

**A TWO-PART CASE STUDY OF TROY COMMUNITY FARM'S CSA PROGRAM**

*QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF MEMBER RETENTION AND ATTRITION AND  
CHANGES IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR ASSOCIATED WITH MEMBERSHIP*



by

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## **ABSTRACT**

A qualitative study was conducted with a subset of the Troy Community Farm CSA members to examine membership attrition and retention, to explore the concept of community within CSA, and to investigate the possibility of behavior change associated with membership. The results indicate that members stay with Troy CSA if their preferences are met. These preferences include: (1) access to high quality, organic produce, (2) moral satisfaction from supporting a local farmer and philosophies that resonate with the consumer, (3) exposure to new foods, (4) being a part of community, and (5) shopping close to home for convenience. Attrition within Troy CSA occurs when the members (1) have a strong preference for self-selected vegetables, (2) do not feel like they are a part of the community, and/or (3) perceive that they are not being treated fairly. The data also suggest that community for Troy CSA is defined as conceptual and is based on perceived shared interests among the members. Behavior change is associated with the innate structure of CSA and affects members' food consumption, consideration for produce seasonality, and appreciation for farming. The presence of these changes influences whether an individual will retain their membership.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

It has been established that habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation are the greatest threats to biological diversity. While ongoing efforts to protect and restore terrestrial and aquatic habitats are a vital component of the conservation movement, particular attention must be paid to human consumption (Meffe and Carroll 1997). Environmental degradation and consumer behavior are familiar bedfellows, as the acquisition of material goods requires resources available in nature, resources that are shared by all other levels of biodiversity. The consumer footprint can now be seen throughout the earth's ecosystems and as the human population continues to climb and as its consumptive behavior becomes increasingly voracious and complex, conservation possibilities are dwindling (McKibben 2002).

Mobilizing consumers to change their behavior is essential if society hopes to preserve biodiversity and the ecosystems that provide for all life forms, including humans. In the fields of sustainable development and sustainable consumption academics and practitioners are attempting to tackle this issue on many fronts, from transportation to architecture to cleaning products to food. In this study I focus specifically on Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), which, on a small scale, addresses the issue of sustainable food consumption.

CSA successfully integrates the "three-legged stool" concept prevalent in the sustainability movement. This concept stresses the importance of addressing environmental, economic, and social issues simultaneously when pursuing sustainability in a community. CSA addresses environmental issues by emphasizing organic farming, which reduces the amount of pesticide, herbicide, and fertilizer run-off that pollutes water sources. It promotes

farming techniques that preserve soil quality and reduce erosion and even provides foraging habitat for wildlife. It encourages local and seasonal diets, thereby decreasing the environmental impact of transporting food across the country (and the globe) and supporting diversity in agriculture that is more resistant to disease and catastrophe (Fishman 1984). CSA that focuses on produce also promotes a vegetarian diet, which has a much lighter ecological footprint than its omnivorous counterpart (Colorado College 2006).

CSA tackles economic issues by cutting out the middleman (consumers buy their produce directly from the farmer) and through a risk-sharing system between consumers and farmers. These two characteristics of CSA help to ensure that small farmers can make enough of a profit to stay afloat amidst intense competition from large-scale, industrial farms. CSA also addresses social issues by creating a mechanism for building community, providing a “supportive social framework within which individuals can rethink and change their life styles” (Robins and Roberts 1998; DeLind and Ferguson 1999). In some cases, CSA farms and affiliated organizations also institute assistance programs in order to distribute whole foods to lower income communities (MACSAC 2006).

In the face of current environmental challenges it is important to explore working systems, like CSA. In this study I focused on two different, but related, questions pertaining to the CSA membership base of Troy Community Farm, a CSA farm located in Madison, Wisconsin. I worked directly with the managing farmer, Claire Strader, to develop the first research question so that it might provide beneficial data for the farm. Claire suggested that I investigate why CSA members renew or give up their membership (Part I), as having a loyal membership base that renews their membership from year to year would contribute to the economic sustainability of the farm.

For the purposes of this study, membership renewal is referred to as retention and, conversely, discontinuance of membership is referred to as attrition. Based on past literature, I hypothesized that retention would occur when consumer preference for the qualities of CSA membership outweigh a preference for convenience and self-selection of produce (discussed in detail below). These data will hopefully help to inform Troy Community Farm's future marketing and outreach efforts and provide useful information for CSA as a whole.

In the second part of my study, I explored the possibility of positive changes in consumer behavior that are associated with CSA membership (Part II). Past research has established that consumer behavior is influenced, at least in part, by an individual's social context. In light of this I attempted to investigate the potential spillover effects created by an individual's engagement with CSA. In this study I treated CSA as a "consumer community," or a community formed by common interests and shared norms (Agrawal and Gibson, 1999). Through this study I hoped to gain insight into how this consumer community interacts and whether membership affects other consumer choices, specifically assessing whether it leads to "greener" purchasing decisions outside CSA. Establishing models of greening consumer behavior could benefit biodiversity by providing mechanisms that would move society towards sustainability.

### **What is CSA?**

CSA was first developed in Switzerland and Japan in the 1960s (Food Security Learning Center, 2005). Ideologically, "CSA is a collective response (initiated by farmers or consumers) to the ecological, social, and economic problems we are currently facing in agriculture and community" (Barclay 1993). Logistically, CSA involves direct contracts

between a farm and consumers (or CSA members). CSA members pay a farmer, or group of farmers, a lump sum of money at the beginning of the growing season. Then, throughout the months of harvest (which vary regionally) members receive a bundle of produce, specific to the farm and to what is in season at that time. Sometimes other goods will be included such as poultry, cheese, or flowers and some CSA farms focus specifically on non-produce items such as meat or dairy. Products sold through CSA membership tend to be organic or at least grown with reduced dependence on chemicals, though not *all* CSA farms are organic (Cone and Myhre 2000; Farnsworth *et al.* 1996; Delind and Ferguson 1999; Lang 2005).

The basic premise for this system is that all members and farmers share the risks involved in agriculture. Everyone receives more from a rich harvest and less from a poor one. CSA's differ in the level of participation that is solicited from their members. Some *require* that members contribute to the farm in an active way (for example helping to harvest, weed, or plant), and some simply encourage it (Cone and Myhre 2000; Farnsworth *et al.* 1996; Delind and Ferguson 1999). Select farms also offer "working share" memberships where members work a set amount of hours in exchange for their share (Lang 2005).

In 2005 the Department of Agriculture identified 1,144 CSA farms in the United States, though a 2006 database managed by the Robyn Van En Center now lists as many as 1,700 farms (ATTRA 2006; Wilson College 2006). Members of American CSA farms are described as "overwhelmingly white," even for a country whose population is 77% Caucasian (Lang 2005; US Census 2000). Members also tend to be college-educated and middle to upper-middle class citizens. They often share an interest in fresh, organic produce, sustainable food systems, protecting the environment, and supporting local farmers (Delind and Ferguson 1999; Cone and Myhre 2000; Lang 2005).

## **Is CSA Green?**

In reference to CSA members' preference for protecting the environment, it is important to discuss whether CSA is actually "green" and how much it really contributes to the sustainability movement. First, CSA comprises a very small portion of the country's food production and consumption, serving an estimated 270,000 households, which comprises only about 0.3% of the 105,480,101 households in the United States (ATTRA 2006; US Census 2000). Additionally, CSA only provides food during the growing season and, even during that season, almost all member households have to do additional shopping to supplement their share. Therefore, any current contribution to sustainability is negligible, though consumer spillover effects could bolster this impact (addressed further below).

Second, though much of the rhetoric and literature assumes that CSA is an environmentally-friendly alternative to non-organic, mass-produced, and imported foods, there have been few rigorous, comparative, and long-term studies to support this. There is some agreement regarding organic agriculture, which could apply to most of U.S. CSA farms, as approximately 94% of them use organic practices (CIAS 1999). Most studies establish that "organic farms do better than conventional farms at nurturing abundant and diverse populations of plants, insects and other animals. And organic farms release no synthetic pesticides or herbicides, some of which have the potential to harm wildlife" (Gewin 2004, p. 797). Farms that use organic practices also tend to generate less inorganic waste, produce less carbon dioxide, and require less energy "per unit area and per unit of yield" than their conventional counterparts (Gewin 2004, p. 797). On the other hand, though "many studies support the idea that organic methods are good for soil quality...the absence of long-term comparative studies [make] the argument about sustainability...difficult to prove

(Gewin 2004, p. 798). Additionally, current research has not established a difference between conventional and organic farming with reference to phosphorous and nitrate levels in adjacent bodies of water that are affected by agricultural run-off. Nor is there sufficient evidence supporting the assumption that the production and distribution of organically grown food generates less nitrous oxide than the conventional production methods (Gewin 2004).

Another one of the forerunning arguments supporting CSA is the reduction in transportation costs associated with imported foods. Many CSA advocates cite the thousand-plus miles that the average food item travels as good reason to buy locally, but while the difference in flavor and freshness is easy to detect, assessing and comparing energy costs is much more elusive. There is no doubt that the agricultural industry consumes energy (more than any other individual industry) often in the form of fossil fuels. “The total energy used annually in the United States for food production [including petroleum-based fertilizers], processing, distribution, and preparation is about 1600 [liters] of oil per capita per year, constituting 17% of the total per capita U.S. energy consumption” (O’Hara and Stagl 2002, p. 512). However, from the current literature it is difficult to tease apart how much energy actually goes into transportation because different studies have defined the components of agricultural transportation in various ways, which has led to a wide range of estimates from 3-6% to 12-13%. It is equally difficult to compare the transportation costs of fewer, large-scale shipments across great distances (as in industrial agriculture) to multiple, small-scale shipments over short distances (as in CSA), particularly when you attempt to include how individual consumer travel factors into the equation (Hendrickson 2004). Further research is necessary to truly assess how these two systems compare in terms of energy efficiency.

One potential environmental drawback of small-scale, organic CSA farming is reduced efficiency, particularly because it could lead to increased conversion of natural habitat to agricultural land (Gewin 2004). A comparative study in Kansas established that small farms with \$10,000-100,000 in annual revenue were, on average, 25% less productive than large farms with over \$100,000 in annual revenue (Lall et al. 2001). This is relevant for CSA as almost all of these farms are considered small, averaging \$30,425 in annual income from their CSA operations (CIAS 1999). Organic farms also tend to have lower yields than conventional farms (in a 21-year study production was reduced by 20%). However, yields do vary depending on the crop and geographical location. Some crops, such as corn and soy beans, have been produced with similar success using both organic and conventional practices while others, such as asparagus and strawberries grown in the northwestern U.S., are virtually impossible to grow organically. Other efficiency issues arise in organic farming with the need to rotate crops to keep pests from establishing permanent populations and to replenish the nitrogen content in the soil. Some of the most effective nitrogen-fixing plants are not edible and, when planted, take the land out of production. This is particularly difficult for subsistence farmers that are working within a limited amount of space. This efficiency conundrum could be addressed by reducing meat consumption in developed nations as raising livestock is very resource intensive (it takes approximately 27-55 pounds of grain, and proportionately more land, to produce a pound of lean meat). Such dietary revisions would be necessary if the current food demand was to be met by using 100% organic practices. This could be a significant obstacle to conversion (Gewin 2004).

A localized food system has other benefits, however. It increases food security, fosters community involvement, and contributes to strong local economy that provides niches

for a diverse group of small farms. It has the potential to extend the availability of fresh, organic produce to lower income and minority communities through assistance programs and through competitive prices, which was established by a Massachusetts-based study that showed considerable savings enjoyed by CSA members (Cooley and Lass 1995). CSA also educates consumers about food seasonality and encourages them to consider the benefits of eating in season and leads to other beneficial behavior changes such as increased consumption of fresh vegetables and reduced use of meat products and packaged foods (discussed further in the following sections).

### **Troy Community Farm**

There are approximately 24 CSA farms that serve over 1700 members in Madison, and the greater Madison area, in Wisconsin. These farms vary in size serving between 10 and 300 households. Some focus specifically on CSA, while others have a wholesale business and sell at farmers' markets as well. Most farms are outside Madison's city limits and thus have pick-up sites off the farm for consumer convenience. Each farm has an individual profile with varying times of production, share size and selection, price, and different of ways for members to become involved with the farm (MACSAC 2006).

In this context Troy Community Farm is a medium-sized, organic farm of 5 acres that currently serves 110 CSA members. Within this membership base approximately 10 spaces are available for worker share members that spend four hours a week on the farm (a total of 84 hours) and 10 spaces for assisted memberships for low-income individuals and families. At \$400 a share, CSA provides about 55% of the farm's revenue (based on the 2005 income data) though the managing farmer hopes to increase this contribution over time. The

remaining 45% is generated by retail sales at the farm and at two weekly farmers' markets (24%) and a from wholesale revenues (21%). Current wholesale items include herbs and sprouts. In the past the farm also sold other wholesale goods such as frozen huitlacoche and fresh tomatoes, winter squash, kale, leeks, and brussel sprouts, though these programs have been discontinued. The farm employs a farm manager, farm assistant, interns from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, members of a high school farming program, and worker CSA share members (FTG 2006; Claire Strader, personal communication).

Members of Troy Community Farm receive shares from June to October for a total of 21 weekly bundles. Members pick up their shares at the farm where they can buy extras if so desired. This year Troy is also instituting a remote pick-up site on the west side of Madison for consumer convenience and to attract new members. In addition to their share, members get *Urban Roots* (a weekly newsletter with recipes and farm updates), invitations to farm events, and are free to pick flowers and herbs from the farm at any time during the growing season. Members are involved with the farm at varying levels, starting with simply picking up their shares at the farm and extending to volunteering on the land and participating in the Core Group, which works together to help make the farm a success (Friends of Troy Gardens 2006).

Troy Community Farm is unique in a few significant ways. It is one of the few urban CSA farms in the country (a quick internet search revealed fewer than twenty urban CSA farms in the U.S.), and it the only urban CSA farm serving the greater Madison area. Troy is located on the north side of Madison making it more accessible to city residents and more restricted by space (limiting the types of crops that can be grown on the land) than other farms. The farm also differs because it is part of a larger non-profit organization called the

Friends of Troy Gardens (FTG). Non-profit CSA farms comprise less than 2% of American CSA farms (CIAS 1999). FTG was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) in June of 2001 and is funded most significantly by a Kellogg Foundation Partnership grant that connects non-profit organizations with the academic community. The organization therefore has close ties the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and particularly with four professors in the fields of consumer science, agronomy, and urban and regional planning, and landscape architecture. FTG currently oversees 26 acres of land. In addition to the farm, FTG manages community gardens, a high school student worker program called Farm and Field, adult education classes, a kids' garden, natural areas, a prairie restoration site, UW-Madison research projects, and is affiliated with a co-housing development that broke ground in March of 2006 on an additional 5 acres of land that are not managed by FTG (Friends of Troy Gardens 2006). To get a sense of the layout of Troy Gardens see Figure 1.

As a part of a larger organization Troy Community Farm can provide unique opportunities for its members to get involved with the farm and other programs. It also positions the farm for different funding opportunities. Troy's CSA program started in 2002 and is intended to eventually be an economically self-sufficient aspect of FTG. Over the past three years, however, a portion of the farm's labor and equipment costs have been covered by fundraising efforts and grants organized and written by the organization and affiliated academics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The budget for 2006 does not include revenue from grants, but the labor costs will be off-set by grant funding provided for farm interns and Farm and Field workers. The farm is also pursuing a grant to help develop the sprout business.

As mentioned above, there is some concern as to whether CSA is truly a greener alternative to traditional food consumption, and it would be negligent to not address this concern when discussing Troy Community Farm. Troy is a certified organic farm and thus reaps the associated benefits. The organization as a whole focuses specifically on maintaining natural areas and is restoring a small section of native prairie, which provides educational and volunteer opportunities for local residents. As an urban farm, Troy provides potential for engaged learning, community building, and associated behavior change (discussed in the results section of this study). Its close proximity to many of the CSA members reduces the individual energy costs of transportation. Over two-thirds of the participants in this study live within 5 miles of the farm. However, some members do drive from across town (or from other towns) to get their share and most members have to shop for complimentary ingredients anyway (even if they are not buying more vegetables). Troy is therefore an additional shopping destination. There is also the question of efficiency. Are the 5 acres of land farmed by Troy producing as much as they could? If not, are the benefits to the environment and the community worth reduced efficiency? These questions of transportation costs and energy efficiency will require further investigation that goes beyond the scope of this study, but they should be addressed in the near future.

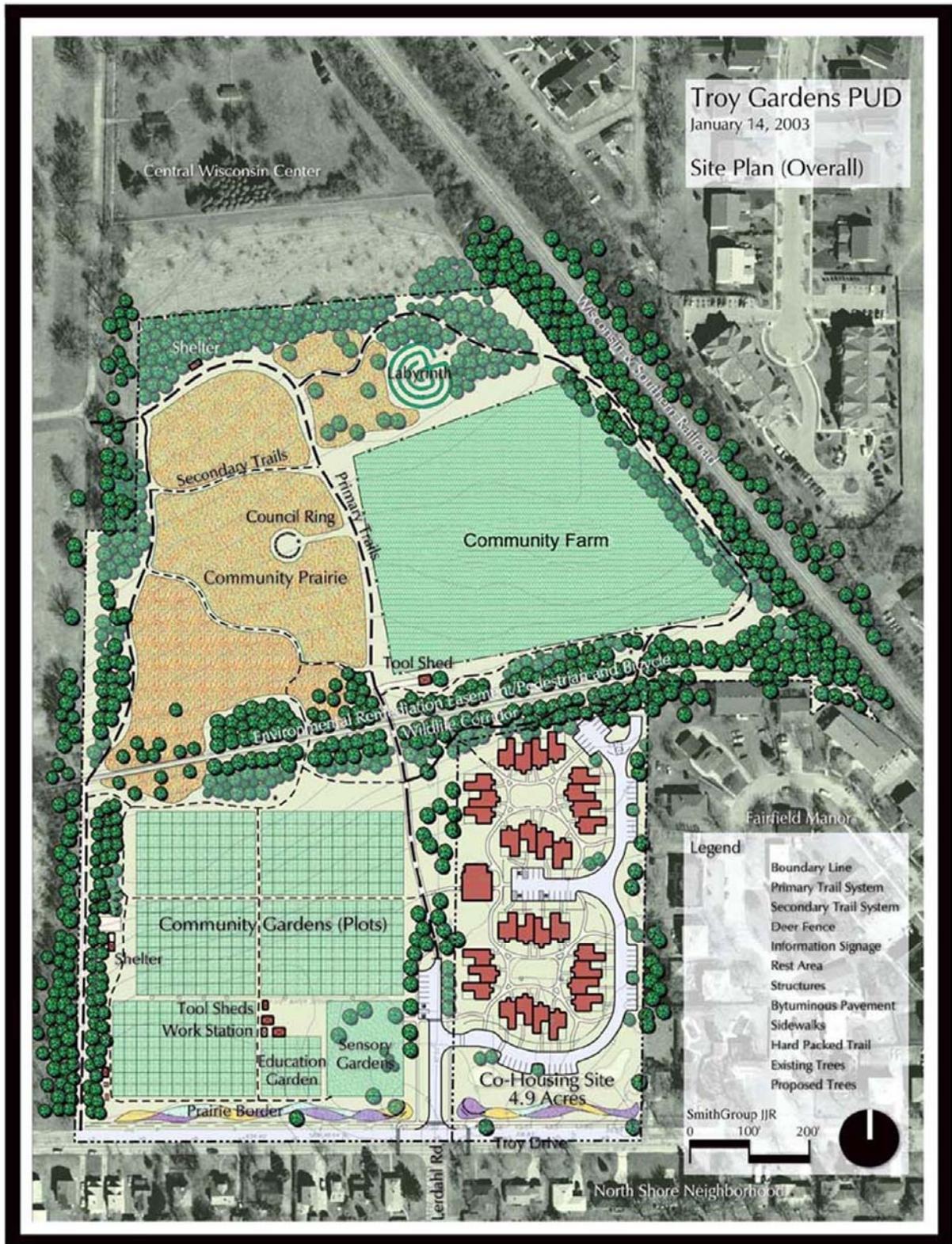


Figure 1: Map of Troy Gardens of which 5 acres is dedicated to Troy Community Farm. Source: FTG Web site: <http://www.troygardens.org/pictures/sitemap.jpg>

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Retention and Attrition in the Context of Consumer Behavior Theory**

Basic consumer economics explains that individuals attempt to maximize the utility gained from the goods or services they purchase. This means that with the amount of resources available (usually measured in dollars), consumers will try to get the most satisfaction from what they buy (Eastwood 1997). Utility is determined by the perceived and, in some cases, experienced quality of the products that are purchased. Lancaster (1966) established that consumers derive utility, not only from the goods themselves, but from the “intrinsic properties” of those goods that are often present in a “bundle” of traits.

In the case of CSA membership this bundle of traits includes not only the quality (freshness and flavor) of the produce itself, but the interactions consumers have with the farm and CSA community and the sense of well-being or moral satisfaction that comes from supporting a system that consumers believe is good for the environment, their health, and the health of their community. It is important to note that economists often differentiate between preferences that are “individual” (such as wanting fresh food), and “social” (such as wanting to support a local farmer). This is relevant because economists typically view individual and social interests as conflicting (O’Hara and Stagl 2002). However, in this section of the study I have defined social interests as preference for moral satisfaction, thereby treating it as a self-interested preference.

The primary reasons for joining CSA involve concern for the environment and food systems, the desire to access fresh and organic produce, and an interest in supporting a local farmer (Delind and Ferguson 1999; Cone and Myhre 2000). However, meeting these goals alone does not guarantee that a farm will retain its members from season to season. One

fairly reliable indicator of retention (when a member renews his or her membership in consecutive seasons) is member satisfaction. In a survey-based study of 204 members of 5 CSA farms in the Mid-Atlantic region Lang (2005) found that membership satisfaction was “positively correlated with the support of alternative agricultural practices, the number of times members visit their respective CSA, the number of years a member has belonged to that CSA, and the likelihood of a person’s share meeting his/her produce needs” (Lang 2005, p. 61). He also found that vegetarians, women, older people, and working members were more likely to be satisfied with their membership. Contrary to his predictions Lang also found that less affluent members were more satisfied with their membership than their wealthier counterparts, that half-share members were more satisfied than full-share members, and that greater distance traveled to the farm correlated with higher levels of satisfaction (possibly because greater distance was connected to greater commitment to the cause).

Results from Cone and Myhre’s study (1998) of eight CSA farms using surveys, participant observation, and interviews of members and ex-members, provides supportive evidence for the correlation between number of CSA visits and retention. They found that the farm with highest retention rate (98%) also had the greatest amount of member participation on the farm. Conversely, they found that the CSA with the lowest amount of member participation had the lowest retention rates (65%). This suggests that active involvement on the farm is positively correlated with renewal of membership. However, Cone and Myhre did not consider other potential differences between these two CSAs. It is possible that there were other contributing factors affecting the retention rates of these farms, such as location and convenience and produce quality and variety, etc.

Another study that focused more generally on the consumption of local foods (from a variety of sources, not just CSA) found that consumers who enjoy cooking (somewhat or very much) are 50% more likely to buy locally produced goods. The authors of this study recommended using this information to market local foods through venues such as cooking shows, recipes, and food festivals (Zepeda and Li 2006). Though this research did not target CSA specifically, it is possible that similar trends would be found among CSA members, particularly because eating seasonally requires good cooking skills, creativity and willingness to adapt. Therefore, one would expect that an individual who enjoyed cooking might be more likely to retain a CSA membership.

On the other hand, individuals who leave CSA generally attribute their decision to inconvenience and a lack of choice in the types and quantity of various produce items. This gets to the heart of the issue. “At a minimum CSA members must change habits of purchasing, processing, and eating to adapt to the production and distribution constraints of CSA farms” (Cone and Myhre 2000). While some individuals welcome change and challenges imposed by a seasonal diet, not everyone wants to adjust, particularly if they value the hallmarks of today’s consumer society: choice and convenience (Farnsworth *et al* 1996 and Cone and Myhre 2000). In a random telephone survey of non-renewing CSA members Cone and Myhre found that 54% of the respondents felt that the delivery times were inconvenient and 50% felt they were not getting the right mix or quantity of vegetables. However, most still advocated for the cause, even if they were not participating. This seems to indicate that members who chose to leave CSA have a greater preference for choice and convenience than for the moral satisfaction they gleaned from supporting a system they believed in.

This is consistent with current research in other fields as well. It has been established that correlation between actualized behavior and attitude increases with the amount of facilitation provided (Olander and Thorgersen 2005). For instance in Olander and Thorgersen's study they found that the implementation of a comprehensive recycling program increased recycling rates and specifically increased rates among people who expressed concern for the issue. Lack of facilitation (or increased inconvenience) leads to discontinuance of behavior (like CSA membership) that is consistent with a set of values.

According to the literature, price does not seem to be a limiting factor, which could be due to the demographics of CSA members who tend to be middle to upper-middle class citizens (Delind and Ferguson 1999; Cone and Myhre 2000). It is unlikely that Troy Gardens would lose members on the basis of price for two reasons. Price is secondary to other concerns (mentioned above) and, theoretically, the economic bracket that CSA members tend to belong to dictates that they would have high search costs (because their time is worth a lot of money). Philips (1988) determined that high search costs would dissuade consumers from seeking out comparative prices.

#### **Attrition and Retention: Current Data from Troy Community Farm Members in 2004**

Marcia Caton Campbell, a former professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, designed a survey that was distributed to the 2004 Troy Community Farm CSA members. The survey was handed out at the farm stand when members came to pick up their share. Fifteen out of the 61 members responded (a 25% response rate). Of those 15 respondents 13 indicated that they would renew their membership. Two members indicated that they might not renew, citing convenience factors (time of pick-up) and interest in

starting their own garden. The time of pick-up was mentioned as concern for a few respondents. On the other hand, convenience of location was ranked high for 7 of the respondents (indicating that those members lived or worked near the farm).

Consistent with previous research respondents indicated that their favorite aspects of Troy Gardens were supporting a local farmer and accessing organic and local produce. Their level of engagement with the farm was mixed. Nine of the 15 picked their own herbs and flowers and 7 attended an event of some sort. However, all 15 members read the farm's newsletter, *Urban Roots*, "every time" they received it. Correlating these levels of engagement with retention (as suggested by the literature) is difficult with this representation of Troy Gardens CSA members as the data might be biased. Those individuals that are most engaged in the farm are more likely to return a survey. In my current research I attempted to reach a more representative population through more aggressive recruitment and by focusing on non-renewing members as well as renewing members.

This survey was repeated in 2005, and I have included these data in my results section.

### **CSA Community and Behavior: Consumer Identity and Social Consumption**

It has been established that consumption of material goods has sociological and anthropological implications. Consumption patterns signal status, style, and values within a social context. They build social relationships and facilitate inclusion and exclusion (Valentine 1999; Schor 1998). Ultimately, consumption patterns shape individual identities "because goods can be used to locate ourselves within narratives which are not of our own making – electing us to a shared form of identification, and because they help us to construct

and maintain individual narrative of the self” (Valentine 1999). Valentine specifically explores the effect of food choices in the home as a way of expressing identity through a series of in depth interviews. In these individual cases family members use food acceptance and rejection to assert their identity, for example rejecting meat as a way of establishing a vegetarian identity in an omnivorous household.

There is a dynamic relationship between identity defining consumer behavior and the social context in which one lives. Family, friends, community, society, mass media, and education all inform individual consumer decisions (Fishman 1985). Thorstein Veblen first introduced the idea of “conspicuous consumption” in the early 1900s and Juliet Schor (1998) uses the phrase “keeping up with the Joneses” to describe competitive consumption that exists within American society. Schor defines consumption as a social activity intimately linked to the community in which individuals reside. Therefore, in order to change environmentally destructive consumption patterns we must address community frameworks (Robins and Roberts 1998).

### **CSA Community and Behavior: Can CSA be Defined as a Community?**

The establishment of social norms is one way that a community shapes the behavior of its members (Coleman 1988). Social norms cannot exist outside a community framework. Therefore, the first question that must be addressed in this research is: Does a CSA membership base act as a community?

CSA, at face value, is a community effort. Members agree to share the risks of agriculture with the farmer. In effect, they sacrifice some control over individual well-being and choose to act within a group, a hallmark of community building (Agrawal and Gibson

1999). Farnsworth *et al*, (1996) identify the “club benefits” of CSA membership as an attractive feature to consumers. They found that select surveyed CSA members valued the exclusivity of membership.

DeLind and Ferguson (1999) cite collective activity as a mechanism through which members “can build interpersonal trust and a sense of community rooted in place. Through such relationships, there can develop a shared responsibility for, and a deeper connection to, the earth and the welfare of those who inhabit it, human and otherwise.” They also refer to CSA as “a catalyst for an altered social consciousness” explaining that it “advocates relationships that extend beyond the marketplace and transform consumers into citizens and community activists.” O’Hara and Stagl (2002) also discussed the possibility that CSA could shape its members’ behavior for the benefit of communities. They stressed that members in a small, interactive CSA group are more likely to develop altruistic behavior than those in a large, anonymous membership because the former provides “moral muscle” that rewards certain behaviors and punishes others.

In DeLind and Ferguson’s study (1999), female members of the Growing in Place Community Farm (GIP) identified the CSA as a place to establish community ties and to cultivate relationships. Men, on the other hand, did not emphasize community, but did value new friendships established through GIP. The generalizability of this work is limited as GIP was founded on the principles of active learning and focused intensely on engaging CSA members in the process. Not all CSA programs promote such a hands-on agenda.

Cone and Myhre’s (2000) work does not deliver such a clear argument for CSA as a model for community. In fact they found that the community aspect of CSA membership was ranked as a low priority for most members and that, on the whole, about half of the

members they surveyed did not engage with the CSA other than to pick up their share. This limits the definition of CSA as a model for community and Cone and Myhre regard using the term “community” when referring to CSA as problematic because of its loose definition. They concluded that “in reality ‘community’ for a great many [members] referred more to a community of interest than to community built on mutual relationships of rights and obligations, on reciprocity.”

Taking a slightly different angle, Agrawal and Gibson (1999) view communities of interests as *self-defined*. They recognized that the “concept of community as shared norms and common interests depends strongly upon the perceptions of its members; in this sense all communities are imagined communities.” Defining CSA as a “consumer community” would thus require self-identification by the group itself.

The conflicting literature and loose and self-defining characteristics of a consumer community lend themselves to an exploratory approach to this research. Through qualitative data collection I attempted to define the type of community Troy Community Farm provides and establish whether social norms exist within that community.

### **CSA Community and Behavior: Endogenous Preferences**

O’Hara and Stagl (2002) discussed the presence of “endogenous preferences” among CSA members. Endogenous preferences are preferences that change over time as consumers are influenced by surrounding social and economic institutions, such as provided by CSA. This theory contradicts neoclassical economics in which preferences “are viewed as exogenous to the economic system itself, i.e., they are revealed by individual economic

actors' behavior, but the preference system guiding individual decisions is established elsewhere" (O'Hara and Stagl, p. 513).

In this study of a New York CSA, members reported changes in their consumer preferences over time. O'Hara and Stagl attributed these changes to the members' interactions with farmers and other CSA members. They found that social motivations (or a preference for moral satisfaction) increased over time. Specifically, members' preferences for organic produce, supporting a local farmer, protecting the environment, seasonal food consumption, knowledge of food origin, and reduced packaging were enhanced. Such findings support the possibility that CSA membership could influence consumer behavior beyond purchases made from the farm itself, and, within this small economic sphere, contribute to a sustainable society. However, this study also showed that the importance of a sense of community decreased over time, implying that the changes are not generated by development of social networks. The authors noted that "[m]embers seem to be strongly motivated by social goals, but most of them do not look for community ties through their membership at the CSA" (O'Hara and Stagl, p. 522).

It should be noted that these data were gathered on a single survey that asked members to reflect back on their preferences. It is possible that more accurate data could be gathered by administering a before and after survey. Additionally, O'Hara and Stagl attribute consumer preference changes generally to interaction with, and learning at, the farm, but qualitative data collection could help to flesh out these pathways.

## **Current Consumer Behavior Data from Troy Community Farm CSA Members in 2004**

As mentioned above, 15 CSA members filled out a survey in 2004. Though these data may be biased towards those members engaged enough to return a survey and the intention of the survey was not directed at identifying community elements at Troy Community Farm, the results do provide some insight into the aspects of community that Troy provides. It provides a learning environment where 11 out of 13 respondents indicated that they have “increased [their] general cooking knowledge since joining the CSA.” This may be due to interactions at the farm or due to ideas gleaned from the CSA newsletter, *Urban Roots*, which is read every week by all 15 respondents.

Troy Gardens CSA is also a catalyst for change. The majority of the respondents eats more vegetables (12 out of 15) and feels that they have “improved [their] family’s nutrition since they joined CSA (12 out 14 responses). Although seeing neighbors was not ranked as a favorite aspect of Troy Community Farm, respondents did indicate that their reasons for joining had community features such as talking with the farmer, sharing the benefits and risks of a CSA, and supporting a farm in their neighborhood.

## **Contributions to Current Literature**

This research provides case specific information that can be used directly by Troy Community Farm. Identifying the farms unique strong points and how they can be used to hold on to members will contribute to the economic sustainability of the farm. This study also adds to the limited literature base available on retention and attrition in CSAs. Specifically, it tests theories on (1) the values that prompt consumers to join CSA and (2) the effects of personal preferences for convenience and choice on attrition. Additionally, this

study provides a new prospective on the concept of community in CSA and investigates how CSA membership might contribute to other (potentially greener) consumer behaviors.

### **Limitations**

The generalizability of this study is very limited as it pertains specifically to Troy Community Farm and may not be applicable to other CSA memberships. Results are also subject to bias as the type of people that participated in the focus groups or filled out surveys might have very different views from those that would not, thus creating sampling error. The data I collected was dependent upon self-reporting, a particular problem when investigating behavior that relates to values and perceptions of an appropriate code of conduct. This could have lead to inaccurate self-representation. Another challenge in this study, specifically relating to consumer behavior, is determining the direction of correlations. It is difficult to identify whether CSA membership is a driver for consumer behavior modification or if the values that lead to becoming a CSA member also drive the other changes. Thus this study only scratches the surface of what motivates green buying habits.

### **METHODS**

#### **Focus Groups**

For this study I facilitated four focus groups with a total of 23 participants (described in detail below). Focus groups are semi-structured discussion sessions that engage a group of people (typically 6-12 individuals) on a certain topic or suite of topics. Results from focus groups are not meant to be representative of a given population due to the non-random and small-scale sampling techniques involved. However, it is a technique that is used with

increasing frequency, particularly in the social sciences, in response to the limitations of other methods (Krueger and Casey 2000). For instance, results from structured interviews and surveys can end up reflecting the preconceptions of the researcher that designed them and can miss connections and trends altogether if the questions were not created to catch them. Focus groups address these limitations by providing an open, but guided, forum where ideas are generated by the subjects themselves and can produce rich qualitative data. Researchers organize groups according to common characteristics and can thereby compare varying groups for a fuller understanding of the issue in question. These groups, if lead well, are comfortable and encourage dialogue between participants and thus provide different data than open-ended, in-depth, individual interviews as “a group possesses the capacity to become more than the sum of its parts, to exhibit a synergy that individuals alone don’t possess.” (Krueger and Casey 2000, p. 24).

### **Recruitment and Sampling Technique**

I recruited participants for this study by phone. The names and contact information of current and former members from 2003-2005 was provided by Claire Strader, Troy Community Farm’s farm manager. I divided this list into sub-groups according to shared characteristics pertaining to the individual’s relationship to Troy Community Farm and took a convenience sample from each group. Each person in every group was called at least once and for each group calls were repeated until the sample size was large enough to complete a focus group (though, unfortunately there was a high level of attrition for three of the groups). The sub-groups and individualized recruitment methods are described in Table 1. Final

selections were based on successful contact, willingness, and availability. Reminder calls and emails were placed and sent out the day before the session to help limit attrition.

<b>FOCUS GROUP DESCRIPTIONS AND RECRUITMENT METHODS</b>			
<b>Group</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Recruitment Method</b>	<b>Meeting Date and Time</b>
Groups 1&2: Current CSA Members (5 participants in each group)	2005 CSA members that are planning to renew or are uncertain if they will renew	Each 2005 member was called once. Not all members were reached directly and voice messages were not left. Calls were not repeated as the first wave of calls yielded enough volunteers to form a focus group. Calls were made on Friday, March 10, 2006 from 10:00 to 11:30 am and from 4:30 to 6:30 pm.	Monday, March 20 (6:00-7:30pm) Thursday, March 23 (5:30-8:00pm)
Group 3: Actively Engaged CSA Members (8 participants)	Members that are actively engaged with the farm through the Core Group, do extensive volunteer work, and/or are worker shares that work on the farm itself.	There were two waves of calls made to the worker share group as it was a smaller pool and it was more difficult to locate willing participants. Each member was called twice (unless they were reached on the first try) and each member was left a voicemail if that was an option. Members of the Core Group were called and recruited at a Core Group meeting. Calls were made on Thursday, March 9 and Monday March 13, 2006 from 4:30 to 6:30 pm. The Core Group meeting was held on Sunday, March 12, 2006 from 3:00 to 5:00 pm.	Saturday, March 25 (3:00-6:00pm)
Group 4: Former Members (5 participants)	Members from the years 2003 and 2004 that did not return in 2005 plus any 2005 members that were contacted and indicated that they would not return in 2006. These participants include both worker share and paying members.	There were two waves of calls made to this group as it was a smaller pool and it more difficult to locate willing participants. Each member was called twice (unless they were reached on the first try) and each member was left a voicemail if that was an option. Calls were made on Thursday, March 9 and Monday, March 13, 2006 from 4:30 to 6:30 pm.	Sunday, March 26 (3:00-5:30pm)

*Table 1: Focus group descriptions and recruitment methods.*

## **Focus Group Structure**

The focus groups ran for approximately 1.5-3 hours and included time to eat, settle in, and fill out a pre-meeting survey (Appendix A) to capture demographic and basic supportive information. Discussion was facilitated in a semi-structured way, instituting a “round-robin” technique that offered everyone an opportunity to speak, while providing for deviations if a discussion style conversation started or if individuals wanted to add something out of turn.

## **Focus Group Questions**

Each group was presented with the following questions (there was some variation in order and structure to facilitate individual discussion flow):

### ***Part I***

To explore retention and attrition rates I posed the following questions:

1. Initially, why did you join CSA in general?
2. Initially, why did you join Troy specifically? What was different or unique about Troy?
3. Why did you decide to renew/give up/change your membership? Did your perception of Troy change after you decided to join?
4. What could be done to improve Troy Community Farm?
5. In what ways did you engage with the farm and gardens (e.g. did you pick up your produce at the farm, attend an event, work on the farm)?
6. How far do you travel to pick up your share? By what means? Are you happy with this situation?
7. How much additional shopping do/did you need to do? Where (else) do you buy vegetables?

## ***Part II***

To explore the possibility of consumer behavior change as a product of CSA membership I posed the following questions:

1. Can you describe a positive and/or negative experience you have had with the farm?
2. Do you know or socialize with any of the other CSA members? If so, in what ways? What do you talk about? Did you know them before joining Troy?
3. Can you describe a positive and/or negative experience you have had with other CSA members?
4. What do you have in common with the other CSA members besides Troy?
5. What have you learned since joining Troy CSA? From who? How has this affected your behavior?
6. Has your lifestyle or have your habits changed since you joined Troy CSA?

### **Focus Group Data Analysis**

The focus group sessions were audio recorded and transcribed. I read through these transcriptions, identified themes, and coded them accordingly. I then pulled all the relevant quotes from the transcription documents and input them into spreadsheets. Each spreadsheet was assigned a topic question (i.e. “Why do members join CSA?”) and each individual sheet was organized vertically by group and participant name and horizontally by the themes associated with the chosen quotes. After I had input all of the relevant quotes, I appraised the themes for commonalities and collapsed them into broader thematic groups. I then determined the frequencies with which these broad themes occurred within individual groups and among all the participants as a whole. Frequencies were defined by how many individuals mentioned the theme, not by how many times it was mentioned by the same

individual. This frequency data was reported in tables and qualitatively in the text in conjunction with sample quotes to illustrate the themes.

### **Supplementary Data**

At the time that I facilitated the focus groups Troy's growing season had not yet started, so "current members" were defined by their intention to join again. Therefore, to correlate actualized behavior (renewing of membership) with intended behavior I compared the 2005 Troy CSA member list with the 2006 member list. I then applied the actualized behavior data retroactively to flesh out my findings in this study.

Additionally, to provide a supplementary comparison for some of the focus group results in this study I included information from the pre-survey and from the 2005 end-of-season survey, which was distributed by Marcia Caton Campbell and Troy Community Farm. In particular, I compared the frequency of topics brought up in the focus groups with quantitative measurements from the survey. The 2005 survey was identical to the 2004 version (discussed above) and was handed out at the farm stand when members came to pick up their share. Thirty-five out of the eighty members responded (a 44% response rate). The 2005 survey is included in Appendix B.

In order to cross reference the results from the focus groups with the quantitative data collected in the 2005 survey I converted all the frequencies (number of individuals that mentioned or selected a certain topic) to percentages of the maximum possible number of occurrences to control for differing sample sizes. I then identified commonality and divergence between these data sets.

## **Participatory Research**

This study was designed to be a participatory research project. As mentioned briefly above, Claire Strader (the managing farmer) recommended the first research question and offered guidance throughout the preparation phase of the study (i.e. providing feedback on the focus group questions). Claire was not, however, involved in the facilitation of the focus groups. This was arranged so that participants would feel more comfortable expressing their opinions about Troy Community Farm and Claire in an anonymous setting. Claire was informed of the results after the focus group and survey data had been gathered, analyzed and synthesized. At that time Claire had an opportunity to review and comment on these results along with a series of recommendations that I generated for Troy Community Farm. I have included her comments where they expand upon, validate, or contradict some of the results. Also, in the recommendations section, I have indicated which suggestions Claire thought were plausible and useful.

## **Inconsistencies**

In this study I adopted a semi-flexible research design, which allowed for some adaptation in data collection. After I met with the first focus group I made some adjustments to the order and presentation of my questions for clarity and to flesh out some issues that seemed pertinent to the study. However, the basic framework and questions (listed above) did not change significantly.

I also made some slight changes to the pre-survey after I met with the first focus group. I added a couple of questions, which were answered verbally by the first group of

participants and thus made very little difference in the demographic data that was collected. The changes to this survey are noted in Appendix A. The results from final question on the pre-survey were discarded because of some wording inconsistencies between the surveys. Additionally, the question was covered in the 2005 end-of-season survey and, because there was an anonymity option, there was no way to know whether there were duplications in the two sets of surveys. Thus I chose to use the 2005 data which also drew from a larger pool of participants.

One last detail worth mentioning pertained to a time issue that came into play with Group 3. This group was particularly engaged and talkative and, in the interest of time, I had to skip questions 1 and 3 of the Part II. However, these questions were partially addressed during the rest of the session coincidentally. In Group 3 there were also two group members that had to leave an hour early, so their input was not collected for Part II of the focus group.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION PART I: ATTRITION AND RETENTION**

### **Demographic and Background Information on Focus Group Participants**

In the pre-survey participants were asked to report demographic information and answer a few questions regarding their familiarity with the programs run by the Friends of Troy Gardens. The demographic results from this survey can be found in Table 2. Further results from the survey are included in the next section.

From this table it seems that the CSA members in this study are fairly representative of the age distribution (not including individuals under 20) and marital status (partners are considered single in the Census) in the U.S. population. However, they are a little older and less likely to be single than the average resident of Madison, Wisconsin (which has a large

university student population). They are also more educated than the average American and Madison resident and tend to be female.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS									
Demographic	Raw #	% of Participants	% of Madison Pop.	% of U.S. Pop.	Demographic	Raw #	% of Participants	% of Madison Pop.	% of U.S. Pop.
<b>Age*</b>					<b>Marital Status</b>				
Range	22-85				Single	7	30%	57%	46%
Mean	47				Married	12	52%	43%	54%
20-29	4	17%	33%	19%	Partner	3	13%	NA	NA
30-39	5	22%	20%	22%	Undisclosed	1	4%	NA	NA
40-49	5	22%	18%	21%	<b>Dependents in Home</b>				
50-59	4	17%	13%	15%	Yes	4	17%	48%	68%
60-69	3	13%	7%	10%	No	17	74%	52%	32%
70-79	1	4%	6%	8%	Undisclosed	2	9%	NA	NA
80+	1	4%	3%	5%	<b>Employment</b>				
<b>Sex</b>					Employed	20	87%	73%	64%
Female	17	74%	51%	51%	Stay At Home Parent	1	4%	NA	NA
Male	6	26%	49%	49%	Retired	2	9%	NA	NA
<b>Education</b>					<b>Annual Household Income</b>				
High School	1	4%	18%	29%	Less than \$30,000	3	13%	34%	35%
Associates	2	9%	8%	6%	\$30,000-\$59,999	13	57%	34%	32%
Bachelors	12	52%	27%	16%	\$60,000-\$89,999	3	13%	21%**	13%**
Masters	4	17%	13%	6%	Over \$90,000	3	13%	11%***	12%***
Professional	1	4%	4%	2%	Undisclosed	1	4%	NA	NA
PhD	3	13%	4%	1%	<b>Primary Food Shopper</b>				
<b>Ethnicity</b>					Yes	14	61%	NA	NA
Caucasian	20	87%	86%	77%	No	0	0%	NA	NA
Asian American	1	4%	7%	4%	Shared	9	39%	NA	NA
Undisclosed	2	9%	NA	NA					

Table 2: Participants' demographic information plus U.S. and Madison population demographics (U.S. Census 2000). n=23  
 \*Census age percentages exclude individuals under 20 (29% of total population) as they are unlikely to be paying CSA members  
 \*\*Approximate comparison: Census income brackets did not match brackets used in this study: \$60,000-99,999  
 \*\*\*Approximate comparison: Census income brackets did not match brackets used in this study: \$100,000+

Participants in this study tend to be Caucasian (note that African Americans, which make up 12% of the U.S., and 7% of the Madison, population are not represented at all)

which is not entirely consistent with the U.S. population, but is fairly representative of Madison's ethnic distribution. These CSA members are also less likely to have children living at home and are a little more likely to be employed than the average U.S. or Madison citizen. Their income distribution is fairly similar to that of the U.S. and Madison populations in the upper income brackets (above \$60,000), but in they are less likely to have a household income below \$30,000 than the most people.

### **Why Do Consumers Choose CSA?**

#### ***Common Trends Between Groups: Quality Produce and Local Farmers***

Results from these four focus groups indicate that Troy members generally join CSA for high quality (fresh, good tasting) produce and because they want to support a local farm or business. These preferences were brought up in each of the focus groups and were the only sentiments shared by all four of the groups.

The preference for fresh vegetables seems to have developed from different sources. Some members grew up on farms and missed the taste and quality of farm-fresh vegetables: "I missed the freshness, the taste, because what you get in grocery stores tastes like, and I don't want to use the word." One member relayed a story about living in rural New York: "We were like in the middle of, you know, farm country. There were farms all over the place, and you couldn't eat a damn thing." Still other participants were simply looking "for a place to find good vegetables."

For most this desire for fresh produce meshed nicely with supporting local farmers: "It was local growers, you could get really fresh, organic produce. I thought, well, you can't lose. It's perfect." Another participant commented: "I like supporting somebody who is

willing to grow in my neighborhood, keep it fresh, and I get it the same day.” Some participants have an interest in the larger concept of local and sustainable economies and tout the importance of supporting local businesses and thereby providing alternative consumer choices, while for others, buying locally “just makes sense” and is, in fact, fairly convenient.

Both of these findings are consistent with the current literature on CSA member preferences. In Lancastarian terms these two attributes (produce quality and supporting local farmers) represent different traits in the bundle that defines the quality of the good (CSA membership). The utility derived from these two traits would be experienced through physical consumption of the produce and the moral satisfaction associated with supporting local farmers.

#### ***Other General Trends Found Between Participants: Organic, New Foods and Community***

A large number of the participants indicated that they want: (1) access to organic produce, (2) to be exposed to different foods, and (3) to be a part of a community.

In this study preference for organic produce was brought up in 3 of the 4 focus group sessions (Groups 2-4). Participants did not elaborate extensively on why they preferred organic produce during these sessions, but a couple mentioned concern for the environment during the sessions and two others mentioned that organic produce tastes better than conventional produce. The participants exhibited varying degrees of commitment to buying organic goods. One CSA member “feels just fierce about things being organic” while others are more price sensitive. A few participants in Group 4 expressed distrust of the organic labeling system and most agreed that they trusted the organic standards of a local CSA more than those governing imported, grocery produce.

Preference for organic foods among CSA members is a common theme in the current

literature. However, their preference for exposure to new foods was a bit of a surprise. Most of the CSA literature attributes attrition to consumers wanting more convenience and choice, but many of the participants (Groups 1-3) in this study indicated that they preferred the *lack* of choice that CSA provides. For instance one CSA member said: “I like having to work within certain parameters of choices because it makes me try things that I might not try otherwise...It’s sort of a hoot to see what I can do with it.” Another participant compared CSA to the Farmers’ Market: “We loved it, we’d go there, but we’d always buy the same things. We wouldn’t really branch out and buy a lot of different things...[In CSA] I like the challenge of trying to use everything up during the week.”

Members not only enjoyed the challenge and introduction of new vegetables, they also relished the surprise and inspiration generated by their weekly bundle: “One of the things I liked best about it is the surprise. What are you going to get next week? Saying, okay, I can try some new recipes.” Another member relayed that when you pick your share “[i]t inspires you. You don’t get that from the grocery stores.” A few of the members adapted to the CSA lifestyle by planning menus around their weekly produce and found the additional structure to be beneficial. They wasted less food, adopted a healthier diet, and in a couple of cases, saved money.

These results indicate that attrition may not be determined by weighing one’s preference for CSA qualities *against* the preference for convenience and choice, as I proposed in my hypothesis. Based on the current literature, I had conjectured that if a CSA member’s preference for the qualities inherent in CSA membership are strong enough a consumer will accept reduced convenience and choice and maintain their membership.

Conversely if the consumer prefers convenience and choice they will not maintain their membership (see Figure 2).

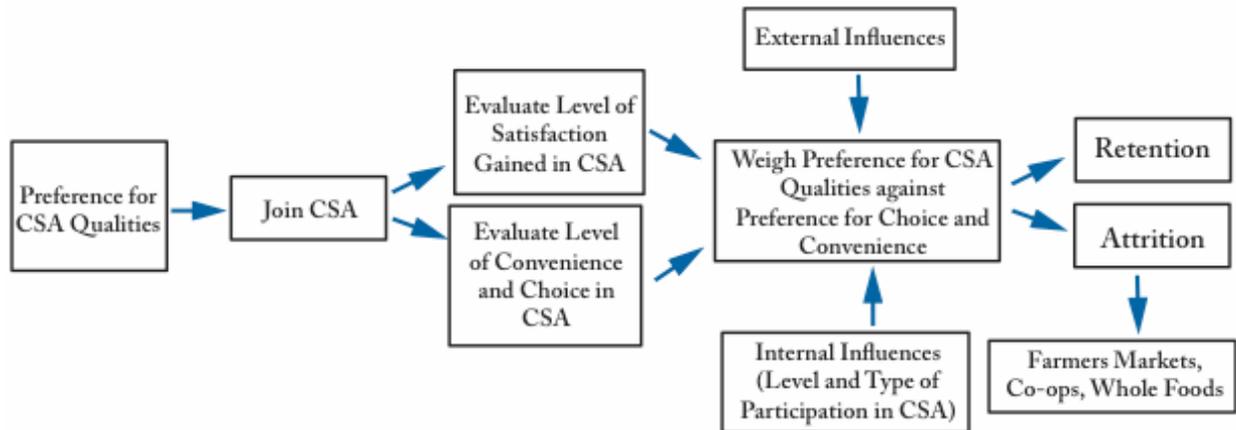


Figure 2: Hypothesized sequence of events involved in a CSA member's decision to stay with, or leave, a CSA. CSA qualities include: moral satisfaction, interaction with farm and farm community, and farm fresh produce.

However, the data in this study suggest that some of the current members do not have to *sacrifice* choice, but in fact *prefer* having their produce selected for them. For these consumers, pre-selected produce is part of the Lancastarian bundle that determines the quality of a CSA membership. These results do not run contrary to the current theories on membership retention and attrition, they simply imply a slightly different model, which will be discussed in the next section.

It should be noted that this topic was not brought up in Group 4, which was made up of former CSA members. In this group 4 out of 5 indicated that they preferred their current situation of self-selecting their produce by shopping or growing their own, to the restricted selection of CSA.

The last trait that was shared among most of the participants (though sometimes as a secondary interest) was the sense of community provided by CSA. This topic was introduced by participants in 3 of the 4 groups (Groups 2-4). The, somewhat nebulous,

definition of community in this particular context will be discussed further in the next section. Here, however, I will simply treat it as a characteristic that defines the quality of CSA for consumers. Indeed its perceived presence or absence can, at times, contribute to whether a member decides to renew or give up their membership. For instance in Group 4 (former members) the participants expressed disappointment in the lack of community facilitation provided by Troy. As one participant put it, "...if you're going to have community, in quotes, then I think it needs to be a community." This group, in part, felt that the volunteers were not properly welcomed or appreciated and that information was not easily accessible. One participant expressed that "it really would have been nice, as a member, to have someone sort of extend a more personal invitation. 'Hey, we're getting together on Saturday. This is what we're going to be doing. We'd like for the CSA members to come to get to know each other a little bit or something'...It could have been more welcoming."

On the other hand the current members talked about how much they enjoy the sense of community provided by Troy CSA: "...just belonging to the group, seeing the same people each week, picking up your vegetables, and realizing that in some way we share the same values, I think, is real nice." Another member said, "I see all of the CSAs advertising [community], making some attempt at it, but Troy's the only one I see that really feels to me like it has a sense of community. . .we all can participate at whatever level we want to and feel like a part of it. And because I do love the concept, I like doing my part of it. It feels valuable to me both ways, that I'm valuable to it and it is to me to be part of the core group. I like that." One worker share member expressed: "I also like the community of it. I really like Claire [Strader, the managing farmer]. She's a good friend of ours, and I don't know, I

like seeing the same people every week and getting to know your little clusters of conversation out in the field.” Another member from Group 1, didn’t reference community specifically, but she did recall that: “I like it when the students are working, the really young people, high school age or whatever, working at the stand, you just feel like you're helping educate them.”

### ***Why Troy Community Farm in Particular?***

All of the groups indicated that they liked Troy in particular because it is (1) close to where they live or work, (2) an urban farm, (3) part of the Friends of Troy Gardens, and (4) because they enjoy their interactions with the managing farmer, Claire Strader.

Eighteen of the 23 participants live on the north or east side of Madison (an average of 3.7 miles from the farm) and really value the proximity of Troy: “It's right in town. I thought it was a really cool idea that it was really local. I know some of the other [farms] are a couple of hours out in the country.” For some, Troy is close enough for them walk or bike to pick up their shares and for the majority, driving to the farm takes less than 20 minutes. The location of Troy is preferred by the participants on philosophical grounds (they like that it is an urban farm) and also for the convenience factor: “What I liked about Troy was that it was in my neighborhood.... It's convenient because I used to go to the West Side to pick up the other one.”

Four members mentioned that they may not be CSA members if Troy was not so close: “It was just because it was easy to get to, and the unique, urban setting. That's the kind of person I am. If I believe in something, I'll go so far, but I want it to be convenient, and this was. I didn't want to drive to the country. I didn't want to drive across town to pick up my share.”

These results tie back to the originally proposed attrition and retention model. Current literature states that convenience is an important factor in retaining CSA members. The results discussed above seem to support that theory generally, but in the particular case of Troy Community Farm the issue of convenience seems to work its favor since so many of the members live near the farm.

The majority of the participants also indicated that they liked the fact that Troy Community Farm was a part of the Friends of Troy Gardens (FTG). According to the pre-survey, on average, 90% of the participants are familiar with all the different programs run by FTG and many mentioned that they liked the physical and cultural diversity it brings to the land (for complete results see Table 3). "...I love the diversity of the farm in itself, the prairie restoration and community garden, children's garden. It just keeps going and going and going and going..." This diversity provides additional utility for some members: "I think the learning, the kids garden, I sometimes go there...and just thinking about little kids planting vegetables together and growing things just makes me all teary-eyed...there's so many different pieces here and having that there definitely enriches it for me." For one member, the philosophy of FTG is so important that "if it weren't for Troy I wouldn't belong to a CSA."

<b>PARTICIPANTS' FAMILIARITY WITH FTG PROGRAMS</b>		
<b>Pre -Survey Questions</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Did you know that Troy Community Farm is part of a non-profit organization called the Friends of Troy Gardens?	96%	4%
<b>Did you know that the Friends of Troy Gardens:</b>		
Has a prairie restoration area?	96%	4%
Runs a kids' garden?	96%	4%
Runs a youth program called Farm and Field with high school students?	74%	26%
Provides space for community gardens?	91%	9%
Is part of a larger project to build affordable co-housing in the land adjacent to the gardens?	87%	13%

*Table 3: Participants were asked identify which FTG programs that were familiar with. n=23*

About half of the participants mentioned Claire specifically when listing the reasons why they joined and why they stay with Troy Community Farm. Some members joined Troy because of a connection with Claire and most members enjoy talking with her, reading her newsletters, and learning from her. “I think Claire is a great farmer, and her personality comes through so much in the newsletters, and just being able to talk to her. We can see she is proud of what she does, and she does it well. She taught a lot of other people that have been interns, and the Farm and Field kids that come out there and stuff. [It’s] a great environment, a great learning experience for a lot of people.”

#### ***Notable Similarities and Differences Between Qualitative and Quantitative Data***

Table 4 provides comparative trends found in the focus groups and in the survey data regarding the participants’ reasons for joining CSA. The focus group data are expressed in the percentages in the table for illustrative clarity. However, it is important to realize that these numbers are not generalizable to the broader CSA community due to the small sample size. Also, the data provided here merely represents the most common trends found in the survey and qualitative data sets, they are not exhaustive.

There are a number of common trends in both data sets including preferences for (1) fresh, quality produce, (2) supporting an urban and local farm, (3) and interaction with the farmer. Divergent details are apparent in four topics that were not covered by the survey, including preference for (1) pre-selected produce, (2) a sense of community, (3) organic produce, and (4) supporting FTG. These findings illustrate the limitations of stand-alone survey data. It does not always paint a complete picture.

<b>COMPARED FREQUENCIES OF PARTICIPANTS' REASONS FOR JOINING TROY CSA (EXPRESSED IN A PERCENTAGE OF POSSIBLE OCCURENCES)</b>						
<b>Reason for Joining Troy CSA</b>	<b>2005 Survey (n=35)</b>	<b>Total Focus Group (n=23)</b>	<b>G1: Current Members (n=5)</b>	<b>G2: Current Members (n=5)</b>	<b>G3: Engaged Members (n=8)</b>	<b>G4: Former Members (n=5)</b>
Troy is located in the city (it's an urban farm)	69%	39%	20%	40%	50%	40%
Fresh, high quality vegetables	66%	52%	20%	100%	25%	60%
<i>Share the benefits and risks with the farmer</i>	<b>66%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<i>Reduce energy waste associated with transporting produce from far away</i>	<b>54%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>0%</b>
Opportunity to talk with the farmer	54%	48%	60%	60%	50%	20%
Opportunity to pick flowers and herbs	43%	17%	0%	40%	25%	0%
Troy is a neighborhood farm (it's nearby, location is convenient)	40%	78%	60%	100%	75%	40%
Support north side (local) business	31%	39%	40%	60%	13%	60%
Disappointed with the quality of super market produce	23%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Health reasons	17%	9%	20%	0%	13%	0%
Troy lets members choose which vegetables they want from the stand	17%	13%	20%	0%	25%	0%
<b>Additional Topics Mentioned in the Focus Groups that were not an Option on the Survey</b>						
<i>Preference for pre-selected produce</i>	<i>NA</i>	<b>39%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<i>Sense of Community</i>	<i>NA</i>	<b>35%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>60%</b>
<i>Organic vegetables</i>	<i>NA</i>	<b>48%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Support FTG (like that it is part of a bigger organization)</i>	<i>NA</i>	<b>57%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>20%</b>

Table 4: Reasons for joining CSA - Comparison of qualitative and quantitative data. Data is expressed in percentages to control for varying sample sizes which are indicated at the top of each column. Obvious differences in the data are denoted by bold, italic font.

On the flip-side, some of the characteristics that were deemed important on the survey, did not register in the discussions. Two topics that had more than a 50% difference between the quantitative and qualitative data include, reducing energy costs of imported foods and the desire to share the risks with the farmer. In similar vein, it is important to note lack of discussion regarding concern for the environment in these focus groups. In the

current literature environmental concerns often rise to the top of the list of reasons consumers join CSA. One potential explanation for these inconsistencies is that as “concepts” these issues are very important (particularly when suggested by a survey prompt), but in actualization, they take the back seat to other issues. For example, it is possible when a participant is asked to rank the importance of the environment with regard to CSA on a survey they are inclined to give it high marks because it is consistent with their values, but when given an open forum to discuss why they stay in CSA the every day benefits are what come to mind.

### ***Notable Differences Between the Groups***

There were a few notable differences between the group discussions. For instance, Group 3 (engaged members) had a slightly different value set than the other four groups. Though all the groups appreciated the quality of the produce, comparatively, Group 3 focused less on food and more on the other aspects of CSA like agrarian history and connection to the earth and food systems, the philosophy of urban farming and CSA in general, and the interactive benefits (social and educational) that they gleaned from their membership.

Many expressed their commitment to Troy in particular. A few have watched FTG and Troy Community Farm from the beginning and can recount success and failure stories from its conception: “...the fact that it was new, it was just beginning, and you had a chance to get in on the early struggles and the early, as you say, ground floor.” These people, who tend to be Core Group members, feel very strongly about Troy succeeding: “I do view this as a business, and how many small businesses don’t make it? So to support the farm by purchasing your share seems like a good thing to do.”

Additionally, the worker share members in the group were particularly grateful for the working option. Two members joined specifically because they wanted to work on the farm: “I just missed the physical act of gardening, and I had very little space where I am. So that’s what got me into it. It was the working.”

There were a few other minor differences between the groups. Group 1, for instance, focused quite a bit on the benefits of menu planning associated with their weekly bundle of vegetables. Group 2 felt strongly about the convenience of Troy CSA, mainly pertaining to its location and Group 4 had a number of unique criticisms that are discussed below.

### **Why Do Consumers Renew or Give Up Their Membership?**

All of the participants in the Groups 1 and 2 plus 5 of the 8 members in Group 3 renewed their membership in 2006. For the most part, these individuals chose to renew their membership based on the same principles that lead them to CSA in the first place and, for some, these principles had become more imbedded over time. Their perception of Troy CSA did not change drastically, although some learned more about FTG’s programs and discovered other benefits (such as unwinding in the flower garden, reading the newsletter, and menu planning) which often strengthened their commitment to the farm. Most were satisfied with their experience and, for some, Troy exceeded their expectations.

Those that did not renew their membership fell into two separate categories (1) those that did not renew in 2005, and thus participated in the former member group (Group 4) and (2) those that did not renew in 2006, who happened to be worker shares that participated in the engaged member group (Group 3).

### ***Former Members***

For the members in Group 4 it was clear that Troy did not meet their expectations. These former members based their decision on (1) the quantity and variety of produce, (2) a lack of community, and (3) perceived inequities on the farm. The issue of quantity and variety of produce is common among former CSA members. In this group, two participants felt there was too much produce and would require a half-share, which Troy no longer offers. Two other participants felt that there was not enough produce: “I didn't feel like we got what I was hoping we'd get from it. I felt like it was more of a donation, which was fine for one year, but not something that I want to do every year.” Four out the five group members also prefer to select their own vegetables and are thus not great candidates for CSA.

The issue of community is interesting. As mentioned above the two groups that discussed the concept of community most adamantly were the engaged and former members (2 of which were former worker shares). For the engaged members, this was not a surprise as they are more actively connected to the CSA community. However, the attention from Group 4 was somewhat unexpected. This could indicate that, for certain subset of CSA consumers, the sense of community provided by the CSA can influence their intention to stay. Based on this issue there is a polarization of this subset of consumers, leading to hyper-commitment by those who feel included in a community and abandonment by those that do not. This begs the question from a marketing standpoint, how much effort should CSA put into creating community? Is this a “service” that should be included in the price consumers pay for their share? Is it worth paying, on a part-time basis, a community-relations person or was creating the Core Group enough of an outreach effort and should the farm simply depend on motivated members to create community? This could be the case, as the former members

that participated in this study had memberships that pre-dated the formation of the Core Group. Perhaps Troy has already alleviated the concerns of inclusiveness that were expressed in Group 4 and should now focus on the other concerns brought up by this same group (discussed in more detail below). Either way, using the concept of community as a way to gain a competitive edge may be worth investigating.

The final common issue raised by the former CSA members involved perceived inequities in the distribution of produce and labor. One participant felt that the UW-Madison interns, farm and field workers (high school students), and the worker shares were not treated equally when they were assigned tasks: “there were a couple of people volunteering who would say no, they didn't want to dig 500 or whatever. Claire, there was especially one person, she would just say oh, that's all right. You stand and wait. The rest of us were out there pulling weeds, and digging onions, and washing radishes. So to me, there was not an equity that I would expect in systems when I volunteer, even though I know, again, we were getting something for [our labor].” In a separate interview that followed the conclusion of the focus groups Claire Strader, the managing farmer, indicated that she did not remember ever letting anyone stand and wait, but will be aware of this concern in the future.

The same participant felt that the way the “farmer food” (food that was leftover after the CSA shares were filled and could not be sold at the market) was divided unequally. For instance, the interns (who were getting paid a wage, but not receiving a share) would get to choose from the farmer food and the worker shares would not, and in one case it was noted that the interns received produce that even the paying CSA members did not. In the follow-up interview Claire noted that there is currently no policy in place to govern the distribution

of farmer food and that she will work on establishing one so that this situation does not arise again.

The introduction of this topic brought up more issues of inequity that were experienced by other former members in the group. A couple of members recalled that sometimes the “extra” vegetables sold at the farm stand were not included in the weekly box that they received. “I used to come on Thursdays to pick up our vegetables. I noticed...that these [other] boxes were fuller than CSA member's, and there were a whole bunch of other vegetables that were for people [to] purchase. I started noticing that the ones that the CSA members got, they had a lot of kale. Kale's okay, but I kind of got it up to here with kale, and a few other things. We kept getting a bunch of those things, like garlic. There were beautiful veggies over here for sale. I thought, I wish I got some of that stuff, but [my box] was over on this side for the CSA members.”

Another participant mentioned her frustration with this issue at the Farmers' Market where Troy had a stand: “I think 2004 was a bad year. As I recall, it was dry, very dry. We heard oh, there isn't any broccoli because it is too dry. There weren't any Brussels sprouts, and there aren't going to be because it's too dry. We'd go to farmer's market and oh, boy, there was plenty of broccoli and stuff there. Again, we knew it was available, but we weren't ever getting it.” One participant who had a half-share also noticed an inequitable distribution of variety: “...there were times when I went to pick up my half share, and I'd be ready to reach for something, and they'd say oh, no, no, no, you can't have that. That's for the full share...There were many times that...I would have preferred having something that was in the full share box than the half share box. It was almost like they were slapping your hand going “oh, no, you can't have that. That's for the full share.”

Most of the participants in this group admitted that they did not ask questions, nor did they complain, but these concerns clearly identify a need for better information (which was mentioned by one of the participants explicitly). Some members were under the impression that Troy Community Farm had to meet their wholesale demands first and assumed that that might be the reason for the lack quantity or variety in their share, though this was not the case. Additionally, they did not realize that the reason the “extras” were being sold at the stand when they were not distributed to the members, was because there was simply not enough to divide equally between the members. The issue with the half-share inequities has been alleviated by default, as Troy only offers full shares now. However, a direct effort should be made to explain these decisions so that members do not feel let down.

### ***Worker Share Attrition***

As for the worker share members that participated in Group 3, their reasons for leaving were less clear. This was partly due to the timing of the data collection, which occurred before the participants made actual commitments to the farm, thus the questions were not particularly geared towards the causes of attrition. However, from the data available I have been able to extrapolate and make educated conjectures as to why these members did not return.

One member intended to return, but due to circumstances unrelated to Troy, was unable to. The second joined specifically to work on the farm. This person was more interested in the labor than the bundle of produce, and because of some life changes thought that she might not be able to work on the farm and evidently chose not to renew. The third member indicated that he had an apprenticeship at another farm in the summer of 2006. It is possible that this opportunity offered him a different experience than what he could get at

Troy, therefore expanding his knowledge of farming, which was the main reason why he joined in the first place.

According to this assessment it seems that, with the exception of the second member, whose reasons for leaving were related to convenience, these members were not dissatisfied with Troy specifically, but for unrelated reasons chose to forego renewal. This finding contradicts some of the current literature that correlates increased involvement (i.e. joining as a worker share) with member satisfaction and retention. Analysis of Troy's member lists from 2003-2006 indicate loyalty among a select group of worker shares, but not among the majority. Further investigation would need to be conducted to flesh out the causes of attrition and retention among worker shares.

#### ***Years of Membership and Retention and Attrition***

It has been suggested in the current literature that retention is positively correlated with the number years a consumer has been an CSA member. In this study the results are a little unclear. 9 of the 15 renewing members in this study had just joined in 2005 and only 4 of the 15 had been members for more than two years. On the other hand, five of the eight members that did not renew were members for only one year and the other three had been members for two or three years. Thus from these data it is difficult to determine a correlation, however, when organizing these members into profile groups (discussed below) there is a more apparent pattern.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION PART II: COMMUNITY AND BEHAVIOR**

### **What Does “Community” Mean for Troy CSA Members?**

#### ***Common Trends among Groups: Limited Social Interactions***

Participants in all four focus groups pick up their shares at the farm where over half of them spend some time chatting with Claire and the other farm workers at the stand. Many appreciate this opportunity: “we really do like going out to the farm, especially if you can talk to the people who are helping to grow your food and are involved in the same community...”

Many participants spontaneously mentioned Claire in particular, and 9 of the 23 participants spoke of her in terms that would imply a more rooted connection than what would be found in a simple consumer-vendor relationship. This was evident in their (1) concern for her well-being: “I think the only thing I could say that I didn't like [about Troy CSA] was during inclement weather, you'd see Claire out there, poor Claire, dealing with it, when it's pouring rain or something like that...I remember the wind just whipping, beating on her face. It would be nice if they had some place that would be a little more suitable,” (2) willingness to help: “I don't do much volunteer work with the farm...but if Claire needs me, she can ask. She knows that,” (3) shared stories about personal experiences with Claire: “I remember, we had just moved from the south side to our house on the east side. There had been several weeks during the hecticness of moving we hadn't picked up our share, and it was the end of the season, also. We came by, and I think it was actually the last day. She said oh, ‘I haven't seen you guys in a couple of weeks.’ I think she was trying to get a hold of us or something...She just gave us so much because we had missed some of our last

shares. That was just very gracious and bountiful. I just felt like we were overflowing with the food and the harvest. It was great,” (4) knowledge of Claire’s personality, likes and dislikes and (5) direct references to their interactions outside the farm as some participants were friends or neighbors of Claire’s before they joined Troy CSA.

Beyond these expressions of loyalty to Claire, however, the social fabric of Troy CSA appears to be fairly thin. When prompted to share a social experience they had with another CSA member the majority of participants in all the focus groups (except the engaged member group) had no stories to tell. Claire said that she has observed the members talking to each other at the stand when they pick up their share, but only 6 participants mentioned this themselves and the focus group discussions indicated that social interactions rarely extend beyond this polite chitchat: “No, I didn't do very much socializing. Just talking at the stand, that's all.” Off-site interactions were almost never mentioned in all the groups except Group 3 (engaged members) and even in that group these instances were limited to the occasional informal conversation when members would bump into each other at the Willy Street Co-op or the Farmers’ Market.

Among working share members there is a little more interaction: “I like seeing the same people every week and getting to know your little clusters of conversation out in the field.” One member expressed that these conversations are “not very serious” and another mentioned that the socializing while working varies tremendously from week to week, and “there are weeks where there’s just something really fun that happens, just the type of conversation bantering back and forth, and then there’s these kind of surly weeks when everyone is doing their thing.” There was also one participant that said there was never any time to talk while working.

The low occurrence of social interaction among CSA members could be explained in a few different ways. It is possible that members of Troy CSA already have their own established communities and are not interested in building new relationships or getting involved with additional projects. They may have limited time and therefore do not engage in civic or broad social activities and perhaps CSA provides a convenient and simple way to connect to the land and community without having to spend a lot of time. Additionally, perhaps CSA as an institutional entity simply does not provide a comprehensive enough system to form meaningful relationships. In reality it is probably a combination of these elements and further research on the social networks of CSA members might shed some light on the issue.

***Common Trends among Groups: A Conceptual Community of Interests***

Despite the low level of interaction among members, a common trend in three of the four focus groups was an affinity for the sense of community that CSA provides (as mentioned above). It seems that Troy CSA members glean utility from a conceptual community of interests, rather than a community based on an actualized network of relationships, social norms, and reciprocity, which is consistent with Cone and Myhre's work (2000).

The majority of the participants in this study believed that they shared common interests and values with the other CSA members. They recognized that this was primarily an assumption, since they had such limited interaction with other members, but they still sensed that this was a group of like-minded individuals: "...I definitely feel like, yeah, if I were to talk to some CSA member out of the blue, I'm pretty sure I'd find plenty in common with them." Another member commented, "...it's an interesting situation because when you

see a stranger picking up a farm share, you definitely predetermine who they are.” In Group 1 this inquiry about common interests led to a participant initiated discussion about how many CSA members would shop at Wal-Mart. A quick poll around the table indicated that a defining quality of CSA members in this group was the conceptual, and in most cases, actualized, rejection of this establishment.

A number of members spoke of this community of interest as a favorable aspect of their membership: “I don't know this, but I suspect a lot of people who are members measure things in other ways than just the dollars. I appreciate that.” Another member explained that, “I think for me I know that other people share the same philosophy as far as taking care of the land and eating organically, but to actually talk to people on a one-on-one basis and know that they share the same philosophy as me is huge.” For some members this sense of shared values enriched their weekly trip to pick up their produce: “It is also a little bit of sense of community, just belonging to the group, seeing the same people each week, picking up your vegetables, and realizing that in some way we share the same values, I think, is real nice.”

It should be noted that, as a group, the former members were less comfortable claiming common interest with the other CSA members: “I don't really know...We all paid to get a box. We all have the same principles. We believe in the CSA. We believe in fresh and organic, but without actually knowing anybody...” This uncertainty could be related to this group's feeling of exclusion and disenchantment with the community aspects of the Troy CSA.

Beyond this idea of community through shared interests, the definition of Troy CSA's conceptual community becomes a little slippery. Although the majority of participants

referenced community in some way when describing why they joined CSA, very few of them defined what that meant. Extrapolating from the data already discussed and the current literature, I would hypothesize that, in addition to shared interests, this sense of community is based on (1) supporting a local and/or neighborhood farmer, and therefore the local economy, (2) common interactions and connections with the farmer and land, (3) supporting FTG and its philosophies, and (4) seeing the same group of people each week. I believe that the topic warrants further, targeted investigation.

### ***Notable Differences Between the Groups***

The members in Group 3 (engaged members) appear to have developed tighter and more interactive relationships with Claire and each other. This is not surprising as they have dedicated more time to the farm, either through working in the field or helping to design and implement strategies to benefit the farm through the Core Group, and tend to have more opportunities to interact. One worker share member recognized that the working members might have more in common with each other than with other paying members: “I don’t know if there’s been sort of a split there just because of the connection that you sort of do begin to develop when you’re working [at Troy] that doesn’t necessarily carry over to the larger shareholder.”

The frequencies (expressed as percentages) associated with the major trends discussed above are illustrated in Table 5.

<b>FREQUENCIES OF TOPICS BROACHED THAT WERE ASSOCIATED WITH CSA “COMMUNITY” (EXPRESSED IN A PERCENTAGE OF POSSIBLE OCCURANCES)</b>					
<b>Indicators of Community Definition</b>	<b>Total Focus Group (n=23)</b>	<b>G1: Current Members (n=5)</b>	<b>G2: Current Members (n=5)</b>	<b>G3: Engaged Members (n=8)</b>	<b>G4: Former Members (n=5)</b>
Talk with Claire and other farm workers at the farm stand	65%	100%	60%	63%	40%
Sense of shared interests and values with other CSA members	61%	80%	100%	63%	20%
Established connection to Claire (the farmer)	43%	60%	20%	75%	0%
Had no social experiences to share	43%	60%	60%	13%	60%
Concept or sense of community directly mentioned	35%	0%	40%	63%	20%
Offered suggestions to improve community	30%	20%	40%	25%	40%
Interact with other CSA members on the land	26%	20%	20%	38%	20%
Informal interactions with other members off-site	26%	0%	0%	63%	20%
Interact with other CSA members at the farm stand	22%	60%	20%	0%	20%

Table 5: Frequencies of topics mentioned pertaining to the definition of community with reference to CSA.

## **Consumer Behavior: What Changes are Occurring?**

### ***General Trends Among Groups: Food Prep and Seasonality Awareness***

Almost all of the current CSA members in this study experienced some sort of behavior change since they first joined CSA. On the other hand, the former CSA members in Group 4 did not find that their behavior changed at all while they were CSA members (discussed further below). Changes common among all the current member groups include alterations in food preparation and consumer awareness and consideration of food seasonality.

Members’ food preparation habits changed in various ways. Some, as mentioned above, began to plan their meals more carefully and around the produce that was available in their share, adapting and, in most cases, enjoying the challenge that a limited selection of produce posed for them: “I feel way better, knowing what I'm going to eat...I love to cook. I

just feel like it's so much better now..." Many changed how and what they cooked, trying new techniques and becoming more involved with their food preparation: "I think it causes me to cook from scratch a lot more." Some participants tried new foods: "I find because of the recipes [in the newsletter], I have some ingredients in my cupboard that I never had before. Balsamic vinegar and tamari, some of those things. So the vegetables I make tend to be a little more interesting..." Another participant learned that "[t]here's so much out there besides what Copps' produce section had. I had no idea. It really opened my eyes to the world of vegetables."

Other participants find that they are encouraged to eat out less and at least one member thinks more about where he dines out: "I think...do they buy food from our farmers or from another farmer around here. So that sort of becomes like another decision-making factor when we go out to eat." About one-fourth of the current members find that they freeze or store more vegetables and produce less waste. One member still has "some leek and potato soup in the freezer from last year" and another has "basil that I just threw in a Ziploc bag and threw it in the freezer. I've been breaking it off. It's unbelievable. It seems like it's fresh." These data are complemented by the 2005 member survey results in which 83% of the respondents indicated that their cooking knowledge has increased since joining CSA.

Seasonality also became an important factor for two-thirds of the current CSA members: "I think the biggest thing I've learned is seasons, and...what things you can get in what part of a season." For many this has translated into an attitudinal shift: "I think it's good for everybody. I think, especially in America, you just get used to [expecting that] whatever you want is going to be there. If you've got the money to buy it, you'll get it. I think it's good to remember that there are forces beyond that, and that nature is one of them. That's all right.

You try something else.” Hand with hand changes in attitude are different purchasing decisions: “...now we’re a little more persnickety about [seasonality] and we’ll kind of ask ourselves the question, ‘do we really need the red pepper from Israel right now?’ Or, ‘can we really afford these?’ So that’s sort of ongoing.”

For some members CSA prompted or empowered them to act on pre-existing knowledge and values: “I think part of it is learning to eat what is in season, and the farm share really helps that because you don’t want to waste it, so you start looking for recipes that are relative to whatever is in the farm share. Even though...I thought that was a cool idea before I got the farm share, that farm share sort of pushed me to [act on it].” Another member expressed that “I think about [seasonality] when I get my share. I think about, well, how much do I really need outside of my share. And I kind of feel guilty going to a store and buying something that is out of season because I feel like I’m not living with the philosophy that I set out with...when I first joined the CSA.”

These participants buy seasonally for various reasons such as the social implications of importing foods from around the globe: “I’d find myself just a little bit more aware, socially. I shouldn’t really buy vegetables out of season that are shipped from California. I think that having a CSA has made me think about that just a little bit more, so I might be a little bit more hesitant.” They also noted the reduced quality and high price of off-season produce: “I think that over the winter I became a lot less tolerant of grocery store produce. I would just rather not eat lettuce if it’s not going to be good.” However, for a smaller percentage of the participants, their enhanced awareness has not prompted seasonal consumer choices: “It hasn’t really changed my behavior any, but when I do go to the store sometimes,

I think about where [the produce] is...in the cycle and also what types of vegetables grow in this area, as opposed to other areas.”

***Other General Trends Among Participants: Vegetables and Appreciation for Farming***

Two other changes common among a large number of the participants included changes in their diet and an enhanced appreciation for farming. The 2005 survey data shows that 91% of the respondents are eating more vegetables and improving their nutritional health since they joined Troy CSA. Members in the focus groups found that they now eat more fresh vegetables and often associated that with the development of healthier eating habits: “I think every year we get a little bit healthier...We try new things, and we're more creative, and we're more adventuresome. I think that carries through. [CSA] does feed your habits, for our family, even after the crops.” Another member found that “[d]uring the year I was definitely eating more vegetables, and vegetables I've never eaten before. That is what is kind of cool about...getting one of these [pre-selected shares]. If I was at the farmer's market, I wouldn't have purchased it for myself.” Those members raising families feel that CSA has benefited their children as well: “...my kids are so aware of vegetables, and being organic, and things...When they have a choice of different foods, they'll pick healthier foods. I think that [CSA] was a really good education.”

For a few members focusing on fresh vegetables has moved them away from eating meat: “...especially since joining the CSA, I've been trying to base a lot more of my meals around vegetables, and try to put some type of vegetables in my meal. Growing up, my mom was very meat, potato, vegetable type of meals. This is a radical shift for me, and it's very welcome.” One member revealed that “[w]e eat a lot healthier since we joined CSA. We are edging further and further towards becoming total vegetarians.” In some cases these changes

influence other family members: “I’m less likely to assume we have to have meat at every meal. Even better, my husband is less likely to assume we have to have meat at every meal.”

A small but adamant percentage of the participants also indicated that they buy more organic foods and products now that they are a part of CSA: “I’m choosing more organic than I would have probably before I had the farm share. Not just produce, but also some products.” Another member revealed that “...we’ve just totally kind of gone organic - milk and everything...It was a gradual change with being involved with the CSA.”

In addition to revised eating habits the current member participants in this study discovered that they had a new level of understanding and appreciation for farming: “I think I’ve come to understand a little bit better the difficulties of being a farmer...And just appreciating...the hardships that [they] go through. I mean, the obvious anxiety that that can cause.” For some members this has changed their attitude about food availability: “I remember Claire writing in the newsletter of how she was very disappointed in some of the earlier stages when things were really hot, and dry, and the CSA shares weren’t as big as they hoped they would be. We just kind of empathized with that...If I go to the grocery store, and there’s no red peppers there, I say, ‘damn it, where are my red peppers?!’...The weather is important to me now. It’s not like I just want it to be 75 degrees and sunny. I want there to be rain so that Claire has a good season.”

### ***Notable Differences Between Groups: Current, Engaged, and Former Members***

The most notable difference between the four focus groups (Table 6) was the complete of absence of behavior change in Group 4 (former members). This could be explained in couple of different ways. First, the profile of a former member may include a strong preference for established behaviors (i.e. self-selection of vegetables, maintenance of a

specific diet and favored consumer habits). Perhaps, willingness, or even desire, to change is part what defines a returning CSA member. Additionally, the lack of attitudinal change with regards to the hardships of farming probably caused these members to be less forgiving when the produce did not meet their expectations. In turn, the absence of attitudinal change is probably related to this groups' general disappointment with the community aspect of Troy CSA.

On the other hand the engaged members seem to demonstrate behavior change that is more closely related the social aspects of CSA. Changes in Group 3's eating habits (i.e. adopting a healthier diet, eating more fresh, organic vegetables) were less pronounced than in Groups 1 and 2, with the exception of trying new foods. Instead this group emphasized changes in their appreciation for farming and consideration of seasonal produce. There are a few possible explanations for this (1) this group has a greater interest in the broad social and community benefits of CSA, which is likely as this group has committed time and energy to the cause, (2) the members in this group have already made the dietary shifts mentioned by the other two groups, and specifically sought out CSA as a way to satisfy those preferences, which was specifically indicated by a few of these members, and/or (3) they have a greater interest in farming as an activity than the produce they acquire as a result of their labor.

<b>FREQUENCIES OF TOPICS BROACHED THAT WERE ASSOCIATED WITH BEHAVIOR CHANGE (EXPRESSED IN A PERCENTAGE OF POSSIBLE OCCURANCES)</b>					
<b>Types of Behavior Change</b>	<b>Total Focus Group (n=23)</b>	<b>G1: Current Members (n=5)</b>	<b>G2: Current Members (n=5)</b>	<b>G3: Engaged Members (n=8)</b>	<b>G4: Former Members (n=5)</b>
Changes in food preparation	61%	100%	80%	63%	<b>0%</b>
Consider food seasonality when making purchasing decisions	52%	60%	100%	50%	<b>0%</b>
Eat healthier/Eat more fresh vegetables	43%	80%	80%	25%	<b>0%</b>
Gained appreciation for farming	43%	20%	100%	50%	<b>0%</b>
Store more vegetables	26%	40%	40%	25%	<b>0%</b>
Waste less food	22%	60%	40%	0%	<b>0%</b>
Buy more organic foods and products	22%	40%	60%	0%	<b>0%</b>

Table 6: Frequencies of topics mentioned pertaining to behavior change among CSA members, notable differences are indicated in bold text.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION PART III: CSA MEMBER PROFILES**

### **CSA Member Profiles**

In combination these data indicate that there are roughly 4 different kinds of CSA members: (1) the Faithful Utilitarian, (2) the Engaged Believer, (3) the Working Utilitarian, and (4) the Disappointed Self-Selector. These profiles help to determine how well matched a consumer is to Troy CSA or, in other words, how likely it is that they will retain their membership. They are generalizations, of course, and cannot be applied with complete accuracy to every member within each category. However, these simplified expressions help to describe Troy CSA members and associated patterns of behavior in more comprehensive terms. These profiles are described below and discussed further in the next section.

#### ***The Faithful Utilitarian***

From these data it seems that faithful Troy CSA members generally share the following characteristics: (1) they have a preference for quality (and probably organic) produce, (2) they want to support a local farmer, (3) they believe in the philosophy of the overall project (FTG and a local, urban farm) and get moral satisfaction from being a part of

it, (4) they glean utility from their interactions with the farmer and the sense of community that CSA provides, which potentially increases loyalty and makes them a little more forgiving of the quirks of CSA, (5) they live near the farm, and (6) they have a preference for pre-selected produce, (7) they have a willingness, and possibly a desire, to change their behavior to accommodate CSA and demonstrate such changes over time, and (8) through exposure to the farm and associated laborers, they gain a sense of appreciation for farming and its hardships.

What sets this group apart from the others is an emphasis on the utilitarian aspects of their membership as opposed to social aspects from which they gain moral satisfaction. For instance, these members seem to focus on the quality of the produce, the convenience of the urban farm, the benefits of pre-selected produce, and the positive changes CSA has made in their diet and food preparation habits. It is these benefits that seem to retain this type of member.

When compared demographically to the other profiled groups, Faithful Utilitarians tend to be a little younger, are more likely to be employed and to have incomes above the national median, which, according to the U.S. Census (2000), is approximately \$42,000 per year (for more details see Table 7). All the Faithful Utilitarians were in Focus Groups 1 and 2, which were comprised of current members and, at the time of this study, were more likely to have been Troy CSA members for only 1 or 2 years (see Table 8).

### ***The Engaged Believer***

The Engaged Believer shares many of the same characteristics as the Faithful Utilitarian, but rather than emphasizing the utilitarian benefits of CSA this group focuses on the moral satisfaction they get from being a part of a movement that they believe in, which is

reflected in the types behavior change they exhibit. They are more interested in the broader philosophies associated with CSA and with FTG specifically. These members are more likely to build meaningful relationships with the farmer and with each other, and therefore have a slightly more actualized definition of community in CSA. They are also more committed to the success of the farm and interested in learning about, and connecting to, agrarian culture. The Engaged Believer is a self-motivated member and gets involved with the farm in different ways such as joining the Core Group and volunteering their time to promote the farm or volunteering with other aspects of FTG. These members are probably the most loyal and are very likely to renew their membership from year to year.

Demographically, members of this group are a little more likely to be retired and to have incomes at or below the median income level, less likely to have children in the home, and tend to be older than the other profiled groups (Table 7). The Engaged Believers were found in Focus Group 1 (current members) and Focus Group 3 (engaged members) and were more likely to have been members of Troy CSA for multiple years (Table 8).

### ***The Working Utilitarian***

These members are engaged with the farm as active worker shares. Their reasons for joining CSA and their exhibited behavior changes are most aligned with the Engaged Believer, but they also emphasize the utility they get from working on the farm. It has been argued that the motivation for joining as a worker share member has egalitarian roots because it could provide a working option for lower income people. However, worker share members put in an approximate total of 84 hours during the growing season in exchange for their produce. At \$400 a share, the implicit wage is about \$4.76 an hour, which indicates that these members are gleaming satisfaction from working on the farm, or for a cause that they

believe in, rather than choosing an economically beneficial option for food consumption.

This is also reflected in their comments (mentioned above).

According to the current literature these members should be more likely to retain their membership than other paying members as they are more engaged with the farm. However, these data do not support this theory fully as only one of the four worker shares in this study renewed her membership and two of the former members were worker shares at one time. It is possible that worker share members are more interested in farming than in supporting a specific CSA. These members might opt to start their own gardens or join another farm where they could learn from a different mentor. It is also possible that convenience plays a larger role for worker shares since they have to put in more hours at the farm. In this particular group community building or the implicit wage could be important factors for maintaining working members and it could be beneficial to conduct a wider scale survey to assess worker share loyalty.

The Working Utilitarians tend to be younger (like the Faithful Utilitarians) and are more likely to be in a committed relationship and to have an income at, or below, the U.S. median (Table 7). These members were all found in Focus Group 3 (engaged members) and, at the time of this study, had been members for 1 or 2 years (Table 8).

### ***The Disappointed Self-Selector***

The Disappointed Self-Selector also shares some characteristics with the Faithful Utilitarian such as a preference for fresh, organic produce, supporting a local farmer, supporting the philosophies of an urban farm and of FTG, and being part of a community. They also tend to live near the farm. However, unlike the Faithful and Engaged members, Troy did not meet the expectations of this group. All of the participants in this focus group

expressed some dissatisfaction with the quantity and variety of produce and the majority did not feel like they were a part of a community. Some of this discontent arose from negative experiences on the farm (described above), but generally it seems that this group has a set of preferences that did not necessarily match the structure of CSA.

The Disappointed Self-Selector generally has a strong preference for choice when it comes to the types and quantities of produce that they buy (or grow) each week and they are less likely to want to change their behavior to adapt to the restrictive nature of CSA. This group tends to be less outspoken than the Engaged members and therefore needs more direct facilitation from the farming community to feel welcomed and involved. These elements are important because without them these members do not cultivate an appreciation for farming at Troy and tend to be less forgiving when it does not meet their needs.

As a result of these findings Claire Strader has made a commitment to resolve some of the information and community building issues that disappointed these former members. However, it is possible that with their primary preference of self-selection, these individuals would still not maintain their membership. CSA is not a great system for everyone and with the plethora of local food outlets in the Madison community they have ample opportunities to act on their value set. In fact some of these former members still buy produce from Troy Community Farm, they simply do it at the Farmers' Market.

The Disappointed Self-Selectors were all found in Focus Group 4 (former members). They tend to be older (like the engaged believers), are less likely to have children and more likely to be employed and to have incomes above the median (Table 7). The number of years that these individuals were members vary a bit, though 3 out of the 5 only joined for 1 year (Table 8).

<b>DEMOGRAPHICS: INDIVIDUAL PROFILE GROUPS</b>					
<b>Demographic Category</b>	<b>Faithful Utilitarians n=8</b>	<b>Engaged Believers n=6</b>	<b>Working Utilitarians n=4</b>	<b>Disappointed Self-Selectors n=5</b>	<b>Total n=23</b>
<b>Age</b>					
Range	22-61	32-85	26-58	48-64	<b>22-85</b>
Average	39	55	40	55	<b>47</b>
20-29	38%	0%	25%	0%	<b>17%</b>
30-39	25%	17%	50%	0%	<b>22%</b>
40-49	13%	50%	0%	20%	<b>22%</b>
50-59	0%	0%	25%	60%	<b>17%</b>
60-69	25%	0%	0%	20%	<b>13%</b>
70-79	0%	17%	0%	0%	<b>4%</b>
80+	0%	17%	0%	0%	<b>4%</b>
<b>Sex</b>					
Female	88%	67%	50%	80%	<b>74%</b>
Male	13%	33%	50%	20%	<b>26%</b>
<b>Education</b>					
High School	13%	0%	0%	0%	<b>4%</b>
Associates	0%	33%	0%	0%	<b>9%</b>
Bachelors	50%	33%	75%	60%	<b>52%</b>
Masters	13%	33%	0%	20%	<b>17%</b>
JD	13%	0%	0%	0%	<b>4%</b>
PhD	13%	0%	25%	20%	<b>13%</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>					
Caucasian	100%	67%	100%	80%	<b>87%</b>
Asian American	0%	17%	0%	0%	<b>4%</b>
Undisclosed	0%	17%	0%	20%	<b>9%</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>					
Single	25%	50%	0%	40%	<b>30%</b>
Married	63%	33%	75%	40%	<b>52%</b>
Partner	13%	17%	25%	0%	<b>13%</b>
Undisclosed	0%	0%	0%	20%	<b>4%</b>
<b>Dependents in Home</b>					
Yes	25%	0%	50%	0%	<b>17%</b>
No	75%	83%	50%	80%	<b>74%</b>
Undisclosed	0%	17%	0%	20%	<b>9%</b>
<b>Employment</b>					
Employed	100%	67%	75%	100%	<b>87%</b>
Stay At Home Parent	0%	0%	25%	0%	<b>4%</b>
Retired	0%	33%	0%	0%	<b>9%</b>
<b>Annual Household Income</b>					
Less than \$30,000	13%	17%	25%	0%	<b>13%</b>
\$30,000-\$59,999	50%	67%	75%	40%	<b>57%</b>
\$60,000-\$89,999	38%	0%	0%	0%	<b>13%</b>
Over \$90,000	0%	17%	0%	40%	<b>13%</b>
Undisclosed	0%	0%	0%	20%	<b>4%</b>
<b>Primary Food Shopper</b>					
Yes	50%	67%	75%	60%	<b>61%</b>
No	0%	0%	0%	0%	<b>0%</b>
Shared	50%	33%	25%	40%	<b>39%</b>

Table 7: Demographic data arranged by profile group. Data is represented as a percentage of the total participants assigned to that group.

CSA MEMBER PROFILES ACROSS THE FOCUS GROUPS				
	Faithful Utilitarian	Engaged Believer	Working Utilitarian	Disappointed Self-Selector
<b>Group 1</b>				
Participant 1		3 Years		
Participant 2	1 Year			
Participant 3		4 Years		
Participant 4	1 Year			
Participant 5	2 years			
<b>Group 2</b>				
Participant 1	1 Year			
Participant 2	1 Year			
Participant 3	2 Years			
Participant 4	1 Year			
Participant 5	1 Year			
<b>Group 3</b>				
Participant 1		1 Year		
Participant 2		3 Years		
Participant 3			1 Year	
Participant 4			1 Year	
Participant 5			1 Year	
Participant 6		4 Years		
Participant 7		1 Year		
Participant 8			2 Years	
<b>Group 4</b>				
Participant 1				1Year*
Participant 2				1 Year
Participant 3				1 Year
Participant 4				2 Years
Participant 5				3 Years

Table 8: Participants from the different focus groups as they were assigned profiles plus the number of years each participant had been a member of Troy CSA from 2002-2005 (does not include 2006 members). n=23  
 \*This member did not prefer self-selection, rather it was the high quantity of produce that was a problem.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION PART IV: CONCEPTUAL MODELS OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE, ATTRITION AND RETENTION, AND MEMBER PROFILES**

### **Behavior Change: What are the Benefits and What are the Catalysts?**

There are environmental and social benefits associated with the behavior change mentioned above. Healthier eating habits, increased vegetable consumption, and decreased meat consumption produce healthier citizens and could reduce the medical costs affiliated

with obesity and other diet-related diseases. In fact, this benefit has already been recognized by health insurance providers like Physicians Plus, which now offers cash rebates for CSA memberships (\$100 for an individual and \$200 for a family, which is half the price of a Troy CSA membership). These dietary changes, along with seasonally conscious food decisions and increased consumption of organic products, also have positive effects on the environment, which were discussed in the introduction.

In order to maximize these benefits it is important to identify the possible catalysts for these changes. As established above, there is not enough actualized interaction in the Troy CSA consumer community to produce social norms. Therefore it is unlikely that any of these behavior changes are influenced by social circumstances within CSA. It is much more likely that the members are adapting to the inherent structure of CSA, which (1) forces them to make dietary and related behavior changes by restricting their choice, (2) educates and exposes them to different foods and preparation techniques through pre-selected produce and recipes provided in the weekly newsletter, and (3) introduces them to the seasonality of foods and benefits of eating accordingly. These adaptations might be amplified by members' predisposition, or even desire, to change their behavior, which might have brought them to CSA in the first place.

These findings reject a portion of my initial hypothesis, which proposed that social norms established within CSA would shape members' behavior (see Figure 3). In my initial conceptual model, individuals displaying a specific value set (discussed above) would join CSA and through community interaction, exposure to social norms, contact with the farm, and the momentum provided by initial changes in behavior, they would eventually begin to adopt other behaviors consistent with their value set. They might drive less, buy

biodegradable soaps, or frequent other locally owned businesses. CSA members that joined with a different value set might find themselves adopting new values and thus undergo the same changes. In this way CSA membership would act as facilitator for behavior change and as a consequence of this behavior change the members most entrenched in the process would be more likely to renew their membership, which could potentially provide incentive for the farm to actively engage their members.

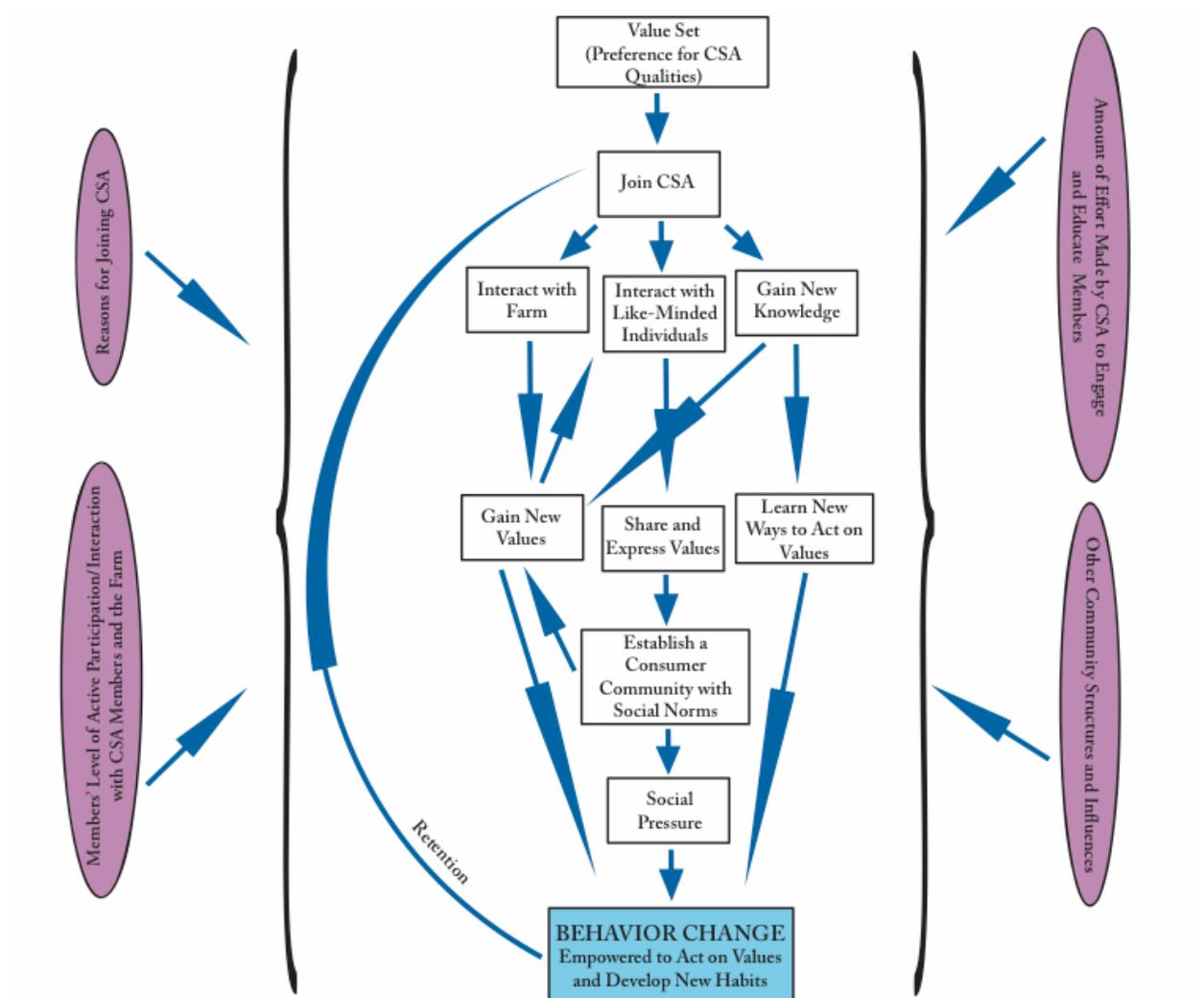


Figure 3: Hypothesized model for behavior change within a CSA. Factors in the lavender ovals represent the mediating factors that influence the level of behavior change that could occur.

The data in this study suggest, however, that CSA does not encourage the development of new values or social norms, but simply facilitates those that already exist. Therefore, the central sequence of events modeled in Figure 3 are not an accurate depiction of behavior change within CSA. A revised version of this conceptual model is illustrated in Figure 4 where attrition, retention, and member profiles are also included, thereby linking these issues with behavior change as discussed above.

In this model the behavior change is limited to food related choices and is based on the institutional structure (pre-selected produce), interaction with the farm, and education provided by Troy CSA. This compliments O'Hara and Stagl's (2002) endogenous preference argument and their results which show that member preferences for organic produce, supporting a local farmer, seasonal food consumption, knowledge of food origin were enhanced over time. It is possible that social norms could develop in smaller, active sub-groups within Troy CSA (like the Core Group) if facilitation and organization was increased within the membership base and the farm, providing for the forum to cultivate relationships and "moral muscle" that shape and enforce social norms (O'Hara and Stagl 2002).

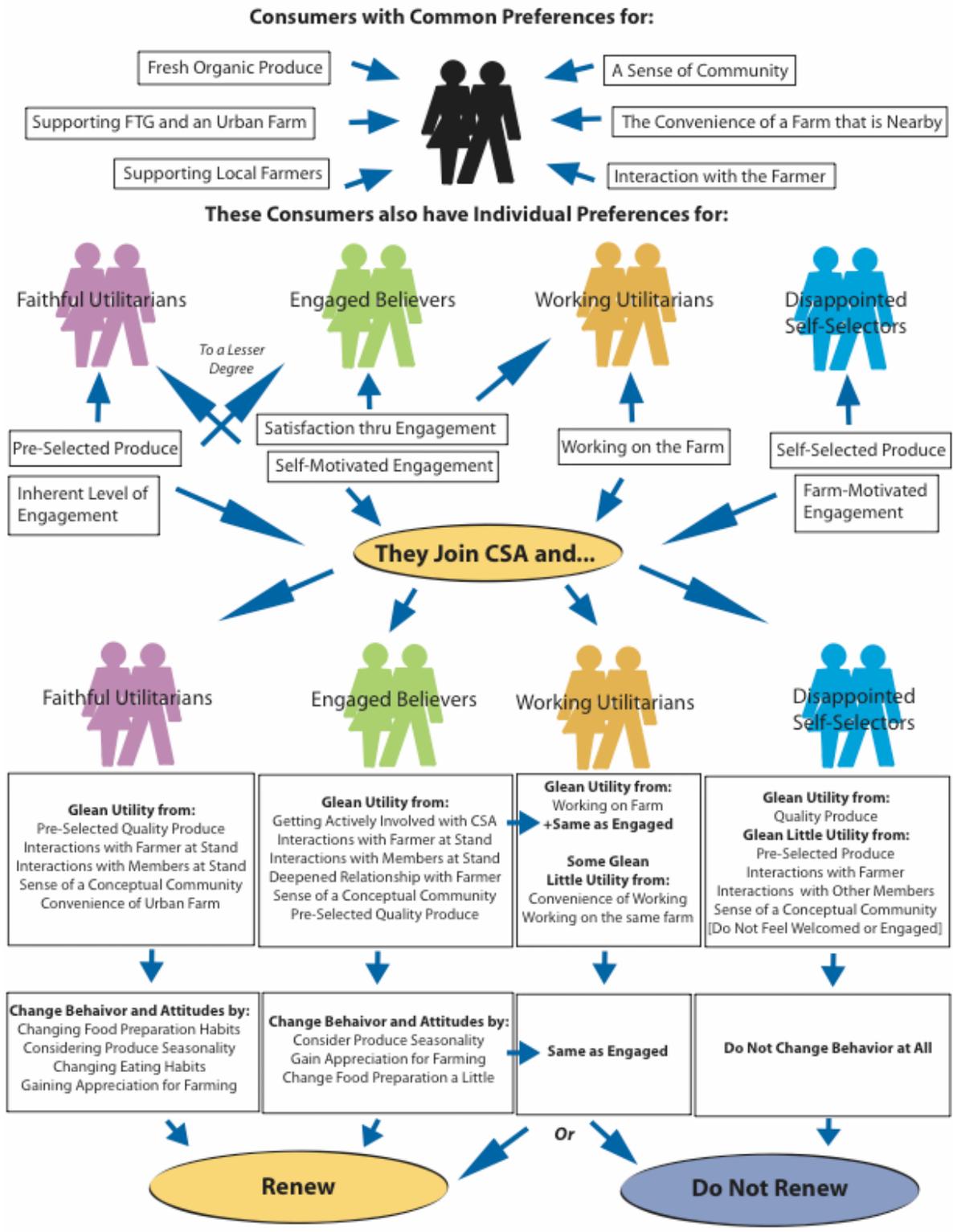


Figure 4: Potential conceptual model for attrition, retention, and behavior change within Troy CSA membership base.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Overview of Broad Themes**

The study indicates that consumers join CSA because they want to (1) access high quality (and, to a lesser extent, organic) produce, (2) support local farmers, (3) get exposed to new foods by receiving a pre-selected bundle of vegetables, and/or (4) be a part of community. Retention is thus based on the farm's ability to satisfy these preferences. Troy Community Farm in particular attracts and retains members because it is (1) an urban farm in close proximity to its members, (2) a part of a larger organization (Friends of Troy Gardens), and/or (3) because there is sense of loyalty to Claire Strader, the managing farmer. Attrition within Troy CSA occurs when the members (1) have a strong preference for self-selected vegetables, (2) do not feel like they are a part of the community, and/or (3) perceive that they are not being treated fairly.

The "sense of community," mentioned above, is defined, in part, by the participants' impression that they share common interests and values with other CSA members. There is very little actualized interaction between members of Troy CSA. Therefore, it seems that Troy provides a conceptual community of common interests, rather than a social network governed by established and enforced norms. In the absence of social norms it is concluded that the CSA members' behavior changes, such as altered cooking and eating habits, consideration of food seasonality, and increased appreciation for farming, are attributed to the institutional and educational framework provided by Troy CSA, rather than social circumstances. The combination of member preferences and behavior patterns provides a rough conceptual model of what makes a faithful CSA member.

## **Recommendations for Troy Community Farm**

### ***Capitalize on Troy's Positive Attributes***

These data indicate that current CSA members are very satisfied with their membership and they have provided examples of what is working best for them. Thus, the first recommendation to Troy Community Farm is to keep up the good work. Below there are a few ways to accentuate Troy's positive qualities that were provided directly by the participants in the study or extrapolated from the data. Some of these have already been instituted and others have been recognized and/or revised by Claire Strader, the managing farmer, who has agreed to apply them.

- 1) Market Troy's convenient location and uniqueness as an urban farm.
- 2) Recruit as locally as possible to capitalize on the convenience factor and encourage environmentally sound shopping habits.
- 3) Market the personal interaction members get to have with the farmer and the farm.
- 4) Give Claire more time to interact with the members at the stand by having the Farm and Field workers be responsible for the logistics of setting up and distributing produce.
- 5) Market the general benefits of CSA: Fresh, organic produce and supporting local farmers.
- 6) Market the benefits of receiving pre-selected produce such as exposure to new foods, menu planning and inspiration, healthier eating habits, etc.
- 7) Market to individuals that want to make changes in their life, i.e. eat better, cook more, etc.
- 8) Incorporate more recipes in the newsletter as they are very popular and promote the benefits of pre-selected produce.
- 9) Provide a recipe drop-box at the farm stand (or another method of collection) to encourage members to share their favorite recipes.

- 10) Encourage members to include a photograph with their recipe to help members get to know each other.
- 11) Market Troy's connection to FTG.
- 12) Include recipes (plus photographs) from individuals that are involved with other aspects of FTG to help connect CSA members to the organization.
- 13) Continue to facilitate the Core Group as it enhances member satisfaction and provides support for the farm.
- 14) Empower the Core Group and other members to help to enhance the community aspect of Troy by organizing food sampling at the farm stand, or other simple activities like that.
- 15) Continue to print the newsletter and include updates from the farm as members really enjoy reading and it helps connect them to the farm.
- 16) Remember to be honest, but not too dreary in the newsletter updates – members want to know what is going on and hearing about the hardships helps them gain a appreciation for farming, but too much bad news might overwhelm them.
- 17) Find simple (time and cost effective) methods of promoting community, like setting out chairs at the stand so that people will be encouraged to sit and chat with each other.
- 18) Revise the yearly survey to include questions that address changes made and reflect the findings in this study (see Appendix C for the revised survey).

### ***Address Specific Concerns Raised in the Focus Groups***

A few members had specific experiences and concerns that were brought up during the focus group discussions and some former members mentioned that these factors contributed to their decision to leave Troy CSA (described in earlier sections). Thus these recommendations address these directly and have been amended and approved by Claire Strader. For some concerns I have included the comments made by Claire to help flesh out the problems and solutions.

- 1) Organize “gleaner” hours when members can come out and pick the extra vegetables that would not be harvested otherwise.  
 Note: Claire expressed that there is rarely any harvestable food left in the field, and that there is often a misperception of waste. The produce left in the field is low quality and not worth harvesting. However, she recommended offering gleaner hours for the worker share members, as they are in the field anyway.
- 2) Institute, and provide transparency for, a policy on food distribution among farm laborers (worker shares, Farm and Field, and interns). There is currently no policy and this has caused some feelings of inequity in the past.
- 3) Ensure that there is transparency of policy for food distribution among paying members as well. For instance, emphasize that the CSA shares are the farm’s first priority and explain that if there is not enough of one vegetable, that variety gets sold as an “extra.” This way members do not feel slighted when they see items at the stand that are not available for them to take as part of their share.
- 4) When there is not enough of certain vegetables to divide among the members, allow members to choose one variety on a first come first serve basis, rather than selling them as extras (also addresses the concern mentioned above).
- 5) Ensure that there is transparency in the distribution of labor among the workers on the farm and that all members are contributing equally.

***Other Specific Recommendations Made Directly by Focus Group Participants***

This last set of recommendations were mentioned by members, but did not seem to pertain to “make or break” concerns. However, I have included them here because they could improve the farm. Claire has agreed to address them unless otherwise noted.

- 1) Consider partnering with other farms and offer other items to the shareholders, i.e. fruit, eggs, etc.
- 2) Allow worker share members to pick up their share when they fulfill their hours so they do not have to come to the farm twice during the week.
- 3) Provide half-shares again.  
 Note: Claire said that this is not possible
- 4) Provide extended hours for pick-up.  
 Note: Claire said that this is not possible

- 5) Make exceptions for older workers and allow them to sit on the ground rather than squat while working

Note: Claire said that this is not possible. She believes that the loss in efficiency is too great when people sit on the ground. She also wants the older workers to set an example for the younger ones.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Recommendations for further research include: (1) a qualitative analysis that looks at worker share members specifically to tease apart what community means to them and why they choose to renew or give up their membership, (2) a qualitative study based on a series of focus groups across different CSA membership bases that focuses on the definition of community for these members, (3) a quantitative, longitudinal study based on before and after surveys for incoming CSA members with multiple farms that tracks their behavior change over time, and (4) a qualitative and quantitative study that compares the preferences of urban and rural CSA members.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Troy Community Farm CSA Focus Group: Pre-Survey (Version 1)**

*Thank you for volunteering to participate in this CSA focus group. Please take a few minutes to fill out the following information. This pre-survey will help inform the results of our study. Although we ask for your name, it will only be used for our own tracking purposes. Your name will not be associated with any of the results included in the final study.*

#### **General Information:**

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Marital Status (please select one):  
 Single     Married     Partner (living together, but not married)
  
4. Education: Highest degree obtained (please select one):  
 High School     Bachelor     Masters     PhD     Other:
  
5. Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. Approximate annual income (please select one):  
 Less than \$30,000     \$30,000-\$59,999     \$60,000-\$89,999     More than \$90,000
  
7. Ethnic Background: \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. Are you the primary food shopper in your household (please select one)?  
 Yes     No     Food shopping is shared

#### **Troy Related Information:**

1. Did you know that Troy Community Farm is part of a non-profit organization called the Friends of Troy Gardens?  
 Yes     No
  
2. Did you know that the Friends of Troy Gardens:
  - a. Has a prairie restoration area?

\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_ No

b. Runs a kids' garden?

\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_ No

c. Runs a youth program called Farm and Field with high school students?

\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_ No

d. Provides space for community gardens?

\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_ No

e. Is part of a larger project to build affordable co-housing in the land adjacent to the gardens?

\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_ No

3. During the most recent year that you were a Troy CSA member how often did you read Urban Roots (the CSA newsletter)?

\_\_\_ Every time    \_\_\_ Once in a while    \_\_\_ Never – I don't have time    \_\_\_ Never – not interested

4. Reasons you joined Troy Community Farm (please rank your top 5 reasons on a scale of 1-5):

- \_\_\_ a. I want the freshest vegetables for my family
- \_\_\_ b. Health reasons
- \_\_\_ c. For my children
- \_\_\_ d. I'm appalled at the quality of produce found in supermarkets
- \_\_\_ e. I don't like the waste in our food system, especially the energy costs of transporting it great distances
- \_\_\_ f. I feel good about sharing in the benefits and risks with those who grow the food
- \_\_\_ g. I like being able to choose my own specific vegetables from the pick-up table
- \_\_\_ h. I like that the farm is right in the city.
- \_\_\_ i. I like that the farm is in my neighborhood
- \_\_\_ j. I like supporting northside businesses
- \_\_\_ k. I like picking my own flowers and herbs from the CSA garden
- \_\_\_ l. I like seeing and talking with the farmer and the folks who grow my food at the pick up site
- \_\_\_ k. I like seeing and talking with other CSA members
- \_\_\_ k. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Troy Community Farm CSA Focus Group: Pre-Survey (Version 2)**  
**[Questions that were changed or added are noted with an \*]**

*Thank you for volunteering to participate in this CSA focus group. Please take a few minutes to fill out the following information. This pre-survey will help inform the results of our study. Although we ask for your name, it will only be used for our own tracking purposes. Your name will not be associated with any of the results included in the final study.*

**General Information:**

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Marital Status (please select one):  
 Single     Married     Partner (living together, but not married)
4. \*Do you have dependent children living with you in your home?  
 Yes     No  
If yes, what is/are their age(s): \_\_\_\_\_
5. Education: Highest degree obtained (please select one):  
 High School     Bachelor     Masters     PhD     Other:
6. \*Occupation and Employer: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Approximate annual income (please select one):  
 Less than \$30,000     \$30,000-\$59,999     \$60,000-\$89,999     More than \$90,000
8. Ethnic Background: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Are you the primary food shopper in your household (please select one)?  
 Yes     No     Food shopping is shared

**Troy Related Information:**

10. Did you know that Troy Community Farm is part of a non-profit organization called the Friends of Troy Gardens?  
 Yes     No
11. Did you know that the Friends of Troy Gardens:
  - a. Has a prairie restoration area?  
 Yes     No

- b. Runs a kids' garden?  
 Yes       No
- c. Runs a youth program called Farm and Field with high school students?  
 Yes       No
- d. Provides space for community gardens?  
 Yes       No
- e. Is part of a larger project to build affordable co-housing in the land adjacent to the gardens?  
 Yes       No

12. During the most recent year that you were a Troy CSA member how often did you read Urban Roots (the CSA newsletter)?

Every time     Once in a while     Never – I don't have time     Never – not interested

13. Reasons you first joined Troy Community Farm (please rank your top 5 reasons on a scale of 1-5):

- I like getting farm fresh vegetables
- \*I like getting organic vegetables
- For health reasons
- For my children
- \*For the quality of the produce
- \*I believe that buying locally reduces the energy costs of importing vegetables
- \*I believe that organic growing practices are better for the environment
- I feel good about sharing in the benefits and risks with those who grow the food
- I like being able to choose my own specific vegetables from the pick-up table
- \*I like getting a pre-selected bunch of produce
- I like that the farm is right in the city
- I like that the farm is in my neighborhood
- I like supporting local businesses
- I like picking my own flowers and herbs from the CSA garden
- I like seeing and talking with the farmer and the folks who grow my food at the pick up site
- \*I like seeing and talking with other CSA members

Other(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX B**

**2005 Troy Community Farm CSA Shareholder Survey**

*Please sit down right now and take a few minutes to fill out this form. We greatly appreciate thoughtful shareholder feedback. Please mail this form to Troy Community Farm, 1814 Sheridan Drive, Madison, WI 53704. Many thanks.*

Name (optional):

1. How did you hear about Troy Community Farm? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How long have you been a CSA member (at Troy or otherwise)? \_\_\_\_\_.

- If you switched to Troy from another CSA, why?

3. Would you be willing to participate in the Troy CSA Core Group to help with marketing, activity planning, etc?

[Yes] [No]

**Food**

4. How many children and adults did you feed from your share? Children\_\_\_ Adults\_\_\_

5. Was your share sufficient for your family size? [Yes] [No]

6. Since becoming a member of the farm, do you feel you have been eating more vegetables? [Yes] [No]

7. Do you feel you have increased your general cooking knowledge since joining the CSA? [Yes] [No]

8. Do you feel you have improved your/your family members' nutritional health since joining Troy Community Farm? [Yes] [No]

-If yes, how?

**Vegetables**

9. Which were your favorite vegetables?

10. Which vegetable would you like to see more of?

11. Which were your least favorite vegetables?

Arugula	Cucumbers	Onions	Summer Squash
Basil	Eggplant	Peas	Sweet Potatoes
Beans	Fennel	Peppers	Swiss Chard
Beets	Garlic	Potatoes	Tomatillos
Broccoli	Herbs	Pumpkins	Tomatoes
Brussel Sprouts	Kale	Radishes	Winter Squash
Cabbage	Lettuce	Salsa Baskets	
Carrots	Leeks	Scallions	
Cilantro	Melons	Spinach	

12. Are there vegetables we do not currently offer that you would like to see in your box? Which ones?

**Share Pick-Up**

14. How did the pick-up process work for you? Very well\_\_\_ OK\_\_\_ Not well\_\_\_  
If not well, why not?

15. Have you ever used the back-up plan for picking up your share off of Claire's porch? [Yes] [No]

If yes, how often?

16. What do you like about Troy Community Farm? (check the 2 most important to you)

- Can buy extras at the farm stand     Flower & Herb garden u-pick     Convenient location  
 Farmstand style pick-up     Seeing neighbors at pick-up site  
 Certified Organic     Supporting local farmer

17. Do you pick-your-own flowers and herbs at the Troy CSA garden ? [Yes] [No]

18. How often did you read Urban Roots (CSA newsletter)?

[Every Time]    [Once in a while]    [Never – no time]    [Never – no interest]

- a. What is your favorite newsletter feature?
- b. What is your least favorite?
- c. Are there other things you would like to see in the newsletter?

### **Troy Gardens**

19. Which events did you attend at Troy Gardens during the 2004 growing season:

- Summer Solstice     Flower Festival     Fall Harvest Festival  
 Other     None

20. Do you spend time at or visit other parts of the Troy Gardens site?

- Gardens     Prairie     Woodland Trails     Farm

21. On a scale of 1(worst) to 10(best), how would you rate your overall CSA experience ? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Will you rejoin the CSA this year?

Yes     Leaning yes     Maybe/don't know     Leaning no     No

If not, why?

23. Reasons you joined Troy Community Farm (check your top 5 reasons):

- a. I want the freshest vegetables for my family
- b. Health reasons
- c. For my children
- d. I'm appalled at the quality of produce found in supermarkets
- e. I don't like the waste in our food system, especially the energy costs of transporting it great distances
- f. I feel good about sharing in the benefits and risks with those who grow the food
- g. I like being able to choose my own specific vegetables from the pick-up table
- h. I like that the farm is right in the city.
- i. I like that the farm is in my neighborhood
- j. I like supporting northside businesses
- k. I like picking my own flowers and herbs from the CSA garden
- l. I like seeing and talking with the farmer and the folks who grow my food at the pick up site.
- k. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Friends of Troy Gardens**

24. Are you a member of Friends of Troy Gardens?

If no, would you like membership info?

25. Do you receive the FTG newsletter? [Yes] [No]

26. Are there any other concerns or suggestions about the Troy CSA, the Friends of Troy Gardens, or land management at Troy Gardens you'd like to voice? (Please use extra paper if necessary)

**APPENDIX C**

**2005 Troy Community Farm CSA Shareholder Survey with Suggested Revisions**

*Please sit down right now and take a few minutes to fill out this form. We greatly appreciate thoughtful shareholder feedback. Please mail this form to **Troy Community Farm, 1814 Sheridan Drive, Madison, WI 53704**. Many thanks.*

Name (optional):

1. How did you hear about Troy Community Farm? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How long have you been a CSA member (at Troy or otherwise)? \_\_\_\_\_.

- If you switched to Troy from another CSA, why?

3. Are you already, or would you be willing to participate in the Troy CSA Core Group to help with marketing, activity planning, etc?

[Yes] [No]

**Food**

4. How many children and adults did you feed from your share? Children \_\_\_ Adults \_\_\_

5. Was your share sufficient for your family size? [Yes] [No]

6. Since becoming a member of the farm, do you feel you have been eating more vegetables? [Yes] [No]

7. Do you feel you have increased your general cooking knowledge since joining the CSA? [Yes] [No]

8. Do you feel you have improved your/your family members' nutritional health since joining Troy Community Farm? [Yes] [No]

-If yes, how?

**Vegetables**

9. Which were your favorite vegetables?

10. Which vegetable would you like to see more of?

11. Which were your least favorite vegetables?

Arugula	Cucumbers	Onions	Summer Squash
Basil	Eggplant	Peas	Sweet Potatoes
Beans	Fennel	Peppers	Swiss Chard
Beets	Garlic	Potatoes	Tomatillos
Broccoli	Herbs	Pumpkins	Tomatoes
Brussel Sprouts	Kale	Radishes	Winter Squash
Cabbage	Lettuce	Salsa Baskets	
Carrots	Leeks	Scallions	
Cilantro	Melons	Spinach	

12. Are there vegetables we do not currently offer that you would like to see in your box? Which ones?

**Share Pick-Up**

14. How did the pick-up process work for you? Very well \_\_\_ OK \_\_\_ Not well \_\_\_  
If not well, why not?

15. Have you ever used the back-up plan for picking up your share off of Claire's porch? [Yes] [No]  
If yes, how often?
16. What do you like about Troy Community Farm? (check the 2 most important to you)
- Can buy extras at the farm stand     Flower & Herb garden u-pick     Convenient location  
 Farmstand style pick-up     Seeing neighbors at pick-up site  
 Certified Organic     Supporting local farmer
17. Do you pick-your-own flowers and herbs at the Troy CSA garden ? [Yes] [No]
18. How often did you read Urban Roots (CSA newsletter)?
- [Every Time]    [Once in a while]    [Never – no time]    [Never – no interest]
- d. What is your favorite newsletter feature?
- e. What is your least favorite?
- f. Are there other things you would like to see in the newsletter?
19. Have you stopped to sit in the chairs set out by the farm stand? [Yes] [No]
20. Have you talked with the other CSA members? [Yes] [No]
21. Have you contributed a recipe to the newsletter? [Yes] [No]
22. Have you volunteered at the farm? [Yes] [No]
23. Do you feel that you have enough time to talk to Claire at the stand? [Yes] [No]
24. How long does it take you to get to the farm stand or the remote pick-up site?
- [1-5 min]    [6-10 min]    [11-15 min]    [16-20 min]    [21-25 min]    [+26 min]
25. How do you get to the farm? (i.e. drive, bike, walk, bus, etc.)
26. How did you hear about Troy Community Farm?
27. Do you consider seasonality of the produce you are buying during and beyond the Troy growing season? [Yes] [No]
- If yes, why and how does this affect what you buy?
28. Do you buy more organic produce now that you are a CSA member? [Yes] [No]

**Troy Gardens**

19. Which events did you attend at Troy Gardens during the 2004 growing season:

Summer Solstice     Flower Festival     Fall Harvest Festival  
 Other                     None

20. Do you spend time at or visit other parts of the Troy Gardens site?

Gardens                     Prairie                     Woodland Trails     Farm

21. On a scale of 1(worst) to 10(best), how would you rate your overall CSA experience ?

22. Will you rejoin the CSA this year?

Yes     Leaning yes     Maybe/don't know     Leaning no     No

If not, why?

23. Reasons you joined Troy Community Farm (check your top 5 reasons):

- I like getting farm fresh vegetables
- I like getting organic vegetables
- For health reasons
- For my children
- For the quality of the produce
- I believe that buying locally reduces the energy costs of importing vegetables
- I believe that organic growing practices are better for the environment
- I feel good about sharing in the benefits and risks with those who grow the food
- I like being able to choose my own specific vegetables from the pick-up table
- I like the benefits associated with getting a pre-selected bunch of produce
- I like that the farm is right in the city
- I like that the farm is in my neighborhood
- I like supporting local businesses
- I like picking my own flowers and herbs from the CSA garden
- I like seeing and talking with the farmer and the folks who grow my food at the pick up site
- I like seeing and talking with other CSA members
- I like the sense of community that CSA provides
- I like that the farm is part of the Friends of Troy Gardens
- I like that I can get a rebate from my insurance company

Other(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Friends of Troy Gardens**

24. Are you a member of Friends of Troy Gardens?

If no, would you like membership info?

25. Do you receive the FTG newsletter? [Yes] [No]

26. Are there any other concerns or suggestions about the Troy CSA, the Friends of Troy Gardens, or land management at Troy Gardens you'd like to voice? (Please use extra paper if necessary)