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## A Case Study of a Moderate-Sale Small Family Farm in King County, Washington: An Example of Social Capital, Socioemotional Wealth in the Context of Civic Agriculture

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**A Case Study of a Moderate-Sale Small Family Farm in King County,  
Washington: An Example of Social Capital, Socioemotional Wealth in the  
Context of Civic Agriculture**

By

Kayanne J. Sullivan

Accepted in Partial Completion  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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Kayanne J. Sullivan

May 2020

**A Case Study of a Moderate-Sale Small Family Farm in King County,  
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A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of  
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
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## **Abstract**

This case study used a multi-method research design including online surveys, personal interviews, and participant observation to generate data organized into two major themes: psychological sense of community and valuing of direct and local food systems. These themes refer to the community connections of social capital, the social ties and emotional connection of socioemotional wealth, and in the context of the local food systems of civic agriculture. In the discussion, I highlight the importance of direct engagement with the owner-operator of a farm to cultivate engagement with the community as an example of the importance of social capital and socioemotional wealth, in the context of a more civic agriculture. Research was conducted on a single farm with 27 survey responses, 4 personal interviews, and 36 hours of participant observation. The results of this research find evidence of strong community support between the owner-operator and patrons and an emotional attachment with the patrons of the farm in the process of valuing fresh produce and supporting local. Future research could focus on the development of the concept of socioemotional wealth to include first-generation businesses and little-known factors affecting the continuation of family owned farms in the future. Indeed, the role of non-market human networks (as seen here) vs markets in the allocation of land and resource use merits further research.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This research will present a case study of a moderate-sale small family farm, referred to as Quiet Rail Farm, located in King County, Washington that exemplifies the concepts of social capital and socioemotional wealth, in the context of civic agriculture. The data derived from the case study analysis will be presented in terms of themes. At the same time, I develop aspects of the concepts which have been previously underdeveloped. I do so by explaining how my findings do and do not align with previous findings and experiences around social capital and socioemotional wealth.

The quest for capital and economic wealth is a very human project. This thesis looks at a particular type of capital, social capital, “refer [-ing] to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 2000, p. 2) Considerable research looks at social capital as an important component of economic capital (Haase Svendsen et al., 2010; Van Den Bulte et al., 2018), including in political spheres (Fukuyama, 2010). Social capital is an example of intangible, non-financial aspects of businesses, agricultural and otherwise, that I examine in this thesis via a case study of a moderate-sale small family farm<sup>1</sup> in King County, Washington.

One concept that emerges from behavioral agency theory invokes the concept of socioemotional wealth (Berrone et al., 2012), and examines how family businesses value non-economic factors in their business decisions (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2017). Within the research on socioemotional wealth, a family business is defined as having majority ownership

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<sup>1</sup> See typology in figure 1 as determined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) gross cash farm income (GCFI).

over the business, compared to non-family businesses (Hauck et al., 2016). Socioemotional wealth is defined as, “capture[-ing] the stock of affect-related value that a family derives from its controlling position in a particular firm” (Berrone et al., 2012, p. 259). This affect-related value can also be described as the non-financial aspects of a family business and include ideas such as binding social ties, emotional connection, and family control and influence (Berrone et al., 2012; Hauck et al., 2016; Kalm & Gomez-Mejia, 2016). These non-financial aspects of family businesses should be considered in understanding the unique characteristics, challenges, and support needed for non-family businesses to make decisions that yield social and economic benefit (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2000; Gomez-Mejia et al., 2014). Necessarily, ideas associated with socioemotional wealth, such as emotional connection, are nested within the context of the community within which the family business is situated.

Family businesses exist within the context of community; accordingly, in addition to socioemotional wealth, another important concept for the purposes of this thesis is understanding the success of moderate-sale small family farms as an instance of civic agriculture. The concept of civic agriculture focuses on community agricultural systems, defined as, “scan[ing] from the ground up, attending to less standardized, more direct and self-reliant approaches to food production, distribution, and consumption” (DeLind, 2002, p. 217). This definition by DeLind was developed and supported by research completed by Thomas Lyson (Lyson, 2000; Lyson, 2004; Lyson & Guptill, 2004). Lyson developed the concept of civic agriculture as inclusive of buying-selling relationships between producers and consumers, known as direct marketing and focused on supporting local food production (Lyson, 2000). As mentioned by Lyson and Guptill (2004), the economic dimensions of civic agriculture represent a departure from commodity agricultural systems, which states, “the primary objectives of farming should be to produce as

much food/fiber as possible for the least cost,” (Lyson & Guptill, 2004, p. 370) and accordingly focus upon economic efficiencies. In contrast, civic agriculture addresses community needs by focusing on local agriculture (DeLind, 2002) standing as an alternative to commodity agriculture, which is associated with long and complicated supply chains.

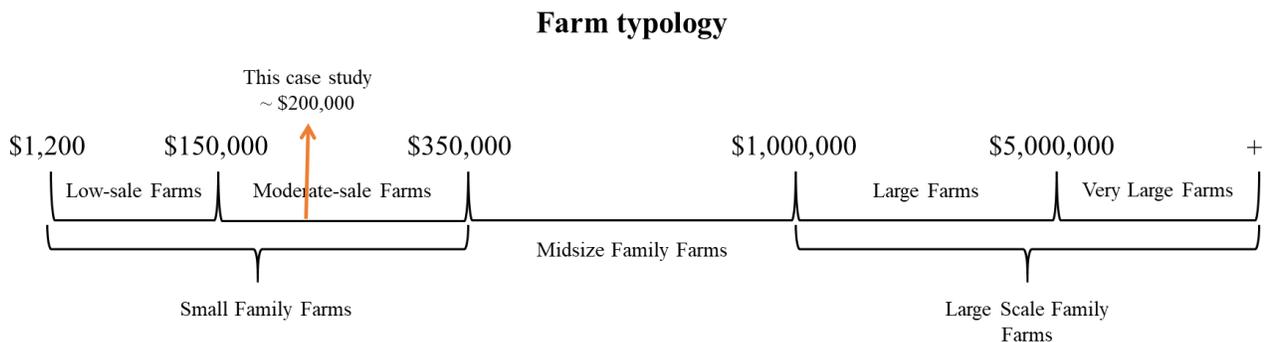
The concepts of social capital, socioemotional wealth, and civic agriculture have been well researched, but little research has been conducted to look at these concepts in the context of moderate-sale small family farms in the United States (U.S.). Previous research has been conducted internationally on the impact of social capital on farm economies in Ghana (Lyon, 2000); as well as on the interaction of these concepts on trade routes in Africa (Fafchamps & Minten, 2001). This research will present a case study of a moderate-sale small family farm located in King County, Washington that exemplifies social capital and socioemotional wealth, in the context of civic agriculture.

An understanding of the interplay between the concepts of social capital and socioemotional wealth, within the context of civic agriculture requires an understanding of food policy in the United States and the type of agriculture to which civic agriculture, for example, is a response. The data available show that 98% of farms in the United States are family owned; the remaining 2% are non-family owned farms (*USDA ERS - Farm Structure*, 2020). Non-family farms, while just 2% of farms in the U.S., produce 12.4% of the total agricultural value in the United States (*USDA ERS - Farm Structure*, 2020). By comparison, large-scale family farms account for 45.9% of the value of production, midsize family farms, 20.6% and, all small (retirement, off-farm occupation, low sales, and moderate sales) account for 21.1% (*USDA ERS - Farm Structure*, 2020). To be classified as a non-family farm requires only that the operator and/or those related to the operator not hold a majority share of the farm (*USDA ERS - Farm*

Structure, 2020). Research shows that farms increase their profitability and efficiency as a function of increased size and specialization of crops; while small and midsize family farms tend to be more varied, specializing less for the sake of efficiency (Chavas & Aliber, 1993). Clearly, the bulk of agricultural output in the U.S. is accounted for by family and non-family owned farms larger than moderate size.

Rather than focusing on very large, large, and non-family farms (*USDA ERS - Farm Structure, 2020*), civic agriculture is a community-based alternative that values local production and distribution over mere efficiency of production. Civic agriculture highlights and promotes community support for local agriculture, allowing local producers to accumulate assets, both social and material, to benefit the local farm.

This thesis presents a case of a moderate-sale farm. Figure 1.1 presents a typology of farm structure according to gross cash farm income (GCFI), which is defined as farm revenue before expenses. The farm in this case study (Quiet Rail Farm) has a GCFI of \$200,000 and is therefore categorized as a moderate-sale small family farm. This information serves as background to the study and locates this farm in the context of a broader typology.



\*Based on USDA Farm Structure, \$ is USD Gross Cash Farm Income (GCFI) which is farm revenue before expenses

Figure 1.1. Farm typology

This research is exploratory and discusses social capital and socioemotional wealth, in the context of civic agriculture in relationship to a case study: a moderate-sale small family farm located in King County, Washington. The research explores the utility of these concepts in understanding the long-term community support, and resultant economic viability, which characterize this moderate-sale small family farm. This research thus has implications for the conditions under which a moderate-sale small family farm might be economically viable, namely, with community support that shares the values of small-scale production – fresh, diverse, and locally produced food (Lyson & Guptill, 2004). The thesis results could be considered highly practical for moderate-sale small family farms similar to the one in this case study.

Using a multi-method research design including online surveys, personal interviews, and participant observation, this research will generate data organized into two major themes: psychological sense of community and valuing of direct and local food systems. These themes exemplify the community connections of social capital, the social ties and emotional connection of socioemotional wealth, and in the context of the local food systems of civic agriculture. This thesis will highlight the importance of cultivating community and direct engagement with the owner-operator of a farm as an example of the concepts of social capital and socioemotional wealth, in the context of a more civic agriculture.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

As this study strives to illustrate the concepts of social capital and socioemotional wealth within the context of civic agriculture, it is important to unpack the origin and current understanding of each of these concepts as they relate to an understanding of the moderate-sale small family farm at the center of this research.

Social capital is the overarching theme of this research as it encompasses social organization and the networks, norms, and trust that are used within these organizations (Putnam, 2000). The networks, norms, and trust that are used in social capital can similarly be found in the concept of socioemotional wealth in which family ownership and organization are seen as theoretical drivers (Hauck et al., 2016). Civic agriculture addresses the changes in agricultural systems towards direct systems of food production, distribution, and consumption instead of the corporate agriculture model that focuses on production and economic efficiency (DeLind, 2002).

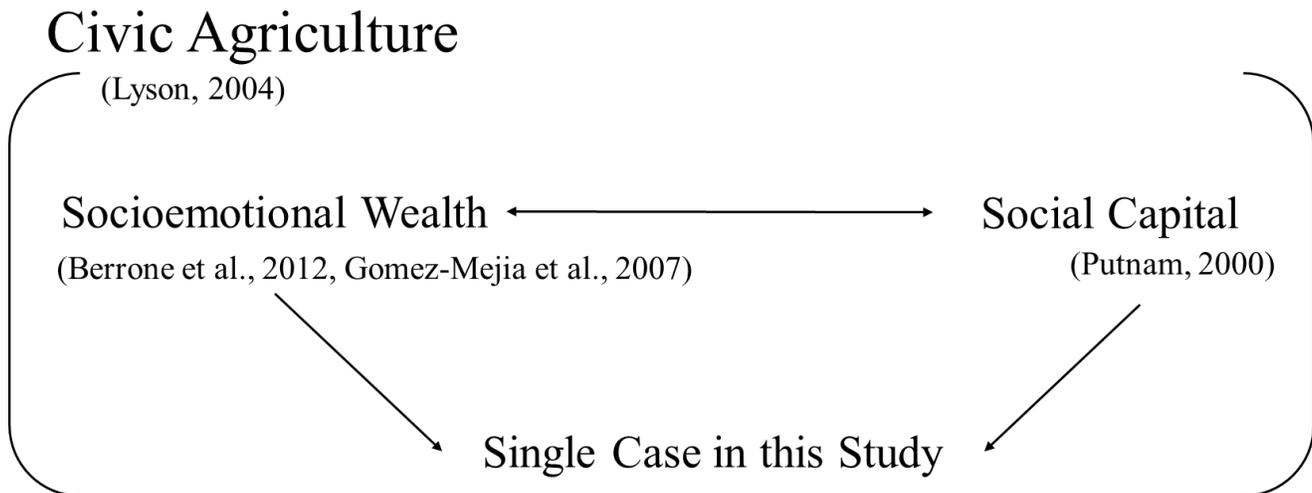


Figure 1.1: Relationship of concepts: Conceptual relationship among socioemotional wealth and social capital within the context of civic agriculture as applied to this single case study.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the relationship among these concepts in the context of this thesis. Civic agriculture serves as the overarching theme in which socioemotional wealth and civic agriculture

are situated as interacting concepts, explaining the data collected from the case. The systems mentioned by DeLind (2002) fit within the concepts of socioemotional wealth and social capital as 98% of the farms in the United States (U.S.) are family owned (*USDA ERS - Farm Structure*, 2020) and interact with the networks, norms, and trust mentioned as a part of social capital. Throughout this research, themes will be found and explained in terms of social capital and socioemotional wealth in the context of civic agriculture, and the uniqueness of this case study.

## 2.1 Social Capital

The guiding concept in this inquiry is social capital. Robert Putnam, a principle theorist of social capital, put forth a general definition in which social capital “refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 2000, p. 2). According to Putnam (2000), civic engagement has been declining in the United States. The decline in organizational attendance such as churches, union halls, sports clubs, professional societies, and fraternal groups demonstrates the lack of community engagement that exists in communities in the present day. The decline in civic engagement is best illustrated by the decline in union membership, one of the most common organizational affiliations. Nonagricultural union membership declined from 32.5% in 1953 (peak membership) to 15.8% in 1992 (Putnam, 2000). In this research, in order to situate the concept of social capital in the context of a moderate-sale small family farm, I will focus on the theme of psychological sense of community adapted from Lochner et al. in which the authors describe studying social capital as an activity that requires one to view the community as a whole, not at an individual level (Hill, 1996; Lochner et al., 1999). In addition, I will be using the definition and themes described by McMillan and Chavis (1986), who have identified four factors central to the psychological sense of community: membership in the

community, influence in the group, reinforcement or that which binds "people together into a close community" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 12), and a shared emotional connection.

The first theme of psychological sense of community is that of membership.

Membership, as described by McMillan and Chavis, involves setting boundaries of who is and who is not a member of the community, and identifying personal investment in the community through time or resources (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The second theme is influence, which includes acknowledgement of the needs, values, and opinions of the group members. McMillan and Chavis explain this theme through the acknowledgement of religious values in a community, for example, individuals respecting the sabbath and choosing not to work. The third theme is reinforcement or close social connection: "this is the feeling that members' needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). This quote is an example of how membership and reinforcement or close social connection work together to develop an individual's psychological sense of community. The fourth factor of psychological sense of community is shared emotional connection. The key to shared emotional connection is that the members of the community buy into the shared history of the community. As McMillan and Chavis (1986) state, "It is not necessary that group members have participated in the history in order to share it, but they must identify with it" (p. 13). Identifying with a major event (some common history) can lead to a stronger bond within the community. The theme of psychological sense of community can be applied to the case study in this thesis by examining the membership of a moderate-sale small family farm through community supported agriculture (CSA) subscriptions. CSA subscribers contribute to Quiet Rail Farm through membership in the community, influence in the group, reinforcement or close social connection, and a shared emotional connection.

## 2.2 Socioemotional Wealth

The concept of socioemotional wealth (SEW) has its roots in behavioral agency theory (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2017) and is defined as “capture[-ing] the stock of affect-related value that a family derives from its controlling position in a particular firm” (Berrone et al., 2012, p. 259). This definition put forth by Berrone et al. suggests that family members have influence on the business that does not revolve around financial capital, but exists through socioemotional factors like trust, emotional connection, relationships, and family bonds (Berrone et al., 2012; Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007 ). To make more sense of socioemotional wealth as a concept, two central articles suggest measurements for SEW: these include Berrone et al. (2012) and Hauck et al. (2016). Berrone et al. established the FIBER factors: F=Family control and influence, I=Family members’ identification with the farm, B=Binding social ties, E=Emotional attachment, R=Renewal of family bonds through inter-generational succession, and are identified with a brief explanation in Table 2.1:

<b>(F)</b> Family control and influence	<b>(I)</b> Family members’ identification with the farm	<b>(B)</b> Binding social ties	<b>(E)</b> Emotional attachment	<b>(R)</b> Renewal of family bonds through inter-generational succession
Preserving socioemotional wealth requires maintaining family control over the business.	The intermeshing of family and business means that the community sees the family and business as one.	Family businesses are deeply embedded in communities, there is a sense of belonging among both family and nonfamily employees.	Emotions are deeply imbedded in family businesses – both negative and positive – links family members together through a shared history and experience.	Transgenerational stability as the business is intended to symbolize the family dynasty.

Table 2.1. Explanation of FIBER factors

Berrone et al. (2012) also provide examples for survey questions that could be used to gather more information on each of the FIBER factors. They suggest that more case study

research be completed on these factors to better understand the relationship between FIBER factors and specific cases. Berrone et al. (2012) also suggest more research needs to be completed in order to validate these factors in survey format. Hauck et al. (2016) conducted validation tests on each of the FIBER factors and found that for survey purposes, binding social ties and family control and influence needed to be re-operationalized in order to be valid in a survey format. They also propose a short form of FIBER, the REI scale: R=Renewal of family bonds through inter-generational succession, E=Emotional attachment, and, I= Family members' identification with the firm. As the REI factors have been validated for survey research they will guide the creation of survey questions and themes for this case study.

### 2.3 Civic Agriculture

The third concept in this research is civic agriculture (Lyson, 2004), and is an overarching theme. In fact, I argue that the concepts of social capital and socioemotional wealth can be understood best in the context of civic agriculture. The reason for this is that civic agriculture, i.e., agriculture in which the community is somehow involved and active, makes possible the accumulation of social capital and socioeconomic wealth.

Civic agriculture is indeed a key idea in understanding rural dynamics and development. The principle theorist of civic agriculture, Thomas Lyson (2004), envisioned a new type of agriculture, one that was civic and representing a democratization of the agricultural and food systems. Lyson defined civic agriculture as, “the process of building local markets through direct sales to consumers...markets which are designed to promote community’s social and economic development in ways that commodity agriculture cannot” (Lyson, 2004, p. 371). Lyson suggested that CSAs and farmers markets – the outlets, as we will see, used by Quiet Rail Farm – are one of the best examples of civic agriculture. This is supported by Obach and Tobin (2014)

who state that CSAs are one of the purest forms of economic engagement and embody the concept of civic agriculture. Civic agriculture upturns the prevailing assumptions of big agriculture and shifts the traditional viewpoint of production and economic efficiency to farm and food systems as values that are responsive to the specific community (DeLind, 2002).

As Lyson (2004) and Obach and Tobin (2014) point out, CSAs are a good example of civic agriculture and the democratization and localization of the food system. CSAs also promote direct sales to consumers. Brown and Miller (2008), provide a clear definition of CSA:

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a marketing strategy where consumers buy 'shares' in the farm before planting begins and receive a portion of whatever is available each week of the growing season. These shares generally cost several hundred dollars and provide enough fresh produce for a family; some shares include other products, such as eggs, honey, flowers, and/or meat. (p. 1296)

This quote describes what subscribers receive when paying for a CSA subscription. CSAs provide opportunities to support local farmers and other food producers, which as Obach and Tobin state, is one of the strongest acts of civic agriculture. These concepts converge to explain the fundamental purpose of what it means to be a community and why community matters, in both social and economic terms. CSAs allow for a close and direct relationship between the farmer and the customer, building relationships that are a part of community. CSAs also provide the farmer with economic stability as the customers pay upfront, and this investment indicates to the consumer that they have a "stake" in the farm. The social and economic relationships that CSAs build are pivotal in understanding how to build social capital and socioemotional wealth in the context of civic agriculture.

From this discussion, two themes emerge that I use to organize the data I collect in this research – psychological sense of community, and the valuing of direct and local food systems.

The analysis and discussion of data thus will provide an exemplar of social capital and socioemotional wealth, in the context of civic agriculture.

## Chapter 3: Study Context and Methods

### 3.1 Study Context

This case study focuses on a moderate-sale small family farm located in King County, Washington. Quiet Rail Farm is considered urban as it produces and markets products to the consumers in the area of King County, Washington (US EPA, 2015). The owner-operator in this case study has been farming on rented land from 2000-2018 and purchased land from 2018-2020. Quiet Rail Farm grew in size from a quarter acre in 2000 to the current 15 acres under production in 2020.

The farmland is protected from development in this urban area as part of the Farmland Preservation Program of King County (*Farmland Preservation Program - King County*, 2019). This is a voluntary program that allows land owners to sell the developmental rights of agriculturally productive land to the county which then restricts land use, such as limiting housing density, preserving land for cultivation, and restricting activities that would otherwise limit agricultural activity.

Despite such protections, Quiet Rail Farm is vulnerable to being sold to other farms in the area seeking to expand. The valley in which Quiet Rail Farm is located in prime agricultural (and protected) land, and larger farms in the area are looking to expand, especially since prices are relatively low. Hence, when the farm was available for purchase in 2018, Quiet Rail Farm needed to act fast to make a purchase.

When the opportunity to purchase the land surfaced, Quiet Rail Farm did not have the financial capital needed to make a down payment for the necessary loan. However, by obtaining the support of the community, Quiet Rail Farm was able to accrue the funds needed for the down

payment and closing costs. Amazingly, these resources were generated in a period of only two months. This was not the first time Quiet Rail Farm had received help from the community for necessary purchases. Quiet Rail Farm previously received services and funds needed to repair the tractor, purchase seeds, and even pay a late summer water bill.

The local support which aided Quiet Rail Farm in purchasing the land illustrates the concepts of social capital, socioemotional wealth in the context of civic agriculture. This situation, where the farm operator turned to the community for such a big purchase, is an example of “cashing-in” social capital (the non-financial capital accumulated through community connection); it illustrates the importance of the social capital and socioemotional wealth for farm economic viability. The farm operator built this social capital and socioemotional wealth over 18 years with no prior intention of cashing it in, which was then necessitated by needing to purchase the farm. Clearly, civic agriculture is based on strong involvement via, say, direct sales to the consumer and the creation of a healthy community relationship. Local support helps to build and maintain this community relationship and allows members of the community to create an emotional attachment to the owner-operator.

The farm at the center of this inquiry is an instance of Wendell Berry’s ideal of urban and rural renewal. In 1988, author and farmer, Wendell Berry wrote:

I know that one revived rural community could be more convincing and more encouraging than all the government and university programs of the last fifty years, and I think that it could be the beginning of the renewal of our country, *for the renewal of rural communities ultimately implies the renewal of our urban ones* (p. 169, italics added).

The solid economic status of this farm is evidence of this vision. The farm has had CSA subscriptions that have sustained it for over the last decade, including the economic downturn of the 2008 recession and in the present COVID 19 health crisis: evolving from farmers markets

and a 10-person CSA to its current 151 subscriptions (doubling last year's CSA subscriptions from last year due to the COVID 19/pandemic food panic).

In interviews, the owner-operator describes both CSA subscriptions and revenue from the farmers markets as resource generators that balance income throughout the year. The CSA subscriptions and farmers market income is split about 50/50, though the balance tilted toward CSA shares, recently, as farmers markets closed due to the COVID 19 health crisis. Generally, the CSA supports Quiet Rail Farm through the winter months and the farmers market supports the farm in the summer. The CSA in the winter provides the farm with revenue which allows the owner-operator to pay up front for seeds, soil, nutrients, etc. without recourse to further debt. The farmer also described how such frontloading of investment eliminates the need for borrowing funds at the beginning of the season, unlike many other farms. Using income from the CSA instead of having to borrow money from a bank translates into consumers being more involved in their own food system, with the added benefit of mitigating fiscal risk to the farmer. The relationship benefits both parties; consumers have the benefit of fresh, locally produced produce, and the owner-operator does not accrue the debt associated with seasonal bank loans. This trusting relationship between owner-operator and consumer contributes to a trusting community partnership and may provide more forms of social capital beyond that of a cash-product trade, such as productive bartering relationships and agreements.

### 3.2 Case Study

This research is a case study of a moderate-sale small family farm in King County, Washington and the community that supports the farm. This research employed methods of online surveys, personal interviews, and participant observation. I conducted interviews in person that included the farmer, and long-time patrons of the farm. Using these mixed methods

(surveys, personal interviews, and participant observation) in a case study ensures converging evidence from multiple sources (Yin, 2006). A case study employing mixed methods allowed me to gain a fuller understanding of the community in which this farm was situated and resulted in a clear exploration and investigation of social capital and socioemotional wealth in the context of civic agriculture. Table 3.1, below, gives the three main concepts in this thesis – social capital, socioemotional wealth, and civic agriculture – and the themes used to develop survey and interview questions and analyze the results.

Concept	Theme(s)	Measurement	Data Source
<p><b>Social Capital</b></p> <p><i>“refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit”</i></p> <p>(Putnam, 2000, p. 2).</p>	Psychological sense of community	Survey questions on: membership, influence, reinforcement, and shared emotional connection	Survey Short answer questions In-person interviews Participant observation
<p><b>Socioemotional Wealth</b></p> <p><i>“capture[-ing] the stock of affect-related value that a family derives from its controlling position in a particular firm.” (Berrone et al., 2012, p. 259).</i></p>	<p>R=Renewal of family bonds through inter-generational succession</p> <p>E=Emotional attachment</p> <p>I= Family members’ identification with the firm</p>	Presence of FIBER factors by way of questions and themes developed from the proposed items in Berrone et al. (2012)	In-person interviews Short answer questions Participant observation
<p><b>Civic Agriculture</b></p> <p><i>“Scans from the ground up, attending to less standardized, more direct and self-reliant approaches to food production, distribution, and consumption”</i></p> <p>(DeLind, 2002, p. 217)</p>	<p>Livelihood strategies</p> <p>Production of produce</p> <p>Barriers to successful farming</p> <p>Direct marketing (T. A. Lyson and Guptill, 2004)</p>	<p>Other income</p> <p>Types of practices</p> <p>Challenges to farming</p> <p>Marketing directly to consumer</p>	In-person interviews Short answer questions Participant observation

Table 3.1. Relationship of concepts and themes

### 3.3 Surveys

To gather more information on the CSA subscribers, I created a short survey which repeated many of the questions asked in the personal interviews, although converted to short answer form. Creating this survey allowed me to obtain responses from CSA subscribers. The survey was created and maintained through Qualtrics and the farmer distributed the survey to CSA subscribers via her listserv used to contact CSA subscribers. The listserv included 75 CSA subscribers and I received 27 survey responses back; this is a 36% return rate. The full list of survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

### 3.4 Personal Interviews

For this inquiry I conducted four personal interviews: one interview with the owner-operator, and three with individuals who were CSA subscribers, farmers market customers, or both. The interview with the owner-operator provided me with context and background about the farm, the owner-operator, and specifics about the organization of the farm. It took place at a coffee shop near Quiet Rail Farm and lasted about 60 minutes<sup>2</sup>. This interview was informative in providing some structure for the other surveys, interviews, and participant observation, in terms of the specific language that I could productively use.

Personal interviews were conducted at the farm, at the farmers market, and via phone. The interviews were selected by purposeful convenience sampling which leads to greater depth of information on each of the sub-groups, albeit with a smaller sample size (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The three farm patrons that I interviewed will be referred to as subject A (referred to as “Maria” – a CSA subscriber for 7 years), subject B (referred to as “Eli” – a farmers market

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<sup>2</sup> Even though this interview was only 60 minutes, I had multiple conversations with the owner-operator throughout participant observation and earlier farm visits.

customer for 20 years), subject C (referred to as “Kali” – a farmers market customer for 6 years and a CSA subscriber for 8 years). Farm patrons in this case study refers to the community of the farm, anyone who supports Quiet Rail Farm financially, with seasonal labor, or has a consumer relationship with Quiet Rail Farm.

These interviews were used to triangulate data with other methods – the surveys and participant observation. The personal interviews were semi-structured and aimed to gather information that could be interpreted in terms of social capital and socioemotional wealth. The questions I asked are listed in Appendix A. I indicate questions that apply only to the owner-operator.

### 3.5 Participant Observation

I also conducted participant observation as part of the triangulation of data in this case study. Through this method, I had a first-hand look at the interaction between farmers market customers and the owner-operator at a local farmers market. Including participant observation in these mixed methods allowed me to document the events that individuals take part in (Spradley, 1980). This insight gives me, as the researcher, the opportunity to observe the interactions between the owner-operator and the community that is supported by this farm. I participated as a market assistant which allowed me to have a low-profile while observing, but also provided me with the ability to talk to the community about Quiet Rail Farm in a casual manner. I was aware of how my presence and position could affect my observation and the conversations customers had with me (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). This resulted in some customers being very interested in talking to me, and others focused on making a purchase and moving on. The location of the owner-operators stall, on the corner of the market, allowed me to observe people coming and going from the market, and to have easy access.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

After each observation session, I took a comprehensive look at my participation of the day and recorded thoughts, feelings, and observations (Spradley, 1980) through voice memos. I then took notes of the important themes and interactions from the voice memo. In total, I visited the local farmers market 6 times over the course of August-November 2019, 6 hours each session, for a total of 36 hours. Attending the farmers market from summer to fall gave me some insight into the patterns of attendance at the farmers market. Patterns of attendance could indicate something about loyalty to supporting the market, even in poor weather.

When analyzing interview transcripts and survey responses, I started with creating codes from the personal interview transcripts and the survey responses. Once these were both created, I combined similar themes and created the code list which can be seen in Appendix B. This method allowed the surveys and interviews to have unique designations, as well as similar codes. These codes were then identified into the two themes initially found through the literature.

### 3.7 IRB and Ethics

The Western Washington University (WWU) Internal Review Board (IRB) approved this research in 2019 (certification can be viewed in Appendix C). I followed ethical guidelines by deleting any communication related to this research and removing any identifiable information before saving or recording any data. I obtained written consent before all interviews and survey respondents indicated consent with a survey question, and before completing the remainder of the survey. The IRB approval also included approval for participant observation. There is little risk in participant observation as the event I was participating in was open to the public and I was not video or audio recording. The only documentation retained in this study are transcripts of

verbal notes and interviews and other written notes, none of which contain personal and identifiable information.

Risk was minimal in this case study. To protect the privacy of Quiet Rail Farm and those associated, I deleted any identifiable information, used pseudonyms when referring to individuals, and eliminated as much identifiable information about the farm as appropriate. Some information is retained as part of geographical significance, but the farm name has been changed to protect privacy.

To avoid any undue burden on the interview or survey participants, the survey and personal interviews were kept short, to less than 15 minutes. For personal interviews, I met the participants in a location that was convenient for them, this included the farm, the farmers market, and via phone.

### 3.8 Validity and Reliability

While there are some inherent issues with case study research, there are also benefits, as noted by Bhattacharjee, “Case research can help derive richer, more contextualized, and more authentic interpretations of the phenomenon of interest [...] by virtue of its ability to capture a rich array of contextual data” (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 93). Even with the rich, contextualized and authentic interpretations that case study research provides, one issue can be that case studies start with no specific research question identified. For this case, I have clearly stated my research objective – which is to categorize the data into themes, and then discuss all in terms of social capital and socioemotional wealth, in the context of civic agriculture. To avoid biased interpretation (for example, if only one method of data collection is utilized), I employed multiple methods in order to triangulate data and ensure against bias – this included surveys,

personal interviews, and participant observation. Finally, I note that case studies cannot possibly be comprehensive in terms of data collection and analysis methods, making repetition or replication difficult. Nevertheless, to address some of these deficits, I maintained detailed documentation throughout the research process. Given the timeline and resources available to conduct this research, the case study not being longitudinal is a limitation of this research. Rather, this case represents a snapshot in time in the farm's development. I believe the study and data are robust, given the constraints of conducting such during the COVID 19 pandemic. What this case will provide is a starting point for others to create longitudinal studies to examine the themes I develop here and discuss in terms of social capital and socioemotional wealth in the context of civic agriculture.

## Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

The data results derived from this case study will be presented in terms of two themes: psychological sense of community and valuing of direct and local food systems, providing insight into some aspects of social capital and socioemotional wealth, as they emerge in the context of civic agriculture. In the discussion, I develop the concepts of social capital and socioemotional wealth in the context of civic agriculture and discuss the strong community support between the owner-operator and patrons. This includes evidence for an emotional attachment with the patrons of the farm in the process of valuing fresh produce and supporting local. I also explain how my findings align with previous research around social capital, socioemotional wealth, and civic agriculture.

The data were obtained from online surveys, personal interviews, and participant observation and are organized in themes related to the concepts of social capital and socioemotional wealth in the context of civic agriculture. The two themes found were a psychological sense of community and valuing of direct and local food systems. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show the ordering of concepts with the themes of psychological sense of community and

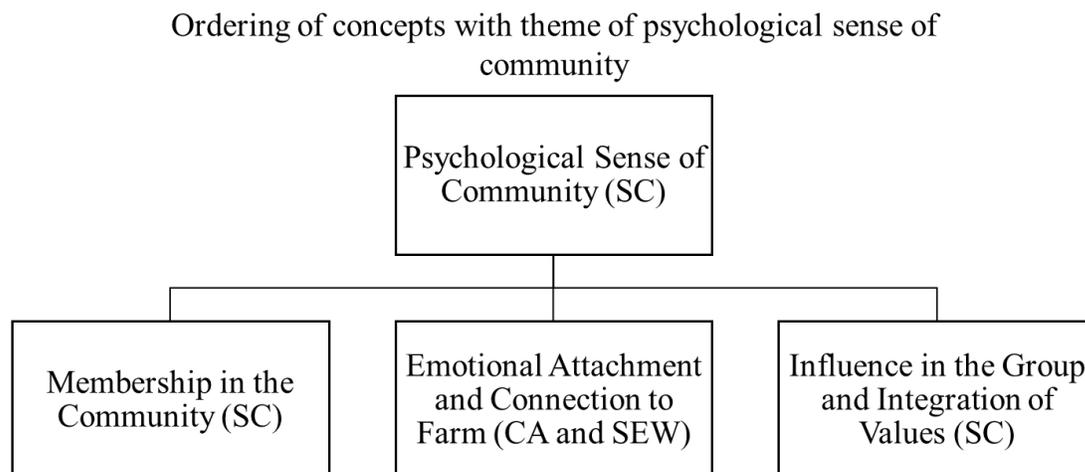
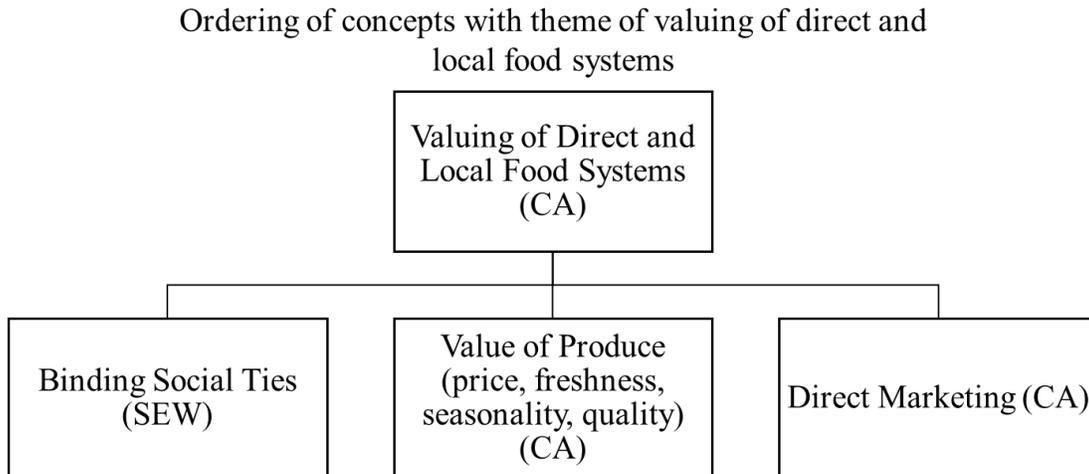


Figure 4.1: Ordering of concepts with theme of psychological sense of community. Related concepts are indicated in parenthesis: social capital (SC), socioemotional wealth (SEW), and civic agriculture (CA)

valuing direct and local food systems. The parenthesis after each theme or sub-theme indicates the concept it relates to: social capital (SC), socioemotional wealth (SEW), and civic agriculture (CA).



*Figure 4.2: Ordering of concepts with theme of valuing of direct and local food systems. Related concepts are indicated in parenthesis: social capital (SC), socioemotional wealth (SEW), and civic agriculture (CA)*

In this study there are three sources of data: 1) twenty-seven responses from surveys completed online; 2) four personal interviews: including one interview with the owner-operator of Quiet Rail Farm; and 3) six sessions of participant observation at the local farmers market. As mentioned above, the survey questionnaire yielded 27 responses, or a response rate of 36%. The three personal interviews that were conducted were with long-term patrons of the farm, this included CSA subscribers and farmers market customers.

The interviewees patronizing Quiet Rail Farm will be referred to as subject A (referred to as “Maria”), subject B (referred to as “Eli”), subject C (referred to as “Kali”). Farm patrons in this case study refers to the community of the farm, anyone who supports Quiet Rail Farm financially, with seasonal labor, or has a consumer relationship with Quite Rail Farm. The first personal interview with farm patrons was with Maria who has been a CSA subscriber for seven

years and who barter for her share, in return for assistance with farm-related videos and photographs to share on social media. The second, Eli, is a farmers market customer who has been a patron of Quiet Rail Farm for 20 years. The third, Kali, has been both a farmers market customer (for 6 years) and a CSA subscriber (for 8 years). These interviews are important in providing additional information to the responses obtained in the surveys. I also include data from participant observations at the farmers market where the owner-operator has been selling for 20 years. I conducted participant observation on 6 market days which totaled 36 hours of observation of the owner-operator and her farmers market customers to gain additional insights into direct sales.

#### 4.1 Psychological Sense of Community

Table 4.1 shows the results for the survey questions related to psychological sense of community, such as activities participants engaged in at the farm, and other types of assistance they may have provided. Table 4.1 shows statistics for responses. Results of the survey showed that 13 individuals, reported participating in farm activities, with 7 mentioning as to why

	Data Reporting	% of Responses
Do you participate in farm activities (u-pick, farm potlucks, etc.)? (N=27)	Responses	
Yes	13	48%
No	14	52%
Why do you participate in farm activities?	Frequency of Mention	
Meet others	2	-
Help the farm	1	-
Obtain farm products	4	-
Did you participate in the farm purchase 2 years ago? (N=27)	Responses	
Yes	19	70%
No	8	30%
Why did you help with the farm purchase?	Frequency of Mention	
Farm stability	7	-
Investment	3	-
Aligns with personal values	8	-

Table 4.1: Survey responses for the theme of psychological sense of community

they chose to participate in farm activities. The most common reason for participation in farm activities was to “obtain farm products.” One survey respondent indicated that the owner-operator asked for help in sorting garlic, and that they were able to participate and enjoyed helping. The same respondent also mentioned that helping in farm activities meant “meeting others,” as did another respondent.

Almost half of the respondents said they do not participate in farm activities. One reason could be due to the geographic locations of respondents, as some lived 20 miles away from Quiet Rail Farm and chose to obtain their produce from a closer location, namely the farmers market (where there also was CSA delivery). In one of the personal interviews, Maria made comments about location. When asked if she was exclusively a CSA or farmers market customer she said, “I just do CSA now, but we did used to go to the farmers market when we lived [closer to one], but now we’re [further away].” She also mentioned distance as a factor, “I feel like the CSA tends to be [servicing] the south side and the market tends to be [servicing] the north side,” implying something about the inconvenience of travelling to the farm, and observing that the farmers market is located about 20 miles north of Quiet Rail Farm.

It appears from the survey and personal interviews that participating in farm activities could play a role in cultivating a psychological sense of community, but distance is also a factor. Those CSA subscribers that do participate in farm activities are possibly looking to gain experience in a farm skill or to obtain farm products. One example of this came from the personal interview with Eli. He mentions an event that the owner-operator had involving a farm-to-table duck slaughter and meal preparation. In this case, Eli brought his entire family with him. His response indicated that he was building an identity of a sustainable agriculture supporter, including being involved in the slaughter of meat. Participating in the slaughter would seem to

contribute to a sense of community. Eli is usually just a farmers market customer, but he may be motivated to participate in on-farm activities if his values are reinforced by the activities hosted by Quiet Rail Farm. His involvement suggests the psychological sense of community present in this case study, resulting from membership in the community, influence in the group, reinforcement or close social connection, and/or a shared emotional connection.

Participating in farm activities is not the only way to show a psychological sense of community. As mentioned in the study context, the owner-operator had been leasing the farmland for 18 years before she was then given the opportunity to purchase the farm. With little financial capital available, Quiet Rail Farm turned to patrons to gain sufficient funds for a down payment and closing costs to purchase the farmland, which included 20 acres, four greenhouses, a propagation shed, and a farm stand. As seen in Table 4.1, 19 respondents indicated that they participated in the farm purchase two years ago, 10 of which provided an explanation as to why. The majority of these ten indicated that they did so because helping Quiet Rail Farm “aligns with their personal values”. Some of the responses included, “I believe in people helping people,” “We wanted to help,” and “Because I value [owner-operators] family.” Others indicated that they participated because they wanted to support local agriculture and have a stable source of produce.

The three personal interviews offered more explanation as to the decision to participate in the farm purchase. Maria, as a close friend of the owner-operator, helped set up the Go Fund Me website used to advertise and complete the purchase. She provided a video and helped with general communication. She revealed, “most of the [people who donated] are people who already knew the farm... just a couple of them are people who donated because friends of theirs shared it [on social media] .” This quote is key to understanding the motivation of the majority of

those who helped purchase the farm, who mostly had some kind of connection to the farm. Eli, a farmers market customer of Quiet Rail Farm for 20 years said, “It was just the right thing to do and I feel really good about it.” From this, I surmise that Eli felt a connection or a responsibility to do what he could to support Quiet Rail Farm in a time of need. Even without the formal membership to Quiet Rail Farm provided by the CSA, Eli felt that he was a part of the community and wanted to support it, because doing so aligned with his personal values. The third interview with Kali echoes many of the feelings of those in the survey and other interviewees. She described how she felt a part of Quiet Rail Farm and wanted others to have the experience and opportunity of being a patron of Quiet Rail Farm, which required Quiet Rail Farm to stay in business. Kali also said she wanted to support a friend into the next step of life, of land ownership, “it just felt like the right thing to do.” She empathized with the owner-operator saying that she knew what it was like to have that feeling of ownership and wanted the owner-operator to be able to experience that.<sup>3</sup>

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the theme of psychological sense of community involves four factors: membership in the community, influence in the group, reinforcement or close social connection, and a shared emotional connection. CSA subscribers make a financial commitment early in the growing season, and this represents a form of engagement and commitment. Influence in the group and reinforcement or close social connection of values are seen with the co-financing of the farm purchase. Through participation in the farm purchase, CSA subscribers and farmers market customers were able to affect the outcome of the purchase and felt influence

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<sup>3</sup> My own observations at the farmers market showed that the owner-operator continued a particularly close relationship with those who supported the farm purchase.

on the group decision around supporting the farm, thereby reinforcing their values. Those who helped co-finance the farm purchase were able to reinforce their values of supporting local agriculture. By contributing to the farm purchase, they helped support the activity of local food being grown for local customers.

Those who participated in the farm purchase helped in creating that shared history and maintaining Quiet Rail Farm as a productive site for those in the future. Being active in farm activities and participating in an event such as the farm purchase shows the psychological sense of community present in this case study.

## 4.2 Valuing of Direct and Local Food Systems

The questions in Table 4.2 show responses grouped under the theme of valuing of direct and local food systems, a theme derived from the literature on civic agriculture. CSAs are a prime example of direct and local food systems that market directly to the consumer, eliminating a middle-person, and thus supporting local producers. The survey questions are given in Table 4.2, together with responses that indicate something of the values of CSA subscribers. These questions also look at how CSA subscribers keep up to date with farm activities and how they first learned about Quiet Rail Farm. Learning about how patrons stay informed with the farm can give insight into the effectiveness of the direct food system, the online community, and marketing efforts for the farm. Part of having a direct food system is direct marketing, which for this farm happens digitally through email, newsletters, and social media.

	Frequency of Response
<b>Why did you choose to have a CSA?</b>	
Quality (taste)	1
Fresh produce	6
Supporting local agriculture	7
Seasonality of produce	1
Community/farmer	5
<b>How did you find out about Quiet Rail Farms' CSA Program?</b>	
Farmers market	4
Farm finding resource	3
Person/connection to farm	2
Online	4
<b>How do you keep up to date with the farm?</b>	
Facebook	18
Instagram	10
Newsletter	9
Website/blog	10
Text/E-mail	20
In-person	13
<b>Why did you pick Quiet Rail Farm to get your CSA over other farms?</b>	
Quality (taste)	3
Supporting local agriculture	1
Convenience (location/time)	6
Community/farmer	1
Type of farming practice	1
Variety	1
Connection to farm family	4
Price	1

*Table 4.2: Survey responses related to the theme of valuing of direct and local food systems*

Belonging to a CSA is, in effect, supporting a local food system and directly supporting producers by subscribing early in the growing season. This rationale is supported by responses to the survey question: “Why did you choose to become a member of a CSA?” The most frequently mentioned response was “supporting local agriculture,” followed by having access to “fresh produce,” and then involvement with “community/farmer.”

“Supporting local agriculture” is not a surprising response to the question “Why did you choose to have a CSA?” due to the observation that supporting local agriculture is a main characteristic of CSAs. The following survey responses indicate such support: “I love the idea of supporting small scale, local agriculture,” “[I want to] deepen our connection to local food and farms,” and “[I want to] support local farmers.” Additional responses included access to “fresh produce” as a reason to be a member of a CSA. One survey respondent illustrated best the desire to support local agriculture and having access to fresh produce:

I love the idea of supporting small scale, local agriculture. I like knowing who is growing my food, how they are growing it, and that the majority of the money I pay for that food is going to remain in our local economy. Also, locally grown produce is fresher, more delicious, and usually more ecologically conscious. (Survey respondent)

This survey response is particularly illuminating in that they mention all three of the most popular responses to the question of “Why did you choose to be a member of a CSA” (fresh produce, supporting local agriculture, and community/farmer).

While only one respondent mentioned the importance of valuing seasonality of produce – something CSAs are focused on, this rationale was also brought up in the personal interview with Kali. She said that part of the reason she wanted to be a member of a CSA was to enjoy the seasonality of produce, having fresh and in-season produce available locally. One possible

explanation for the lack of responses on seasonality is that respondents think about seasonality as connected to ideas around fresh produce.

The survey question, “How did you find out about the Quiet Rail Farm CSA program,” addresses advertising by the owner-operator and any previous connection CSA subscribers had to Quiet Rail Farm before becoming a CSA subscriber. The two most popular ways CSA subscribers learned about Quiet Rail Farms’ CSA were online and through interaction at the farmers market. The response “online” included google searches for local CSAs. Another common way to get information on the Quiet Rail Farm CSA was through the farmers market; this suggests something of an established relationship with Quiet Rail Farm, namely already purchasing produce from the farm through direct sales at the farmers market. Through participant observation at the farmers market it was clear that the owner-operator took the time to interact with farmers market customers who had questions about produce, the farm, or the CSA. So, both social media and personal communication through the farmers market seemed effective ways to communicate. The relationship and connection made at the farmers market is what several of the respondents said was how they found out about the CSA program.

Another way CSA subscribers learned about the farm’s CSA program is through various farm-finding resources. Examples of these are “the Seattle tilth farm guide,” “I read about [Quiet Rail Farm] in a local farm handout,” and “Tilth; PCC.” These ways of obtaining information on the Quiet Rail Farm CSA, are in effect, farm “finding” resources. Mostly, they are resources developed (mostly by nonprofits) to encourage people to support local farms – and this includes providing information about Quiet Rail Farm and its CSA program.

Based on responses, more CSA subscribers found out about Quiet Rail Farm while searching online or from a farm resource (Seattle Tilth/PCC) than with personal communication with the owner-operator. However, the owner-operator is very active on Instagram and Facebook and this accounts for her strong social media presence, which she claims helps to maintain a sense of community.

In response to, “Why did you choose Quiet Rail Farm over another farm?”, the most frequently mentioned reason to choose Quiet Rail Farm was “convenience,” as seen in Table 4.2. For CSA subscribers, the most important factor in choosing a CSA was not the products offered but the ease of location and time of CSA pickup. Having a pickup time that fits within a subscriber’s schedule is desirable: it supports their choice in (conveniently) participating in their local food system.

The responses from the three personal interviews support ideas around convenience in choosing Quiet Rail Farm. When asking Kali about how she found this CSA, she comments that she found the CSA online, and then realized it was conveniently located to her home and place of employment. She also mentioned that knowing the produce was fresh was important in selecting a CSA. For example, she had the option of buying from a local farm stand but decided against it – it did not align with her personal values of sustainable farming and so she chose Quiet Rail Farm.

Examining other responses for why CSA subscribers chose Quiet Rail Farm, connection to farm family was a strong response, suggesting that there is some emotional connection to or value placed on a family farm. Those who mentioned “connection to farm family” also mentioned that being a friend of the owner-operator was important, which could be construed as

emotional attachment to the farm. This suggests a connection that could outweigh factors of convenience or quality.

These survey responses were corroborated by the participant observation and the personal interview with Eli. During participant observation, I witnessed Eli's interactions with the owner-operator, interactions that suggested a strong friendship had been established over the last 20 years. This relationship was evident as I watched Eli and the owner-operator check in on their weekly adventures – often mentioning what they saw on each other's social media accounts. I followed up with the owner-operator asking how they knew each other, she said "He's been a customer since I started here, so 20 years, we are friends" (quote from memory). One interaction that stood out was their mutual interest in mushrooms and sharing of mushroom picking locations.

From the interactions at the farmers market and the comments from the owner-operator, I was surprised (when during the personal interview with Eli), Eli said that he prefers the farmers market over the CSA – being that those with a CSA have a larger financial investment in the farm. When I asked Eli about why he chooses the farmers market over the CSA he said he would rather choose the produce he gets each week than get a set number and type of items – some of which he may not have any use for. His values were based in a strong sense of responsibility regarding his consumption and waste. This suggests that even though he is not a CSA subscriber he still places value on convenience of access to fresh produce, and values supporting local food systems.

As customers at the farmers market checked in with the owner-operator about posts on her social media, I thought back to the interview with the owner-operator. A topic that came up

more than once was her use of social media as part of the farm business and marketing. Based on the interview with the owner-operator, I found that most of her communication with farmers market customers was through social media – primarily Instagram. So, when creating the survey questionnaire, I wanted to include a question to gauge what resources the CSA subscribers used to stay up to date with the farm. From this interview, I got a list of all the ways the owner-operator stays in contact with people and in the survey, respondents were able to choose multiple responses regarding the ways they keep up to date with Quiet Rail Farm (Facebook, Instagram, Email, in-person, etc.). Table 4.2 shows results for the question “How do you keep up to date with the farm?”

From the interview with the owner-operator I thought that Instagram would be the most popular since the owner-operator said that she posts to Instagram more than Facebook, and that she uses Instagram as the main way to share information on what is next in season and what is coming to market. However, text/email was the most common way of maintaining contact with the owner-operator and being up to date with farm news, as compared to Instagram. The popularity of text/email could be because email is the primary way the owner-operator sends updates on CSA subscriptions. While Instagram has less information on CSA subscriptions, it has more information on the status of Quiet Rail Farm and upcoming produce coming to the farmers market. Email communication from the farm is mainly to CSA subscribers (not farmers market), which accounts for half of her sales. Part of the reason CSA subscribers preferred email is due to email being the primary source of communication between the CSA subscribers and the owner-operator whereas farmers market customers are more involved with social media such as Instagram and Facebook.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, direct and local food systems are a factor in cultivating civic agriculture. The data from the surveys, personal interviews, and participant observation shows the value that the patrons of the farm put on having a relationship with the owner-operator and being a part of their local food system.

### 4.3 Discussion

The purpose of this research was to present a case study of a moderate-sale small family farm located in King County, Washington that exemplified the character of social capital and socioemotional wealth, in the context of civic agriculture. The data derived from this case study analysis were presented in terms of two themes: psychological sense of community and valuing of direct and local food systems. These themes enabled consideration of how social capital and socioemotional wealth manifest themselves in the practice of civic agriculture. In this discussion, I develop aspects of the concepts previously underdeveloped by explaining how my findings align with previous findings and research around social capital and socioemotional wealth, in the context of civic agriculture. Over the course of the study, the core concepts and themes surfaced in the context of the moderate small family farm in ways both expected and unexpected.

For instance, the results of the research showed that this moderate-sale small family farm enjoyed a strong community that supported the owner-operator and the ideals of civic agriculture through a turbulent and unknown time (the sale and subsequent purchase of the farm). While strong community ties were expected, in line with a practice of civic agriculture, I was surprised by the depth and impact of the emotional attachment within the community which predated the purchase of Quiet Rail Farm. I also found surprising how this attachment provided a level of social capital that would not have been present without contributions by Quiet Rail Farm patrons

who value a direct and local food system. I will explain this insight relative to each of the findings below.

By interrogating social capital in relation to the case study, I found that there were several instances of social capital at work within the case. As Putnam states, social capital, “refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 2000, p. 2). The social organization of Quiet Rail Farm, and the network, norms, and social trust that were created suggests that psychological sense of community played a key role in the coordination and cooperation of the purchase of the farm; as the farm would provide mutual benefit for the owner-operator and the patrons of the farm. As discussed earlier, McMillan and Chavis (1986) in their research of the psychological sense of community, describe four main dimensions: membership in the community, influence in the group, reinforcement or close social connection, and a shared emotional connection. Through the research of this case I found evidence of each: group membership within the CSA subscription community; influence, in the ability to raise needed funds to make the farm purchase; reinforcement in the growth and sustainability of the community support for the farm; and emotional connection to the farm and its values – all expressed in interviews with supporters of the farm.

I also note the findings in this research in relation to socioemotional wealth. Socioemotional wealth is defined as “capture[-ing] the stock of affect-related value that a family derives from its controlling position in a particular firm” (Berrone et al., 2012, p. 259). In previous research, socioemotional wealth has been used to illustrate the non-financial value in inter-generational family businesses. For this research it was also applied to a family business, but not one that was to be passed on to a family member. In this case, there was evidence that the

farm held certain aspects of socioemotional wealth through the REI factors: R=Renewal of family bonds through inter-generational succession, E=Emotional attachment, and, I=Family members' identification with the firm. In terms of emotional attachment: the values of fresh produce and supporting local agriculture were clear through survey responses and personal interviews.

While the renewal of family bonds through inter-generational succession could not be observed in this research, due to the lack of interest by the owner-operator's children to continue the farm, family members' identification with the business could be understood in terms of the relationships that farm patrons had with the owner-operator. These long-term relationships cultivated a sense of identification with the farm. Overall, the case of this farm showed the difficulties in researching socioemotional wealth in a first-generation (the first generation of a potentially inter-generational) family business. From the case of this farm, I suggest that socioemotional wealth can originate in a first-generation business – as we see in this instance (and as evidenced by apparent emotional attachment and family members' identification with the farm), yet the benefits of socioemotional wealth, the affect-related value, is not immediately present. Certainly, the results suggest that “family members” per se may include community members, in other words, a collective human connection.

Thus, this research suggests that there is the potential to expand our notion of “family members” as we consider socioemotional wealth. As mentioned earlier, Quiet Rail Farm exhibited both the ‘E’ and ‘I’ factors (emotional attachment and owner-operator identification with the farm) of socioemotional wealth. But I think there could be the possibility of expanding our understanding of socioemotional wealth beyond that of the family to farming collectives or community/close-friends. From this research I think the key variable to socioemotional wealth is

the collective human connection and not the commonly-understood family unit. Inter-generational succession could still be accomplished through mentorship of the next generation of farmers which enables farm succession. This broader understanding of socioemotional wealth within the context of civic agriculture prioritizes maintaining direct and local food systems and the communities that support them.

Civic agriculture can be considered as the following, as given in a comment from the owner-operator on her farming philosophy, “grow the most nutritious, best tasting produce that I can and deliver it locally.” The interests of the farmer are to democratize the food system in her community. The owner-operator first sold her produce directly to consumers at her place of work – starting with a small CSA of ten people. She has since sold at farmers markets and grown her CSA to 75 people (now 151, with the food panic associated with COVID 19).

The owner-operator was also able to develop a community that supported her through one of the most challenging times of having to purchase the farm in just two months. The owner-operator is able to go to the farmers market each weekend and knows by name and faces the people to whom she sells. The owner-operator also demonstrates the power of direct marketing by cultivating an online social media presence that engages the patrons of the farm. These are all aspects of civic agriculture: growing local and sustainable produce, supplying the produce directly to consumers, and participating in direct marketing to the local community.

Possible limitations related to these findings include the surveying of only CSA subscribers and not other farmers market customers. The literature suggested that CSAs are one of the strongest aspects of civic agriculture, which informed my decision to focus on that group. Also, due to the time constraints and location of this research, the CSA subscribers were easier to

contact in terms of emailing a survey rather than conducting in-person interviews. This research was conducted *after* the farm purchase, which could be considered a large “cash-in” of the social capital the owner-operator had accumulated, making it more of a challenge to ask farm patrons to give up time and/or resources to participate in voluntary research, which also used some social capital.

Given this discussion, my understanding of the exploration and investigation of social capital and socioemotional wealth, in the context of civic agriculture as a case study of a moderate-sale small family farm in King County, Washington has changed. I initially thought that this case study would be a strong example of normative socioemotional wealth. This research suggests that the concept of socioemotional wealth could be expanded. Perhaps conditions for how a first-generation farm could accumulate or establish socioemotional wealth need to be included in the conceptualization of socioemotional wealth and its measurement.

These results suggest that this case illustrates the importance of social capital (considered as the community that works together for mutual benefit (Putnam, 2000)) in the context of civic agriculture. I found that there is a mutual respect between the owner-operator and the patrons of the farm, and a much more tender relationship present than what might be expected by, say, a consumer purchasing food in a grocery store. Clearly, there is a mutual understanding that the owner-operator depends on each sale for her family’s welfare, which the patrons respect, and take pride and responsibility in supporting.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research used a multi-method research design including online surveys, personal interviews, and participant observation to generate data around a case study of Quiet Rail Farm. The data are organized into two major themes: psychological sense of community and valuing of direct and local food systems. These themes refer to the community connections of social capital, the social ties and emotional connection of socioemotional wealth, in the context of the local food systems of civic agriculture. In the discussion, I highlighted the importance of direct engagement with the owner-operator of a farm to cultivate connection with the community as an example of one way to build social capital and socioemotional wealth, in the context of a more civic agriculture.

It is clear from this research that the case, Quiet Rail Farm, has a strong community of support for the owner-operator, thus following the ideals of civic agriculture. This is evident from the long-term CSA support and the support through the purchase of the property Quiet Rail Farm resides on. Such support can be understood in terms of the concepts of social capital and socioemotional wealth.

Social capital refers to the mutually beneficial relationships in communities. In the case of Quiet Rail Farm, it is evident that the psychological sense of community, an important component of social capital, benefits both the owner-operator and the patrons. The owner-operator provides the patrons of the farm with produce and a community that support their values of supporting local and direct food systems. The patrons of the farm are able to support the owner-operator by being reliable customers in both the CSA and the farmers market and some support the viability and longevity of the farm by having helped with the farm purchase. Four dimensions of psychological sense of community are exemplified here: the robust CSA

membership subscription community, the positive influence of the community to raise funds for the earlier purchase of the farm, reinforcement or close social connection, even growth in community support for the farm, and the emotional connection and apparent values that the owner-operator and patrons share.

This emotional connection seen in the psychological sense of community is also present in socioemotional wealth (in the 'E' factor of emotional attachment). I discussed previously the associated "REI" factors of socioemotional wealth: R=Renewal of family bonds through inter-generational succession, E=Emotional attachment, and I=family members' identification with the farm. Emotional attachment is evident by the apparent values implicit in responses, i.e. , regarding convenience, fresh and local produce, and reinforcement of shared values, that survey respondents and interviewees shared. The 'I' factor of family members' identification with the farm is seen through the long-term relationships with the farm, built between the owner-operator and the farm supporters. The 'R' factor was not observed in this research since the farm is first-generation and the owner-operator's children have shown no interest in taking over the farm. Socioemotional wealth typically does not address first-generation farms, but perhaps should; I will discuss this further below.

Limitations of this research are that it is a single case study, and so generalizing ability is limited. Single case study research is suitable for considering concepts and identifying areas of future research, but cannot be generalized to any cases that do not meet similar location, size, and population.

The response rate in the survey reported on here was 36%. Perhaps a higher response rate would lend more confidence in the results of this case study, but nevertheless would still not be

sufficient to generalize to other cases – further, each particular farm “case” is unique. Also, due to the time and geographic constraint, the CSA subscribers were easier to contact in terms of emailing rather than conducting in-person interviews (which might have yielded more information). One further note: This research was conducted after the farm purchase of 2018 which could be considered a large “cash-in” of the social capital the owner-operator had accumulated. One could speculate that farm patrons felt they had contributed enough time/effort/capital to the farm and were not interested in participating in this research (yet, another “outlay” of capital).

Other research limitations include the time frame of the study. Ideally, I would have conducted a longitudinal study to provide a more comprehensive look at the building up of social capital and socioemotional wealth. Scholars could benefit from longitudinal study to increase understanding of the two concepts. Another limitation is in the number of interviews I conducted. My original intent was to conduct 14 interviews, but due to geographic constraints and difficulties in identifying and scheduling of interviewees, only 4 interviews resulted. With more interviews, I could have further explored the nuances of farm patrons’ decisions to support the farm and to be a part of a persistent farm community. However, Holt (2019) and Hook (2011) collected a similar amount of data in a single case study as compared to cases such as Trauger et al., (2010) to produce valid results.

Future research should include, as I mentioned, further research into socioemotional wealth in first-generation family farms (and family businesses). Other promising areas might be investigation into how social capital builds when one is basically a newcomer to a community, with little resources and assets. An ancillary question has to do with farm continuity or inter-generational transfer, and what are some of the most critical factors in successful transfer.

This research raises questions of what is required of a first-generation farm to start accumulating socioemotional wealth. It seems that emotional attachment between community members and owner-operator is key. A longitudinal case study would provide insight into the decisions to pass the farm down to the next generation, and explore the creation of binding social ties in terms of family control and influence – as a bid to build socioemotional wealth. Indeed, it appears that considerable social capital can be accumulated in just a 20-year time-period. Clearly, with time and resources, a moderate-sale small family farms can accumulate social capital and socioemotional wealth.

A further question is how does the selling of farms (for retirement) to non-family members impact the concept of civic agriculture, especially in terms of maintaining direct sales to consumers and direct and local food systems over multiple generations. The practice of civic agriculture involves maintaining direct and local food systems which involves some creation of community as seen in this research. When small family farms are sold (outside the family) to larger farms it can undermine the community that has been created through civic agriculture, as well as the direct and local food system that was created. In order to preserve civic agriculture, do such farms need to be part of inter-generational succession, or as mentioned, part of a mentorship program where farmers can mentor the next generation of future farmers – all with the goal of preserving civic agriculture practices.

An additional question has to do with (ever-increasing) high prices for agricultural land, which makes it difficult for new first-generation farmers to purchase land, much like was the case with Quiet Rail Farm. Community support was needed to complete the purchase. Otherwise,

only those with assets, such as with larger scale farms, are able to purchase agricultural land – thus compromising the democratization of the food system that is the basis of civic agriculture. Perhaps the important distinction that is emerging here is not passing a farm down through family vs. selling it, but rather the role of non-market human networks (as seen here) vs markets in the allocation of land and resource.

This case study of Quiet Rail Farm exemplifies ways forward in democratizing the food system by building social capital and socioemotional wealth in the context of civic agriculture. This research suggests that ideas around promoting direct marketing, strengthening community ties, and establishing emotional connection are important to understanding the non-financial aspects of farm viability. These strong connections between the owner-operator and the patrons of the farm lead to consumers' strong psychological sense of community and a valuing of direct and local food systems.

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## Appendix A: Survey and Interview Questions

### Owner-Operator Interview Questions

- What is your farming philosophy?
  - Has this changed over the years?
- Why do you choose to participate in farmers markets and CSAs?
  - How long?
  - How did you make that decision?
- What roll does your community play in the farm?
- Do you view your community as an asset to your farm?
  - How do you invest in your community?
- What roll do local businesses play in your farm?
  - Local restaurants promoting your farm? Buying from you?
  - Do you shop for your farm local? Feed/Seed/Supplies?
    - If yes, do these stores know you?
- Do you think your farm customers have a ‘stake’ in the farm?
  - How? Why?
- How do you engage with customers?
  - How do you choose what to share with customers?
  - Do you think sharing about your farm fosters a stronger community?
- Your family lives on the farm, do they play any role in the farm business?
- Do you or family members ‘get’ anything by being a part of the farm (in terms of deals at local businesses/social status/name in the community)?
- Do your regular customers know each other?
  - If yes, elaborate on how the relationship came about and the role the farm had in the relationship. Have there been any products from the relationship that have benefited the farm?
- Has your community ever helped when the farm or your family needs help (financially or otherwise?)
  - How? Why?
- What is your plan for farm succession?
  - Have you identified someone to take over the farm?
  - Will they keep the farm name? And the community you have created?
- Can you talk about the experience of buying your farm?
- Are there any other times when members of the CSA or Markets have helped you buy any supplies when the farm wasn’t able to?

## **CSA Subscriber and Farmers Market Customers Interview Questions**

- How long have you been a customer of Quiet Rail Farm?
- Have/are you a CSA member?
- Have/do you buy from the farmers market?
- How did you become a part of the farm community?
  - What brings you back to Quiet Rail Farm rather than a different farm?
- How do you experience the successes and failures of the farm?
- Have you participated in any farm events?
  - Visited the farm?
  - Done any U-pick activities?
- How do you engage with the farm?
  - Social media?
  - At market?
  - Text/email?
- Can you describe your relationship with Quiet Rail Farm?
- Is Quiet Rail Farm a topic that comes up in conversation with friends and family?
- Would you recognize Quiet Rail Farm or the owner-operator outside the context of the market or CSA?
- Do you know anyone else who is a part of the owner-operators' community or a part of Quiet Rail Farm? (count the number)
- Did you participate in the farm purchase last summer?
  - If yes, why did you help?

## CSA Subscriber Survey Questions

1. How long were you or have you been a CSA customer?
  - a. 0-5 years
  - b. 5-10 years
  - c. 10-15 years
  - d. 20+ years
2. Why did you choose to have a CSA?
3. How did you find out about Quiet Rail Farm's CSA program?
4. Why did you pick Quiet Rail Farm to get your CSA over other farms?
5. How do you keep up to date with the farm?
  - a. Facebook
  - b. Instagram
  - c. Newsletter
  - d. Website/Blog
  - e. Text/Email
  - f. In person
6. Do you participate in farm activities?
7. Why do you participate in farm activities?
8. Did you participate in the farm purchase 2 years ago?
9. Why did you participate in the farm purchase?
10. Are there any other thoughts that you would like to share with me that you didn't have an opportunity to write in other questions? If so, you may use the space below or click the next button to finish the survey!

## Appendix B: Codes

- Quality (taste)
- Fresh produce
- Supporting local
- Convenience (location/time)
- Seasonality of produce
- Identification with community/farmers
- Farming practices
- Variety of produce
- Connection to family
- Price
- Farmers market
- Farm finding resource
- Personal connection to farm
- Online
- Meet others
- Help the farm
- Obtain farm products
- Farm stability
- Investment
- Aligns with personal values

## Appendix C: IRB Certification



**CITI**  
PROGRAM

Completion Date 24-Jan-2019  
Expiration Date 23-Jan-2024  
Record ID 29966891

This is to certify that:

**Kayanne Grubb**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

**Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher** (Curriculum Group)  
**Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher** (Course Learner Group)  
**1 - Basic Course** (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**Western Washington University**

**CITI**  
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w54a337b4-63c9-43d4-80fc-808ba8489e66-29966891](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w54a337b4-63c9-43d4-80fc-808ba8489e66-29966891)