hear about ... crisis. ‘Oh my god, global warming, we're all going to die.’ For people who have a lot of crisis already, they don't want to hear about another big crisis. They've got sick parents, no health care, all the kind of stuff --

feasible and desirable for everyone to purchase food that it deems “better,” for the health of the environment, society, and the individual.

The food movement calls for a reformation of the mainstream industrial food system. The movement aims to address both social and environmental concerns. As a large consumer of fossil fuels, emitter of greenhouse gasses, and user of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, industrial agriculture is a large contributor to global climate change, responsible for 10-12 percent of anthropogenic emissions (Martinez, 2010). The food movement also targets issues of animal welfare, the rights of those working in the food system, and the accessibility of healthy food. The local food movement, as a subset of the larger food movement, aims to develop and sustain local economies and reduce fossil fuel use by reducing food’s transportation distance. The local food movement capitalizes on consumer purchasing power to fight the monopoly of mammoth food corporations, like Monsanto and Cargill Inc. The local food movement additionally supports food sovereignty -- the right of people, and nations, to define their own food system. Small farms often adhere to sustainable farming practices, and many consumers value local food for the ability it gives them to engage with the people growing their food and learn about their practices. However the local food movement goes beyond this and simply acknowledges food as a fundamental component of life by attempting to strengthen a0 (2 (o a(m) -2 (pt) -p20 () -10 (é2 (-2 (i) -2 (t) - 4

for the consumption of these products and participation in the social culture that surrounds them (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012). However, as a fundamental component of life, food affects every being. Systems of food production and consumption have power and control over many aspects of everyday life. The food *powerhouses* that have arisen, including the local food movement, are capable of marginalizing less privileged populations when creating opportunities and access to food and its production.

The purpose of our research was, through surveying and interviewing residents of the general area of Saratoga in New York state, to explore people's perceptions of the Saratoga Springs local food movement, whether these perceptions influence people's involvement or lack of involvement in the Saratoga Springs local food movement, and explore whether the Saratoga Springs local food movement is accessible and inclusive. Through this research we explored our hypothesis - that the local food movement in Saratoga Springs is based on consumer purchasing and is consequently exclusionary, both economically and socially.

The food movement is expansive, branching into many realms of activism. It reaches communities across the nation through various means, such as grassroots organizations, community education, community supported agriculture (CSA), farmer's markets, restaurants, print publications, websites, and community gardens. In the following literature review, we

almost every aspect of daily life. Many Americans count themselves lucky that this primal need no longer seems to have a place within the borders of their country, thanks to the high production levels of industrial agriculture and the government subsidies imposed by the Nixon

nutritionists, environmentalists, animal welfare advocates, sociologists, and economists, uniting under the common goal of reforming the industrialized food system (Pollan, 2010).

The push for increased consumption of local food is a principal way through which the food movement seeks sustainability, as well as food justice and food sovereignty. Though “local” is a term that has recently gained popularity in food rhetoric, there is no consensus as to its definition in terms of distance between production and consumption. However, it is loosely agreed upon that in the promotion of the economic, social, and environmental ideals for which local food activists advocate, closer is better (Martinez, 2010). In the 2008 Food, Conservation, and Energy Act, the U.S. Congress proclaimed that to be considered a “Locally or regionally produced agricultural food product,” a product must be transported less than 400 miles from its origin, or within the state in which it was produced (Martinez, 2010).

However, the commitment

that conventional, petro-chemical-based and subsidized agribusiness enjoy” (Webber & Dollahite, 2008). Currently, policy surrounding food distribution and labeling are not directly focused on improving and eliminating food deserts.

The views and habits involved people with the means to purchase food that the food movement deems “better,” creates status, a major part of the discourse in the food movement today. Culinary capital, among other types of capital (cultural, economic, etc.), is food patterns that provide a person with “status and power” (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012, p. 2). This can change over space and time (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012). Culinary capital is a “necessary precursor to bio-power,” a concept coined by Foucault, concerning how the body is involved in the process of accepting or rejecting power (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012, p. 4). It is also applied to a new type of self-governance based on how the potential for status from good citizenship influences individual choice (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012). Following or deviating from certain food habits also plays a role in the creation of certain identities (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012). The romanticized view of local, organic farms “[s]imultaneously leads to a more utopian politics in which particular discourses and actions are presupposed by a small subset of relatively privileged people and legitimized through their claim to natural-ness” (Alkon, 2012, p. 673). These views create “a politics of conversion,” where people who do not accept the beliefs and actions as their own are judged (Alkon, 2013, p. 673).

Concerning local food movements specifically, there are critiques of the concept that local food supports the local economy. Allen (2010) argues that this can be problematic for social justice efforts because localities vary in their economic privilege, and if economically privileged localities only focus on their own well-being they do not address justice issues in other localities with less economic privilege. There is also often an assumption that needs to be

questioned, that localities that are part of the local food movement will make “equitable decisions that prioritize the common good” (Allen, 2010, p. 301). The power dynamics in localities means that a variety of interests are not automatically included in the decision making process (Allen, 2010).

Where the dominant food movement is criticized for catering to the elite, the subset of the food justice movement promotes the access of quality food for all and health for everyone involved in the process of production. However, food justice movements are composed mostly of white people (Passidomo, 2013) even while they focus on creating alternative food systems specifically for communities of color (Alkon, 2012). Food justice is an ideology within the food movement that strives to ensure “that the benefits and risks of where, what and how food is grown and produced, transported and distributed, and accessed and eaten are shared fairly” (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010, p. 6). Food justice advocates for “healthy food (i.e., food security) as a

Table 1. Saratoga Springs, NY Race Breakdown (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013)

Our qualitative research employed ethnographic and phenomenological methodologies, utilizing surveys, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation (Cresswell, 1998). We used two main methods of data collection and used similar methods to reach out and locate our sample population. In addition to accessing demographic information from Census data, the majority of our data came from surveys and semi-structured interviews. The research questions

questions, and took an estimated 10 to 15 minute to complete, it provided a quicker way for people to participate in our research, compared to our interviews. The survey consisted of both multiple choice and open-ended (short answer) questions. The survey begins with three multiple-choice questions, geared at understanding respondents' definition of local food (Appendix A). The remainder of the survey focuses on describing perceptions and defining characteristics of the Saratoga Springs local food movement. The majority of these questions were designed to be open-ended, allowing respondents to answer the questions to the best of their ability and whichever way they interpreted them. The survey finishes with a brief demographics section.

We distributed our survey using two methods: informational flyers and word of mouth. The flyers provided an explanation of our research, contact information, and a link to our SurveyM

Respondent semi-structured interview data was thematically coded and identified for common themes and ideas that arose (Creswell, 2003). Data from the structured online and pen and paper surveys and semi-structured interviews were coded in a similar fashion in order to determine prevailing perceptions of the local food movement. Respondent data was also organized thematically and put in a quote chart. Additionally, we utilized descriptive narratives to organize our data, as, according to Schneller, “Descriptive narratives proved useful in our

wide-ranging (Figure 1). When given several criteria, both in mileage and region, with which to define the boundaries of local food, there was no majority indicating that a single definition prevails in Saratoga Springs.

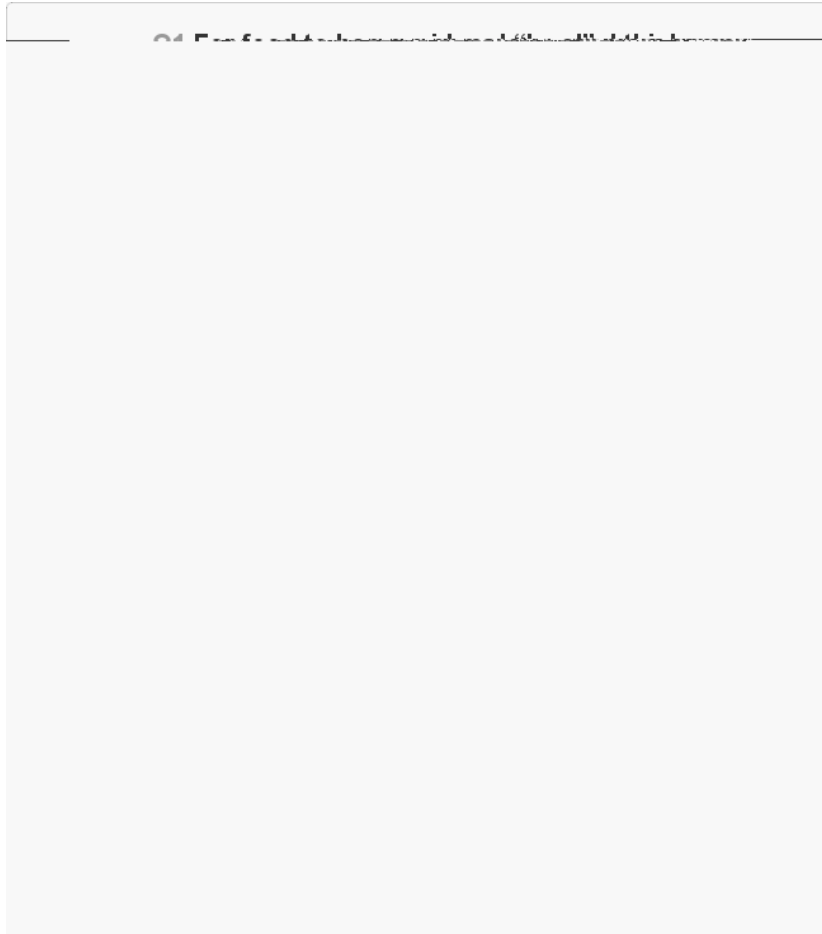


Figure 1. Survey Results Showing Respondents Definitions of “local” food.

Similarly, there was no consensus on whether or not the size or scale of a company, business, or production operation affects the locality of their products. Some respondents expressed that local products must necessarily be produced at small, “family or community farms,” while others applauded local business, like Stewart’s, for expanding, and continued to consider their products local, despite the larger size of the operation.

In many cases, interview respondents interpret

and vending at various farmers' markets in the area (Figure 3). The two farmers' markets located in Saratoga Springs, the Spa City Market and the Saratoga Springs Farmers' Market, were also identified, in addition to the market in Troy. Many of the farmers who vend at these markets were specifically identified; especially those that also offer CSAs, including Denison, Kilpatrick, Hand Melon, Malta Ridge, Saratoga Apple, and Battenkill Creamery. Grocery stores were also mentioned as a part of the movement. Specialty stores like Four Seasons, Healthy Living and buying groups or co-ops were named as major actors, while larger grocery stores like Price Chopper and Hannaford were mentioned for increasing the amount of local food and local food products on their shelves. Skidmore College was also mentioned as a player of the movement because of Sustainable Skidmore's work both with the college and in town, and for its efforts to incorporate local food into the school's dining hall. Lastly, civic organizations (NGOs) like Sustainable Saratoga and Saratoga PLAN were mentioned as part of the local food movement because of their leadership in the environmental movement in Saratoga.

Fifty South

Comfort
Kitchen

Forno

Jack
Dillon's
Farm to
Fork
Cuisine

[sprayed], being local. But I think anything coming right from the ground has got to have more vitality than something that's imported... would you choose a local apple or an organic apple?

There was a recurring perception that local or organic food meant spray or pesticide free even though this often isn't the reality. Instead the question should be what kind of spray or pesticides are used? The legacy of Saratoga Springs's mineral springs and spas were also used as a unique defining factor of the local food movement. When asked to describe the movement, one respondent identified it as a "rare" movement because of the wellness and healthy conscious mentality present in Saratoga Springs, especially in relation to local food.

While support of various organizations, businesses, farms, and healthy, fresh lifestyles were mentioned, this approach to support and be involved with local food is heavily dependent on a consumer base. We found that some respondents considered themselves involved because they either gardened or maintained a small-scale farm that produced enough yield to supplement their daily intake. As one respondent explains,

We grow a lo

Farmers' Market as an icon of the movement, there was also a huge discrepancy between whether or not the local food culture in Saratoga Springs was accurately described as a movement. During our interviews, a variety of opinions were produced in response to our classification of a local food movement. While some respondents didn't comment on the term movement, many respondents addressed the term movement and described the local food culture as a trend instead. One respondent explored this idea by stating,

Most commonly, respondents described those involved in the local food community in Saratoga Springs as people who care, spec

However, often underlying many of these seemingly neutral responses implications that the respondents knew what “good food” is and that uninvolved people are simply unaware of the benefits of local food or don’t care enough to purchase it. While some respondents implied that

Saratoga Springs farmers' market compared to Price Chopper, one consumer said, "Well they're higher. But it's fresh you know. And I understand that. It's fresh and usually better. You get some taste out of it. Some of that [non-local] stuff there's just no taste to it."

Despite this, there are several programs that currently exist to address the economic inaccessibility of local food. The farmers' market accepts state funded economic assistance programs like Economic Benefit Transfer (EBT) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which has a program specific to the farmers' market, the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). Denison Farm, for example, also works to make their CSA shares more accessible with low-

when purchasing food. Many respondents express

However, for all of these locations seasonality is a different kind of time constraint. Many respondents mentioned that they only go to a farmer's market or buy local food elsewhere in the summer because that is when certain produce is available or that is when they get around to going.

Awareness

The issue of awareness is twofold, with a lack of awareness both within the community those involved and those uninvolved. Much of this is attributed to a lack of transparency and adequate labeling. Many respondents spoke of the need to engage in "detective work," in order to find products that they could be sure were local. Because they felt local products were not well-labeled, these consumers felt the need to search among many products for those that were local and read the existing labels closely to ensure that they didn't fall prey to the use of the term as a marketing technique. However, one producer interviewed also believed that consumers of local food don't have an intimate enough knowledge of their food systems to know which questions to ask when trying to overcome local washing.

According to respondents there is also a lack of awareness about local food culture and buying practices among people who don't already live within its sphere of influence. Many within the local food community contend that shopping at the farmers' market can actually be much less expensive than the grocery store, but this necessitates knowing how to navigate the market, purchase smartly, and then store products bought in bulk. Through participant observations we found that if purchasing loc

The belief was also expressed that these barriers are also used as excuses, and could be overcome

While many of our respondents saw the culture surrounding local food to be inclusive and celebratory, the culture was also described as being a part of a social club, a place to see and be seen. One respondent captured the social atmosphere well by saying, “the rest of the world that comes into the Saratoga Springs Farmers’ Market are people that it’s almost cool to be there and to be seen there. It’s a social as much as a food-gathering place”. In addition to being a social club, the movement has also taken on a certain air of competition among consumers – who can be the better ‘local’. Another respondent describes the feeling of competition by saying, “What the hell do I do with this bushel?! Photograph it. Post it. Show everybody what a good local you are”. The idea of being a “good local” further supports the idea of an elitist environment within the local food movement. In addition to being competitive, a lack of support or camaraderie is described best by one respondent, “I feel like [the local food movement hasn’t] taken on an air of let’s support each other, let’s eat healthy. Like I eat better than you, type of thing... It’s more like a condescending attitude”. While inclusive to those involved, the local food movement was seen by many as an unwelcoming environment, if not already a part of the ‘club’. Tying back into the barrier of price, the elitist, unwelcoming culture is articulated by one respondent who views this atmosphere as problematic, “I think there’s that kind of elite class of people that are drawn to, unfortunately. What those markets represent sometimes doesn’t feel very inclusive to people of certain income levels and that’s something that could get worked on.” The respondent’s reference to the values or culture a farmers’ market represents connects back to many of the previously listed barriers. While smaller, easier to combat barriers can exist with the local food community, the general atmosphere surrounding a specific location or business is seen as exclusive and unwelcoming to a particular group of people, then the culture surrounding that place becomes inaccessible.

Connecting the Themes

Our data overlapped in many areas and was often able to fit in multiple themes. These themes also had many possible connections between them. Our results closely matched many of the themes described by Julie Guthman (2011) in her study of farmers market and CSA managers in California. She asked explicitly about race, which we did not do, and spoke more generally about alternative food. Many of her respondents also mentioned lack of awareness and values as barriers and also described alternative food as a lifestyle, which were the main themes in our results concerning respondents' perceptions of people that are uninvolved. She describes the alternative food rhetoric, exemplified by phrases like "if they only knew," as being coded as white and also says "it not only works as an exclusionary practice, it also colors the character of food politics more broadly and may thus work against a more transformative politics" (Guthman, 2011, p. 264). One of our respondents echoed this rhetoric: "People who are aware, they are going to be supportive of it because they know. It's kind of like once you know you can't go back to not knowing". Other respondents assumed that people who do not have access to local

exclusion in the local food movement in Saratoga Springs. Because respondents in our study often equated local food with healthy or organic food, Guthman's (2011) study on alternative food is made more comparable to our findings.

Our results demonstrate a clear connection between local food and the space it is found in, and therefore both of these factors must be considered when trying to understand accessibility. Another factor that was connected with the idea of accessibility was the presence of family. Interestingly the point was made that someone having a family and caring for their health was often a reason for being involved with local food but others, sometimes the same people, said that people with families could often not take the time to be involved with local food. This again brings in the idea that many respondents focused on people's values. Respondents also sometimes connected these differences to the socioeconomic class of the family though this was not always the case. The respondents' perceptions of people that are involved had a tendency to focus on socioeconomic class more than ability or willingness to pay while respondents' perceptions of people that are uninvolved tended to focus on the lack of willingness to pay over

institutionalized system of support of local food, that didn't exist in Saratoga Springs. We kept the use of the term throughout our research for consistency, and because there did not seem to be a better term for the culture of local food in Saratoga Springs. The idea of calling the culture a local food trend instead of a movement was mentioned by several of our respondents. However, by the end our data collection and analysis, we decided that the best way to describe the culture surrounding local food was to name it the Saratoga Springs local food community. The lack of organized leadership and mass social change directed us away from the continued use of the term movement. Instead, we think the trend of local food has developed a social community within Saratoga Springs that has established itself as a separate sector of the larger community.

We asked respondents if there is anything they would like to change about the local food movement in Saratoga Springs and received a large variety of responses. The most common response was to make it available in stores like Wal-Mart, Price Chopper, and Stewart's. Other responses mentioned by more than one person were having farmers' markets open more often, making it possible to get involved in more ways than purchasing local food (i.e. community or personal gardens), there should be more local food school programs, more outreach, encourage more diversity in the local food movement, less competition for local food producers or distributors, more conversations to be had surrounding accessibility, and that current local food consumers should ask the next layer of questions to avoid local-washing. However, many also said that the movement was naturally growing and would expand organically of its own volition. A few outlying opinions stood out to us. One producer suggested a change in the focus of local food marketing: "We're really moving more once again into community service agriculture, not supported. Where, 'what do you want, you can choose it, whenever you want it, if you don't want it now, don't worry' ...Well, I think it will be in service of the wealthy. I don't think it will

really be in service of those in need”. She also discussed her approach to target customers new to local food as “meeting them where they are”. For further research one respondent suggested “one way perhaps to see how much the local food or sustainable food culture permeates an area would need to look at what is served at non-food related

inclusive local food community, which could in turn contribute to more sustainable environmental practices. Exposure to local food in a familiar context may interest more people in connecting with the origins of their food in new ways. By increasing accessibility of local food, it may become an avenue to address larger social problems, which, as Passidomo (2013) suggests, should be considered more. For any new project aiming to increase the accessibility of

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Local Food Perceptions Survey

For the purposes of this survey we are referring to the culture surrounding local food of Saratoga Springs, as the Saratoga Springs local food movement. This includes the collection of individuals and organizations that support the local food system and the interactions among them.

If questions or concerns arise, please contact our research advisor, Andrew Schneller at aschnell@skidmore.edu.

1. For food to be considered “local”, I think it must come from (circle all that apply)...

- a. within my city
- b. within my county
- c. within my state
- d. within my region (i.e. the Northeast)
- e. within my country
- f. 50 miles from its origin
- g. 100 miles from its origin
- h. 200 miles from its origin
- i. 400 miles from its origin
- j. I do not know
- k. other: _____

2. In your opinion, what does it take for food to be considered “local”?

- a. I do not know
- b. It must be locally grown
- c. It must be produced by a local business or company
- d. It must be either locally grown __ produced by a local business or company
- e. It must be both locally grown ____ produced by a local business or company
- f. Other condition: _____

3. Consider a product that is produced by a local business or company, for example bread. For the bread to be considered a local food product, how many of its ingredients need to be local?

- a. All
- b. None
- c. Less than 50%
- d. More than 50%
- e. I do not know
- f. Other: _____

1. How would you describe Saratoga Springs's local food movement?

Please describe any specific organizations, institutions, and/or businesses that you think are involved in the Saratoga Springs local food movement.

When you think of people who are *involved* in the local food movement, what characteristics come to mind?

c. When you think of people who are *uninvolved* in the local food movement, what characteristics come to mind?

d. Describe the leadership, if any, of the Saratoga Springs local food movement

e. Are there any other defining factors that you would use to describe the Saratoga Springs local food movement?

2. Do you consider yourself to be involved in the Saratoga Springs local food movement? If No,

Yes

No

3. If you *do* consider yourself involved in the Saratoga Springs local food movement...

a. Please describe how exactly you are involved.

a. Why don't you consider yourself to be involved?

b. Would you like to be involved in the Saratoga Springs local food movement?

No

Yes

I do not know

c. If , why are you *not interested* in getting involved? If , what has stopped you from getting involved up until now?

5. If you could change anything about the Saratoga Springs local food movement, would you?

Yes

No

I do not know

If , what would you change? Please be specific.

6. Please rate how inclusive you think the Saratoga Springs local food movement is
Defining inclusive as: welcoming and accessible to everyone, not limited to certain people

3. Years in living in Saratoga Springs?

- a. 0 - 2
- b. 3 - 5
- c. 6 - 10
- d. 11 - 20
- e. 21 - 30
- f. 31 +
- g. I am not a resident. I am a resident of _____.

4. Age:

- a. 18 - 23
- b. 24 - 29
- c. 30 - 39
- d. 40 - 49
- e. 50 - 59
- f. 60 - 69
- g. > 70

5. Gender:

- a. female
- b. male
- c. other _____

6. Race:

Please choose the race(s) and/or ethnic group(s) that you most closely identify with.
(Circle all that apply).

- a. African American/Black
- b. Asian American/Asian/Pacific Islander
- c. Latina(o)/Hispanic American
- d. Native American/American Indian/Alaskan Native
- e. Arab American/ Arab
- f. White/European American
- g.

- b. \$1 - \$10,000
- c. \$10,000 - \$20,000
- d. \$21,000 - \$30,000
- e.

13. Please circle all that apply:

I am a member of, volunteer for, or work for an environmental organization

I compost

I recycle

Political affiliation: _____

I have health care

I volunteer for a political or civic organization on a regular basis

I vote in local elections every year

I garden

I read a newspaper every day

Interview Guide-Local Food Perceptions Capstone

We would like to thank you for taking the time to talk with us today.

We are doing this research as part of our Senior Research Capstone for our Environmental Studies majors at Skidmore College in order to understand peoples' perceptions of the Saratoga Springs local food movement and their reasons for uninvolvement or involvement. Through our research we hope to gain insight into ways the Saratoga Springs local food movement can be more inclusive.

All information will be used anonymously. Do we have your permission to record our conversation today?

Please be as honest as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your opinions.

We would like to talk with you for about an hour. If you need to take a break to use the bathroom etc. just let us know!

Considering what we have told you, do you give consent to share information we can use as part of our research?

Any questions?

- *What differentiates local food from non-local food besides the main defining factors (e.g. is it also always sustainable?)*
- Do you ever encounter local food when doing your food shopping?
 - *Does it seem to differ to the non-local food available?*
 - *How often?*
 - *What products?*
- Do you ever purchase local food when doing your food shopping?
 - *What makes you decide to or not?*
 - *How often?*
 - *What products?*
- Where could you find local food in the area?
 - *Have you ever heard of or visited the Saratoga Springs Farmers Market?*
 - *Have you heard of or are familiar with any farms in the area?*
- Why do you think the Farmer's market price is the way it is?
- For the purposes of this survey we are referring to the culture surrounding local food of Saratoga Springs, as the Saratoga Springs local food movement. This includes the collection of individuals and organizations that support the local food system and the interactions among them.
- Examples: Grocery stores, restaurants, farms, Farmer's Market*
- Please describe participants of the Saratoga Springs local food movement.
 - *Perceptions of others involved and uninvolved*
 - **How do your perceptions of participants affect your level of involvement?*
 - *Do you know people personally that are involved and uninvolved?*
 - *Examples: consumers, farmers, farm workers*
- Describe leadership of the Saratoga Springs local food movement.
 - *Can be in various organizations etc. and don't need to be connected or related.*
 - *Examples of specific individuals?*
- Other defining factors?
 - **Organizations*- ex: Farmer's Market, Healthy Living, own garden, etc.?*
- Do you think there is a dominant Saratoga Springs food culture or multiple food cultures? How does the Saratoga Springs local food movement fit into this?
 - **Where have you heard this information from (newspapers, friends, etc.)?**
- To what extent do you consider yourself to be involved in the Saratoga Springs local food movement?
 - *Reasons for uninvolved/involvement*
 - *How you're involved (if applicable): how often, what ways?*
 - *Would you like to be involved at all/more? If so in what ways? What has stopped you? If not, why are you uninterested?*
 - *How did you first get involved/interested (if applicable)?*
- If you could change anything about the Saratoga Springs local food movement, would you?
 - *If yes, what would you change?*
 - *Ideas for making this change happen?*
 - **Would you like the role of people involved or uninvolved to change?*
- Do you think there's a need for local food and people and related organizations involved with local food in your community? Why or why not?

