

**UNCOMMON GROUNDS: LGBTIQ FARMERS, AGRICULTURE,
AND ECOLOGIES OF SOCIAL DIFFERENCE**

by

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Abstract

This work is an ethnography of queer farmers throughout British Columbia and acknowledges that by working within such a diverse population, there exists no singular representation of “queer individuals,” “farmers,” and / or “queer farmers.” The research design integrates a qualitative, post-structuralist ethnographic and auto-ethnographic methodology based upon individual narratives and a review of both local (British Columbia) and non-local (national and international) print and web sources (academic and non-academic) related to gender, and especially sexuality, in agricultural production and practice. This study recognizes the existence of ecologies of social difference. I define ecologies of social difference as the role of ecological indicators, settings, and contexts as mediators and moderators in the intersections of social difference (i.e., the role of ecology in shaping both positively and negatively greater inequalities, inequities, injustices). This study draws from several intellectual lineages, from queer theory to feminist political ecology, to illustrate how agriculture might be transformed within a queer ecological context. Rooted in my belief that understandings of agriculture and ecology are shaped and impacted by gender and sexuality even as understandings of gender and sexuality are shaped and impacted by practices within and perceptions of agriculture and ecology, this work seeks to challenge heteronormative assumptions of both gender and sexuality and agriculture and ecology. It presupposes that queer sexualities can provide lenses through which farmers are not only creating new agricultural practices, but also new queer identities. These new, heretofore unstudied, lenses may then lead to the identification of new perspectives, practices, innovations and understandings of agricultural and ecological sustainability.

Lay Summary

This thesis proposes that intersections of ecology, agriculture, and queer sexuality may relate to unique queer perspectives, as well as specific agricultural perspectives, practices, and production outputs. Through a critical interrogation of queer sexualities (and where applicable, gender) within a variety of different agricultural settings and contexts in British Columbia, it may be possible to identify the complex mechanisms through which agricultural practices (and associated outputs) inform and are informed by queer sexualities. By examining the range of practices and perspectives potentially impacted by the intersections of queer identity, ecology, and agriculture, these findings may then create potentially new understandings of both queer sexualities and agriculture.

Preface

This thesis is the original work of the author. This thesis is wholly unpublished, and is solely the independent work of the author. The author independently identified and designed the research questions, study design and methodology, and was sole performer of the research interviews, data collection, and analysis of research data.

This research was approved by UBC's Behavioural Research Ethics Board, Certificate Number H14-01285.

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Dedication

For Phyllis Berries and every other queer farmer who never got asked.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study proposes that intersections of agricultural production, gender, and sexuality may relate to specific agricultural practices, perspectives, and production structures (i.e. farm and garden typology) in British Columbia. Through a critical interrogation of gender and sexuality within a variety of different ecological settings, including ecotones (transition areas between distinct ecological systems) and associated agricultural settings and contexts, it may be possible to identify the complex mechanisms through which agricultural practices (and associated outputs) inform and are informed by gender and sexuality. By examining the range of production practices potentially impacted by the intersections of queer sexual identity and agriculture, these findings may then create potentially new understandings of both queer sexuality and agriculture. These identified intersections and impacts may then lead to the identification of new perspectives, practices, innovations and understandings of agricultural and ecological sustainability.

This work is presented in four parts. The first chapter, through a critical review of literature on germane themes (including but not limited to ecology / ecologies, queer theory, and agriculture), provides both a starting point and rationale for my study objectives. Also included in this chapter is a detailed outline of my research approach, theoretical perspective(s), and study design and methodology, including research questions. The next chapter presents an autoethnography of my own lived experiences as both a queer individual who grew up in rural Montana on a farm, and also as a queer individual living and farming in a large West Coast city. In integrating and presenting an autoethnographic component as part of this thesis, it is my intent to both act as a participant in chronicling the lives of queer farmers, and also to recognize

outright my belief that distance between researcher and researched is not only a construction, but a negative one at that. The third chapter utilizes the voices and perspectives of study participants, as well as my own findings and analyses, to dissect the implications of binarism within heteronormative cultural, temporal, and ecological contexts. In doing so, I outlines the implications of binary privileging on queer identity, temporal geographies, and agricultural practice, specifically, agroecological farming methods. In the fourth chapter, I interrogate the ecological and agricultural perspectives, practices, and production outputs that constitute queer identity for queer farmers in British Columbia, Canada. Hypothesizing that queer farmers live ecologies of social difference that both mirror and replicate ecological and agroecological values, this work uses participants' perspectives and the ecological concept of the ecotone as a theoretical starting point to explore how ecological transition zones can foster the diversification of both agriculture and farmer alike. The final section presents my conclusions about the goals and hypotheses presented in this introduction, as well as a review of study limitations and crucial next steps.

1.1 The Case for Queer Farming: A Literature Review

The intersections of ecology, agriculture, and farming identities are a prominent theme in agricultural research. Yet even as these research perspectives have contributed many important histories of / arguments about the evolution of farming and farming practices in modern life, the critical intersections and contestations of the role of new queer identities in modern farming practices and perspectives remain a relatively new area of inquiry (Gray, Johnson, Gilley, 2016; Leslie, 2017). Thus, the role of ecology, agriculture, and modern farming practices and perspectives in the construction of new queer identities provides an opportunity to better

understand intersections among ecology, agriculture, and farming identity broadly. This chapter explores these intersections in order to identify important gaps and new directions in both queer and agricultural studies. Specifically, this thesis challenges the heteronormative constructs undergirding agricultural and ecological narratives and the metronormative (defined as urban centric and urban privileged) constructs undergirding many queer theoretical narratives. Utilizing a review of the body of literature related to and informing present agricultural and queer theoretical intellectual traditions, I contribute in this chapter a new perspective that explores the binaries (and spaces between those binaries) and the intellectual tension(s) between farming and queer identities. Through an examination of queer theory, this work provides parameters for defining “the queer” as that which is not only performative, but also aspirational (see Muñoz’s “queer utopia”), non-urban, and even ecological and agricultural. Indeed, these settings for alternative queer realities may even offer new possibilities precisely because they engender radical queer potentiality- if not in the same terms as their urban counterparts, and in light of their engagements with oppositional narratives to the metronormativity of queer theory. Additionally, I review and situate this work within the literature of queer ecological theory specifically, and in doing so center ecology and agriculture within queer culture(s) as under-recognized and even underappreciated forms of demarcation and delineation, resistance and recalibration.

1.1.1 A Survey of Queer, Ecological, and Agricultural Theory

A valuable starting point in this work is defining the queer; to consider it as a discursive construction, by which I mean the ways in which language and understanding shape one’s perception and relation to the self. Like the terms “gender,” “woman,” “man,” or “homosexual,”

the queer then is not as “copy is to original, but rather as copy is to copy ... a parody of the *idea* of the natural and the original” (Butler, 1990, p. 31). The queer is that which disorients and troubles the idea of a central, fixed orientation point against which all else deviates. Like the word “queer,” the words “rural” and “nature” are also unstable in similar ways. The same social constructs troubled by the queer can be troubled by “nature” and the North American ideal of “the rural,” including individual and collective identity, sexuality, gender, and spatio-temporality. Just as Butler used the queer as a conceit to illustrate the instability of gender and other individual constructions, so too can the ecological, spatial and temporal location of most agricultural production – that is, the rural – do similar work.

Rurality, and queer rurality in particular, offers new insights into the narratives and constructions of identity:

Put simply, “rural America” is strange; it is queer in the sense of existing somewhat at odds and out of time and place with greater cultural norms. At the very least it is complicated, and at times downright confounding, at least for a concept that is as supposedly commonsensical and familiar as the idea of rurality is often imagined to be. It is simultaneously everywhere in general and nowhere in particular. It is ever-present and yet a thing of the past. It is at once archetypically American and atypical of America.

(Gray, Johnson, Gilley, 2016, p. 4)

Framed as an extension of Butler’s canonical work in establishing the queer as that which is both illusory and unstable and also that which illustrates that *all* is illusory and unstable, the rural can also be deployed to similar ends: it is that which also resists categorization; it anti-normative.

Jose Esteban Muñoz (2009), in his book *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, succinctly captures the irreducible nature of the queer when he states “Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality” (p. 1). Muñoz posits that the queer has always existed, and indeed still exists, before and outside of recognition and definition. Johnson (2013) further illuminates a need to consider the queer within a heteronormative culture as that which defies, as opposed to that which defines: “People are not necessarily ‘straight’ simply because they do not identify as ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian.’ To assume as much, either historically or contemporaneously, is the very definition of heteronormativity” (p. 7).

Here, Johnson refers to the queer in relation to the ordering of the world around the heterosexual, including understandings of gay and lesbian identity, and questions whether this binary simplicity can capture the queer. Yet the accepted historical narratives of queer identity have largely made little room for either the queer rural and the rural queer: “Indeed, for all that the term ‘rural’ *does* connote in the context of twenty-first-century American culture, one thing that it is almost never used to signify is gender or sexual diversity” (Gray, Johnson, Gilley, 2016, p. 4).

Queer has been applied to individuals and communities that represent identifiable markers of sexual otherness and difference between “mainstream” and “sub” cultures, as when lesbians, gay men, and bisexual, transsexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals of male, female, and non-binary gender are defined as “queer” in oppositional relation to heterosexual men and women. Historically, this use of queer was pejorative, and recent attempts within the LGBT community to reclaim queer – to assert ownership of the term – indicate that as slippery

as it may be, “identity is a necessary error” (Butler, 1993, p. 21, Spivak, 1989). It is also important to note that the use of any word with a contested meaning, including queer or rural, must acknowledge Butler’s (1993) identification of the inability to “sustain...mastery” (p. 227) of language within greater social (here, heteronormative and metronormative) contexts. Thus, while the use of either word throughout this work represents my own comfort with and ownership of the terms as a queer man with a rural upbringing, I recognize that these words are also fraught with meanings that are not my own and that, even though they can be emancipatory, they are simultaneously potentially pejorative: “space matters where the politics of gender and sexuality in the United States [and, frankly, everywhere else] are concerned, not because it is so powerfully determinative, but because its effects are so wildly unpredictable” (Gray, Johnson, Gilley, 2016, p. 7).

Even a queer theoretical perspective on defining the word queer is, at the outset, problematic: any attempt at a reductive categorization would in itself represent a departure from the queer. Queer, within this intellectual tradition, represents not an identifiable “Other,” but a refutation of the *very attempts* to identify an “Other.” The queer must “never [be] fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted” (Butler, 1993, p. 19), or it ceases being queer. Queer, then, is questioning; queer is undermining attempts at categorization; queer is engendering ontological instability in cultural and scholarly traditions that attempt to categorize “normal,” “deviant,” “natural,” and “unnatural.” Queer “emerges as an interpolation that raises the question of the status of force and opposition, of stability and variability” (Butler, 1993, p. 18). Similarly, the queer rural questions these same scholarly traditions and renders these very same forces unstable: “All of which is not to say that locatedness no longer matters. Rather, it is to suggest

that we can no longer presume to know in advance what located-ness will mean. And in fact, we probably never could” (Gray, Johnson, Gilley, 2016, p. 7).

As a blanket term, “queer” as applied to individuals, communities, and ecologies can be useful and help us see, in Seymour’s definition of queer, that it is “that which questions the naturalness, and undermines the stability, of established categories of sex, gender, and sexuality” (Seymour, 2013, p. 28). Crucially, however, and key to understanding the distinction of “queer” when moving it from describing human beings to describing ecology, is Seymour’s use of the term to name “that which questions.” Queer not only takes on new meaning in this transition, if its theorists and advocates are correct (and successful), queer *must* take on new meaning continually. In her canonical work *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler proposes that “the articulation of an identity within available cultural terms instates a definition that forecloses in advance the emergence of new identity concepts” and, as such, a “foundationalistic tactic cannot take the transformation or expansion of existing identity concepts as a normative goal” (1990, p. 15). Simply put, the queer fails if it is reduced to a purely oppositional entity to mainstream discursive narratives of identity, community, ecology, and agriculture, for if it is, it only *extends* these above narratives; it does not allow for the creation of new ones. The queer must “never [be] fully owned” (Butler, 1993, p. 19); its identities (across individual, community, and ecological systems) must be “always riven, unstable and discursively entropic” (Johnson, 2013, p. 7).

An understanding of queer as that which defies systemic categorization, anticipation, and established notions of “future” and “past” not only undermines the social and political establishments that, through a variety of unsustainable, inequitable, and oppressive mechanisms, have created such systems, but also undermines our relationship(s), understandings, and

narratives of ecology and agriculture and of temporality and rurality. Queerness as rejection of a static, centered “normal” from which all-else deviates thus opens new frontiers against the “normality” that seeks to legislate morality. The queer is the “sexual imaginary” (Weston, 1998) that, like agroecology destabilizes the “normality” of social, economic, and agricultural systems that are based in linear temporality, hierarchies, exploitation, and the maximization of profit and yield. This destabilization is significant, insomuch as agroecology represents one way to queer agricultural through farming practice, in addition to (and even possibly outside of) queering agriculture through sexual diversification of farmers and fostering a culture of inclusion, openness, and porosity within farming. Broadly conceptualized as “the application of ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable food systems” (Gliessman, 2007), for this paper, I use Dalgaard, Hutchings, and Porter’s (2003) definition of agroecology as “the study of the interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment within agricultural systems” (p. 39). It is important to note that in using this definition, I do not refer solely to academic study, but also to the careful analysis and study conducted by farmers themselves.

The queer then, is the “unnatural” alternative to those systems developed by political and social regimes that seemingly view the “natural” as synonymous with dominance and exploitation, with linearity and logic. Through queerness defined as that which questions naturalness, stability, and futurity (Muñoz, 2009; Seymour, 2013), we can envision models of sustainability that differ markedly from those currently informing ecological and agricultural practice: sustainability not for future generations, but sustainability for *its own* sake. A sustainability that gets us to this queer future much more quickly. This is a sustainability defined

not by that which potentially makes tomorrow “better,” but an ecological sustainability premised in *this* moment; it is a decoupling of the long-entrenched idea that one needs to either see positive future results or fear negative future repercussions in order to provide a rationale for behaviour. This is the unique sustainability offered by the insider/outsider perspectives of lived queer lives. Queer farming may simultaneously be nested in greater ecological sustainability movements (for example, agroecology), even as the queer can present a refutation of heteronormative reproductive futurism (Edelman, 2004); it may also be nested in greater narratives of spatial temporality, even as it can present a refutation of these metronormative and homonormative narratives.

We might also use the queer to recognize that:

As much as identity terms must be used, as much as “outness” is to be affirmed, these same notions must become subject to a critique of the exclusionary operations of their own production: for whom is outness an historically available and affordable option?

(Butler, 1993, p. 19)

Yet even this does not suffice, for as far as Butler’s foundational work recognizes the privileging inherent in out queerness as centered identities, she fails here to recognize that such a concept of “outness” *cannot* occur without the figure of an Other who *cannot* attain visibility / “outness.”

As noted by Butler, these are those we assume to be closeted because they lack both historical and economic capital necessary to attain the privileged and centered “outness.” Butler establishes the argument, but fails to extend it to its necessary conclusion: “The rural queer lacks visibility not only because of local hostility, but also because the absence of visibility is required as a

structural component of metronormativity” (Gray, Johnson, Gilley, 2016, p. 13). Simply put, the urban queer requires not only the *idea* of invisibility, but also the practical application of invisibility and erasure of the rural queer to attain visibility.

If urban queer communities may be, in a sense, the easiest to see, then rural queer communities are so difficult to conceptualize in popular discourse as to be rendered non-existent; invisible. In its simplest sense, community is a specific geographic place, populated by individuals and groups of individuals. “Community” is also, of course, the great aggregator that encompasses not only the shared socio-demographic characteristics of these collective identities, but also the commonly shared values, family, kinship, interpersonal and transactional relationships that take place within these geographic areas. Thus, while an urban gay village may not be exclusively comprised of queer individuals, many queer individuals may rightfully consider such a neighbourhood (both socially and physically) as “*their* community.” Historically, these urban communities have attained priority of place, both literally and figuratively, for some queer individuals (often those who are white, wealthy, and male). This privileging, bolstered by modern visibility politics in queer social and political movements, has effectively obscured the historic and modern realities of queer lives for rural communities and individuals alike:

Explaining the role of diversity in creating the sexual imaginary, Weston notes the greater diversity of media texts within urban areas. Significantly, many of these texts that help to create a sense of the sexual imaginary also suggest that life for gays and lesbians is better in urban areas, encouraging the perception that one has to move to the city to “be gay” and putting the lives of gays and lesbians in rural areas further “under erasure.” (Hain, 2016, p. 169)

The historical division between urban and rural queer lives, between spatio-temporal narratives of visibility and invisibility; of progress and regression, leads to the erasure of both queer lives *and* communities, and the unique ways of living, of *being*, that the rural queer offers. Lacking the sociocultural momentum of the privileged urban, the queer lives lived in these rural queer communities are not simply neglected, but are instead missing from greater collective queer narratives rooted in how the queer retains the unique ability to destabilize and otherwise trouble individual and collective identities:

The unique, vital, but often overlooked ways of inventing and living queer identities in rural spaces ... holds unlimited possibilities for new ways of being and new forms of interaction that will make rural spaces not merely safe for queer youth, but places to thrive. (Hain, 2016, p. 178)

Of course, these communities can also be “hidden,” but their lack of visibility does not necessarily indicate either fear or failure, but rather the deliberate construction and recalibration of identities and narratives that are different from those social norms and constructions that are “accepted” within hegemonic urban and urban queer narratives.

To queer the queer as it were, we must then decentre sexual identity, including sex and sexuality as lived, temporal experiences, and find room for those excluded from easy categorization in “us versus them” binary social and sexual narratives. We must address the historic exclusion of individuals not only by heteronormative and patriarchal systems of power, but also by queer systems of power (as in the case of the historic privileging of urban queer visibility above). Rurality, and the potential for queer lives lived in rural spaces, and queer lives

lived doing “non-queer” things like farm-work, neither inherently closets nor limits the queer imaginary. They further it: “the spatial politics of gender and sexuality are enormously complicated – far more complicated, certainly, than they are often imagined to be.” (Gray, Johnson, Gilley, 2016, p. 6).

Historically, modern queer identities have ostensibly centered not only on social markers such as “visibility” or “outness,” but on the geographic and temporal narratives and constructions that Mary Pat Brady calls “the scaffold imaginary” (2016, p. 109). The journey to the “authentic” queer self must be supported by Brady’s “temporal girders” that hold “temporal movement to a single direction, forming nostalgia. Nostalgia finds the rural quaint, discarded, left apart, and crushed” (p. 123). Thus, both homonormative and metronormative queer identities do not defy articulation (Erickson, 2013); they specify it. We must leave rural communities for cities (metronormativity); we must leave farms for “real” jobs, and we most certainly must leave the closet in order to “be” queer and we must then demonstrate out queerness in specific, accepted ways (homonormativity): “In essence, we hear a popular coming-out chant articulated in a different way: ‘Out of the country (closet) and into the city (streets)!’” (Cram, 2016, p. 285). We quickly learn what it means for queer sexuality “to be lived as oriented” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 1) in temporal as well as sexual ways. We learn that one must be “from” someplace to go “to” elsewhere, there must be nameless, no-good “nowhere” for every significant “somewhere”; closed closet doors are necessary for open ones. We do not, though, always learn that Ahmed’s oriented lives also present possibility, as in the case of queer individuals orienting queer lives not in city centres, but also on farms and ranches.

The sexual imaginary constructed by Weston's urban texts are important, inasmuch as they leave us, at best, with an understanding of queer lives in rural and / or farming communities as static and inert; they are places where nothing happens if one is *lucky*, for any *other* action can only be understood as secrecy and shame, homophobic violence, and even death. Yet we might consider that the lesbian and queer women's communes and queer men's Radical Faerie communities found throughout North America may exist simultaneously within spatially identifiable areas (Unger, 2010), but temporally unidentifiable ones at odds with Weston: "Geographic identities are shaped as much by cultural ideologies as by physical landscapes, and the constructed division between the 'country' and the 'city' is a particularly powerful and naturalized formation in American culture" (Schweighofer, 2016, p. 223).

What, then, do we make of concepts like queer ecology and the queering of agriculture? Furthermore, what do we make of these concepts that are not inherently rural, but which imply rurality? Simply put, "why *queer* agriculture" and "why queer *agriculture*?" In one context, we may posit queer ecology as a necessary extension of queer perspectives to ecological studies, science, and research. Within such parameters, queer ecology is the extension of structuralist and post-structuralist intellectual traditions beyond their focus on individuals and identities to the ecological world—a reorienting of terms and concepts such as "nature," "agriculture," "sustainability," and "ecology" that recognizes them as no more inherently stable than terms and concepts such as "male" or "female," "gay" or "straight." Queering ecology and agriculture disorients these terms: Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands' work in queer ecology is particularly illuminating here, providing a framework that allows us to redefine not just ecology but agriculture as something that is enacted both with and upon ecological systems: a recognition

and critically analyses of “ideas and practices of nature...located in particular productions of sexuality, and sex, both historically and in the present, located in particular formations of nature” (2010, pp. 4-5).

There exists here the risk, however, of an interpretation of Mortimer-Sandilands more heavily oriented toward the “ideas” than “the practices.” That is, those ideas that overemphasize queer ecology’s theoretical implications over its practical ones. To do so limits that dis-orientation which the queer ought rightly to expand within ecology and agriculture; this theoretical overemphasis may then close the potential for Winnubust’s queering as transformative inasmuch as it is that which allows the unanticipated (Winnubust, 2006, Erickson, 2010) within biological, ecological, and agricultural systems. Earlier in this paper, the popular gay imaginary is framed as the girding of “sexuality to be lived as oriented” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 1), and the rural was held up as potential loci for new, dis-oriented ways of being queer. To turn Ahmed’s phrase, we might then consider agriculture and ecology within the popular ecological imaginary as the girding of “farming as oriented.” The queering of agriculture thus *also* offers up potential loci for new, dis-oriented ways of *farming*, of being farmers, and farming land; it explores alternative geographies and temporalities even while exposing how “the collapsing of processes into categories – units of analysis – masks the temporalities that these processes engage and perpetuate” (Brady, 2016, p. 112).

Simultaneously, in rural and farming communities, and other non-traditionally queer spaces, in dis-oriented ways of being queer, we find how “nature allows space for the self-reflection and self-invention that Michel Foucault saw not as ‘a luxury or a pastime for lesbians and gay men,’ but as a necessity” (Hain, 2016, p. 176). Far from being prescriptive, then, rural

and farming spaces and communities might separate queerness from “narratives of child-to-adult growth, “rework the visibility/invisibility binary, and find a way to better incorporate other identity elements and different lifestyle patterns” (Schweighofer, 2016, p. 239). Through these “disidentificatory practices,” the binary itself, as opposed to binary structures, falls: the ability for mutual exclusion – for assimilation and opposition, rurality and urbanity, queer and heteronormative – ceases altogether (Muñoz, 1999; Thomsen, 2016, p. 260).

Similar to the ways that urban queerness has been privileged as a remedy for homophobia and heteronormativity, within both popular and academic discourses a return to “natural” ways of living has been proposed as a remedy for any litany of ecological woes facing the planet. “Natural,” it seems, is synonymous with creating a pastoral and sustainable ecological present that returns to what has been lost to the industrialization of many global commodities and processes, including agriculture (Ladino, 2004). At issue, however, is whether these idealized notions of pasts that never were can provide a useful vantage point from which to address a present and a future increasingly defined by potentially catastrophic climate change and ecological instability, an era in which eco-theorist Steve Mentz says “sustainability is over” (Mentz, 2012, p. 586). Scholars have offered alternative theoretical constructs that address this nostalgia, from Timothy Morton’s “dark ecology” (2007; 2016), to Lee Edelman’s “queer death drive” (2004), and Jack Halberstam’s “queer art of failure” (2011). In their own way, each seeks to break with historical critical frameworks and develop new frameworks to help us understand our relationship to nostalgia, and by extension, nostalgic ecology.

Concurrently, in many cultural narratives, queer individuals, communities, and even plant and animal species have been posited as “unnatural” in contrast to dominant cultural, political,

and scientific constructions of “the natural” (Cronon, 1995; Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, 2010; Laist, 2013; Roughgarden, 2014; Sandilands, 2014). As a result of this heteronormative twining of sexuality and nature, diverse perspectives have been left out of discourse and debate, including those occurring within agroecology.

A cursory review of academic journals devoted to research in fields including ecology, agriculture, and queer theory reveals little in the way of devoted scholarship to the intersection of all three; to queer ecological perspectives on (and within) agriculture. Timothy Morton, in his essay “Queer Ecology” (2010), reflects, for example, on the “toxic environment” ecocriticism provides for queer readings and understandings of ecology (and, by extension, agriculture). Without a specifically queer understanding of ecology, Morton posits that ecocriticism remains a largely paternalistic and heteronormative affair, a “vector for various masculinity memes, including rugged individualism, a phallic authoritarian sublime, and an allergy to femininity in all its forms (as sheer appearance, as the signifier, as display)” (p. 274). While some might point to obvious starting points for a queer understanding of ecology (ecofeminism, ecophenomenology), Morton calls for a refutation of these as well, categorizing them as “upgrades” to the “toxic environment” of ecocriticism. This need for an explicitly queer ecology, for ways of knowing that recognize that “ecology itself ... demands intimacies with other beings that queer theory also demands” (p. 273), not only calls out the historical exclusion of queer peoples and perspectives from environmental and food system sustainability movements; it illustrates how this absence of queer ecological perspectives further perpetuates cultural narratives of homophobia and heteronormativity. In so doing, this exclusion does something even greater: I will argue that by excluding queer ecological perspectives in food system and

environmental sustainability, essential new ideas and transformative responses to current ecological crises may go unvoiced, unheard, unrecognized, unsupported, and undone.

This chapter positions agriculture within the queer community as an extension of both the emerging fields of queer ecology and rural queer studies. Queer ecology is defined by Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson as:

a sexual politics that more clearly includes considerations of the natural world and its biosocial constitution, and an environmental politics that demonstrates an understanding of the ways in which sexual relations organize and influence both the material world of nature and our perceptions, experiences and constitutions of that world. (2010, p. 5)

Rural queer studies can be considered as the interrogation of queer sexualities and rural identities through the study of the ways rural queer individuals utilize “existing signs from the social field in distinct and novel ways as a critique of limitations on conservatism and rurality,” and by extension, as a critique of limitations on queer sexualities and identities (Gray, Johnson, Gilley, 2016, p. 12). For example, LGBTIQ men, women, and trans individuals in both rural and urban areas participate in rodeos through organizations like the International Gay Rodeo Association (www.igra.com). In so doing, these individuals subvert the existing signs of both queerness and rurality. They identify as “cowboys” and “cowgirls,” and engage in activities that seem culturally antagonistic, if not outright hostile, to queer individuals; the macho sublime of the bull rider and the fragile femininity of the barrel racing cowgirl are upended and subverted within a greater queer culture that allows, even encourages, expressions of femininity in men, and butchness in women. Simultaneously, they subvert the signs of urban metronormative queerness by

identifying with historically rural activities and values, even while they subvert the signs of rurality by identifying as openly queer. In addition to placing it within a queer rural context, this chapter similarly frames agriculture within larger critiques and ecological perspectives, including ecofeminist, Indigenous, racialized, and other historically marginalized communities.

Within a system in which industrialized agriculture and ecological devastation are the norm, we must recognize that industrialized agricultural systems and their associated ecological impacts are the *de facto* orientation; we cannot claim them to be “unnatural” models against which “natural” ways of farming in sync with ecological systems can develop as alternatives. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands asks what it means “that ideas, spaces, and practices designated as ‘nature’ are often so vigorously defended against queers in a society in which that very nature is increasingly degraded and exploited” (2010, p. 5)? The seeking of legitimacy by industrial and corporate agricultural entities via the integration of organic and agroecological concepts and practices within those systems should give us pause; it should represent a “stopping point,” not a “starting point.” Based solely upon the state of the modern industrialized food system, new models should neither assume legitimacy in that system nor should we expect the creation of new models from those who have broken the world’s agricultural and food systems, just as we should not expect that those who have created our current ecological mess may be trusted to suddenly turn about and undo it. To borrow from Audre Lorde (2003), “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” Instead, queer perspectives extended to ecology, agroecology, and agriculture should support potentiality in its purest form: the creation of new models of ecological and agricultural sustainability that do not yet exist and may even yet be

unimagined; they are the ideas, applications, and methods which will only occur completely outside of those traditions, institutions, and practices they oppose.

Within ecological criticism / philosophy, two authors warrant specific inclusion, both for their contributions to the canon of ecological and agroecological thought, and more specifically, for the ways in which their works represent the limits within that canon to the inclusion of gender and sexuality as critical components of the discourse. This “exclusion of inclusion” is telling inasmuch as these works represented (and still represent) an entry point for many into ecological thought. Rachel Carson, whose seminal work *Silent Spring* (1962), might be credited with the creation of both the mainstream environmental and ecofeminist movements, brought to mainstream audiences a consciousness of the devastation of natural systems (including the use of pesticides directly linked to agriculture) by industry. But Carson did not make any explicit connections between industry, patriarchy, gender, and the natural world. Even as Carson wrote that “the history of life on earth has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings” (p. 5) (in short, a great summation of post-structuralist theory), she did not specifically link these “interactions” to industry, patriarchy, and gender – let alone sexuality. Instead, Carson highlights a monolithic “mankind” – an actor whose:

Power has not only increased to one of disturbing magnitude but [one that has]...changed in character The most alarming of all man’s assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials. This pollution is for the most part irrecoverable; the chain of evil it initiates not only in the world that must support life but in living tissues is for the most part irreversible. In this now universal contamination of the environment, chemicals are the sinister and little-

recognized partners of radiation in changing the very nature of the world – the very nature of its life. (1962, pp. 5 – 6)

While Carson provided a crucial, even canonical foundation for future areas of inquiry in ecological criticism and philosophy, it would require future scholars to more fully articulate connections between social constructions including patriarchy and heteronormativity and the environmental devastation she so eloquently captured.

Aldo Leopold, alongside his work *Sand County Almanac* (1949), also stands in a unique position amongst ecological scholars, not only for the year his work was published, but also for its multiplicity – a work whose uses are not fully constrained in advance of ecological narratives, philosophical discourse, and a consideration of what would now be considered ecological theory (as in the chapter “The Ecological Conscience”). However, like Carson, Leopold also fails to make explicit any greater discursive connections between gender, sexuality, and ecology, choosing instead to highlight the need to reconsider economic incentives associated with resource exploitation. Leopold’s essay is illuminating in two key regards: first, in its use of the gendered pronoun “he” to describe all the ecological “performers” (the farmers, hunters and other nascent ecologists); and second, in his call for the development of value systems outside of the traditional economic ones, specifically his identification of the social importance of place (as opposed to pure economic value) in conservation discourse (Leopold, 1949). “Some scientists may dismiss this matter forthwith, on the ground that ecology has no relation to right and wrong. To such I reply that science, if not philosophy, should by now have made us cautious about dismissals” (Aldo Leopold, 1991, p. 182). From Carson and Leopold, then, do we gain if not specific links between the relationship between the gendering of nature and the natural and

ecological destruction, at least glimpses of future understandings of gender, sexuality, ecology, and agriculture (in Carson), and the need for the development of entirely new ecological values systems altogether (in Leopold)? Carson and Leopold leave us a contested legacy.

Acknowledged by many as foundational scholars in ecological philosophy (and subject of many introductory university courses in ecology and agriculture, including in courses at my own university), the question begs asking: what, if any, are the enduring legacies of each to queer ecological thought?

In his essay “Ecocentrism: The Land Ethic,” Leopold offered his most direct articulation of the need for a new theoretical conception of the role ecology plays in human life. Leopold calls here for a centring of ecology within values systems; for a fundamental realignment of the anthropocentric values undergirding modern capitalist and industrial societies. This is no insignificant contribution, but it is a troubled one. In Leopold’s ecocentrism, “nature” may be centred, but binarism and the othering of ecological systems endure. There is still the hunter and the hunted, but rather than reflecting subjugation and paternalism, for Leopold they represent a sort of ecological détente of oppositional forces- of conservation as “a state of harmony between men and land” (Leopold, 1949, p. 119). Leopold then, in the words of ecofeminist scholar Chaone Mallory (2001) “may unwittingly promote an attitude of domination to the nonhuman world...that portray the natural world as an object available for exploitation, thereby casting it as the ‘other’” (p. 59). Thus, we may see in Leopold precisely Morton’s critique of ecocriticism as largely paternalistic and heteronormative; a classic example of his ecocritic “masculinity meme.”

For this text (and for queer ecocriticism) Carson represents a figure far more complicated. While, as previously noted, Carson failed to extend her critique to “naming names” and calling

out ecological paternalism and misogyny specifically, I join others in calling for a more thoughtful reconsideration of Carson's role within ecocriticism, including queer ecological thought. Gary Kroll (2002) argues for consideration of Carson's ecological philosophy "as a 'subversive subject' - as a perspective that cut against the grain of materialism, scientism, and the technologically engineered control of nature." Yet, Kroll posits, Carson's greatest enduring legacy is *not* one of specific ecocritical subversion, but rather one every bit as critical in the development of discrete feminist and queer ecocriticism: "the adoption of a very healthy and widespread scepticism concerning the scientific control of both the body and the environment."

Kroll further considers *Silent Spring* as an "appropriated text" that was subsumed by the mainstream environmental movement, and notes that "While Carson rarely waxed on reforming the entirety of western society, there is an element of critical theory in *Silent Spring* that begins to contemplate a wholly new relationship between humans and nature." Does Carson not then, warrant consideration as a foundational scholar of ecofeminism, defined by Greta Gaard (1997) as the "basic premise that the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature" (p. 1)? I argue she does.

That the emergence of ecofeminism certainly presented a more discrete (defined briefly as a unique, differentiated, and distinct) vision of ecology than that of Carson (and certainly Leopold) is largely irrefutable, as are its contributions to the emergence and development of a discrete articulation of queer ecology. Pesticides have devastating ecological consequences, Carson may have warned, but it was ecofeminist scholars who specifically warned us that sexism does too (Sturgeon, 1999). Ecofeminism was crucial, in its contributions of critical gender

analysis to ecological thought, to new understandings of both ecology and ecocriticism as oriented; as reflective of (as opposed to distinct from) the paternalistic and misogynistic culture(s) that they emerged from and remain embedded within. Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature* (1980) is a particularly notable contribution, especially in its efforts to critically depart from the troubling essentialism in nascent ecofeminist thought. Merchant's work confronts the "essentialist...conflation of women with nature" (in ecofeminism) and especially the risks of linking paternalism, sexism, and the subjugation of women and the feminine with the domination of animals and ecological systems; linkages that "[imply] not only that women's nature is to nurture but also that women's role is to clean up the environmental mess made by men" (Merchant, 2006, p. 514). In reflecting on the contributions of *The Death of Nature* to ecofeminist (and later queer ecological) thought, Merchant notes that while focusing on the detriments of gendering of "nature" as female, she also works to present "nature" as:

characterized by ecological laws and processes described by the laws of thermodynamics and by energy exchanges among biotic and abiotic components of an ecosystem. Any of these components can become an actor or actors in an environmental history of a particular place. (p. 516)

Merchant provides a particularly singular voice in the development of ecofeminist (and later queer ecological) criticism, by centring multiplicity in ecological criticism; of making Carson's implicit reorientation of ecological relationships (subject as they are to appropriation and erasure) explicit, and explicit in ecological, vs. philosophical terms (as in her presentation of "nature" as outlined above).

In Merchant's de-essentialized articulation of ecofeminism, then, we find space for Carol Adam's *The Sexual Politics of Meat* and its linkages to patriarchal violence, social hierarchies, and the mistreatment of nature through meat consumption (1987); we find space too for Noël Sturgeon's *Ecofeminist Appropriations and Transnational Environmentalisms* (1999) with its foundational "critique of certain essentialist constructions of Third World and Native American women that predominated among U.S. ecofeminists in the late 1980s and early 1990s" (p. 255); we have Vandana Shiva's "subsistence ecofeminism" and its theory of "maldevelopment" and critical refutation of capitalism, including neo-liberal food and farming policies (i.e., India's "green revolution") (2009, p. 5).

More importantly, in ecofeminism's origins and evolution(s), we find also find the origins and space for queer ecological criticism. In building upon (and in some cases extending) ecofeminism, ecofeminist and queer ecology theorist Greta Gaard made the implicit explicit in her works on gender, sexuality, and ecology, as when she contemplates the meanings for both queer people and ecology when "queers are feminized, animalized, eroticized and naturalized in a culture that devalues women, animals, nature, and sexuality" (1997, p. 119).

In so doing, as Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson (2010) argue, Gaard is identifying "a strong relationship between the oppression of queers and the domination of nature." Furthermore, Gaard's framing of this relationship as "erotophobia" specifically links "heterosexism and ecological degradation ... a consideration of environmentalism as a sexual politics as a form of aesthetic and corporeal struggle against the disciplinary logics of heteropatriarchal capitalism" (p. 29). Gaard's erotophobia speaks both to Carson's initial steps

towards an understanding of the gendering of environmental exploitation and destruction and Leopold's call for new cultural value systems specific to ecological realms.

Aligning the queer with those cultural elements that are least valued suggests that these new value systems fundamentally reimagine what might be considered as successful in Mortimer-Sandilands's phrase "heteropatriarchal capitalism." Here we might reconsider Jack Halberstam's concept of queer failure as a queer ecological perspective. While failure as ecological sustainability seems to posit only one thing, to "give up" within these new ways of looking at both the queer and nature, we might instead see that this term actually engenders alternatives and radical potentiality. "Failure," in such a context, might speak instead to the recognition of the value of those individuals who have failed, who have been left out of most historical narratives of the queer (i.e., the poor, the uneducated, the rural, the farmer). In an age in which metronormative queer identity is increasingly tied to conspicuous consumption and economic and cultural ties to the heteronormative systems that created their oppression in the first place, may there not be something admirable, something to emulate, about those who have "failed" to gain entry into such a crooked system in the first place? In a world in which "the modern state has run roughshod over local, customary, and undisciplined forms of knowledge in order to rationalize and simplify social, agricultural, and political practices that have profit as their primary motivation" (Halberstam, 2011, p. 9), might those unrepresented "failures" that failed at maximal ecological or agricultural exploitation also represent models of sustainability? If ours is a patriarchal and heteronormative world that treats its most valuable and vulnerable assets like trash, is there not real value in being associated with that which is thrown away?

Ian Coldwell, in his 2007 study on farming and masculinity in Australia, identifies within

even heterosexual, masculine farmers what might be considered the recognition for new, even queer perspectives on success and failure. Interrogating traditional farming masculinity along some of the lines used to interrogate queer identity (and, in fact, calling for the type of reflexivity gaining prominence within queer theory), Coldwell joins Marta Chiappe and Comelia Flora (1998), Michael Bell (2003, 2004), Gregory Peter et al. (2000), and Asher, Baptiste, Harris et al. (2011) in questioning those systems under which agricultural concepts such as production yields are expected to increase even as the environment necessary to sustain them is destroyed, as well as the role masculinity and gender has played in the development of this and other unsustainable models. Much like the queer theorists outlined above, Coldwell identifies as necessary “a fundamental way to move forward in the difficult business of agriculture is to cultivate new identities and new ways of farming in a culture of diversity and dialogue” (2007, p. 88).

In an alignment with Halberstam’s articulation of failure as a potential positive, Coldwell and Peter et al. share the need for error, mistake, revision and reimagining within farming, and for “change and criticism, to a less controlling attitude toward machines and the environment, and to different measures of work and success” (Coldwell, 2007, p. 91). Within the agricultural sector, Coldwell and his peers are calling for the kind of fundamental realignment of values and perspectives found within the queer theory of Jose Esteban Muñoz (2009), who asks “what would it mean, on an emotional level, to make work not the defining feature of our lives?” (p. 177). This is one way we potentially *queer* agriculture; and how we *queer agriculture*. One of my goals is to extend the desiderata that Coldwell articulates for farming practice with ideas about queerness as they have been discussed in the history and cultural study of sexuality.

1.1.2 A Queer History of Agriculture and Ecology

For many individuals, queer and non-queer alike, agriculture retains cultural currency as synonymous with both nature and culture, the rural, and the non-urban. It forms a particularly vivid example of the functioning of oppositional and discursive binaries: the “natural” and “unnatural” agricultural products, “sustainable” and “unsustainable” farming methods, and even “farmland” and “development.” So, while urban agriculture has been a component of city life for as long as there have been cities, and indeed is currently expanding and gaining ever-increasing visibility within North America (Boyd, 2009; Irazábel & Punja, 2009; Mendes et al., 2008), “agriculture” is still, for many, synonymous with “rural.” As such, any critical interrogation of the contributions (and the suppressions) of queer people in agriculture will necessarily begin by acknowledging the prominence of the rural in agricultural production.

Within broader discourse(s) of agriculture, rural agriculture continues to hold a special presence of place for reasons related to the economies of scale that still render rural agriculture essential for domestic and international consumption and trade. Such agriculture contributes \$3 billion to British Columbia’s economy alone (BC Ministry of Agriculture); to history (i.e., multigenerational ties to farming, or the historical relationship of some western North American cities to farms and agricultural distribution); and even to culture (the North American cowboy and his female equivalent, the hard-working farm wife, who play such key roles in the mythologies of the West). As within any discursive construction, there are cultural narratives around agriculture that are both positive and negative, that inform, oppress, encourage, and suppress not only access to practice, but also even *perceived* access.

Despite the positive narratives that agriculture plays in the greater historiography of the “West,” there is a more complicated version that exists in the histories, lived experiences, perceptions, and cultural narratives of queer individuals. For many of us who grew up queer on farms, or in rural areas, but also including those of us who grew up in cities and peri-urban areas, agriculture may be synonymous with small-town conservatism and provincial mindsets that engender distrust, hostility towards queer individuals and communities, and the perception of an omnipresent risk of violence towards queer individuals (Rubin, 1984). Agriculture, for many of us, may even represent a sort of critical temporality, a “past” in which we found ourselves mired whilst yearning for the “future” (i.e., modern) sexual identities promised by urbanity (Halberstam, 2005, Florida, 2002, Weston, 1995). It is surely no rhetorical accident that rural communities, farmers, and their livelihoods are so frequently described as “backwards.” Farmers are not only regarded as culturally “backward” (i.e., holding out-dated, conservative views), but they are also perceived as cultural anachronisms: we may be utterly dependent upon the foods and other agricultural products they produce, but we cannot understand why they’ve chosen not to engage in modernity, why they choose to “stay” in the past of the agrarian and agricultural. As Hain observes, “part of getting *better* is getting *out* of the narrow-minded rural area, the oppressive small town, the unenlightened ‘flyover’ states, because happiness, acceptance, self-fulfillment and others like you are only to be found in coastal urban centers” (Hain, 2016, p. 165).

An interrogation of agriculture, suppression, and the queer community by means of “the relationship between identity and regulation” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 30) is contingent upon a critical inquiry into the very premise of suppression. Such a critical inquiry also necessitates

recognition of the possibility that suppression has not occurred, or has not occurred in the ways we imagine. It also requires an interrogation into the role of identity construction within the queer community as a mechanism of suppression and / or oppression itself. Only through a thorough decoupling of *all* binary possibilities engendered in discourses of suppression will an opportunity for a new narrative emerge.

Michael Warner, in his social critique *The Trouble With Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*, famously quipped “the world was homophobic ... before it identified any homosexuals to be phobic about” (1999, p. 6). For many LGBTIQ people coming of age in the post-Stonewall era, Michael Warner’s missive swirled like an undercurrent through our daily lives. Those of us who grew up queer on farms, or in rural areas, or in socially conservative or religious families, or in families with no history of higher education, came to hold our own existence at a distance. We cringed when the nightly news broadcast leather fetishists marching in big-city Gay Pride parades, and we cringed when we saw how our rural and farming communities, friends and family were represented in popular media: the hillbillies and bumpkins, the coarse people with neither class nor culture. We were simultaneously perverts and sodomites, hayseeds and hicks, mannish women and crude, inarticulate beasts of men. We were defined by our sex acts, despite the fact that we sometimes could not find anyone with whom to have them; we were told we were closeted even when we were fucking other boys and men in the great, wide open in the proverbial “back forty.” To be queer on a farm in rural North America is to experience equal opportunity shame: to orient our own sexual narratives onto an unfamiliar temporality where we silently bided our time until we could “be” queer in the “right way,” while also dreading that very moment, the one when we might also have to reveal that we grew up on

farms, that we were participants in 4-H and county fairs, that we were the children of bumpkins, of people with strange, old-timey names, funny accents, and bad grammar.

Horror stories associated with agrarianism and rurality have become foundational within urban queer communities, despite the prominence of farming and the rural within gay and lesbian history and cultural narratives (Unger, 2010). During the 1990s, the brutal murders of the young gay man Matthew Shepard and the young trans man Brandon Teena (Bell, 2000, Halberstam, 2005) gave many of us, rural and urban queers alike, pause about our safety in certain environments. Within this climate, if anyone needed any reminders about just how unwelcome queer individuals were in rural “traditional” North America, they needn’t listen only to Anita Bryant from her pulpit at the Florida Citrus Council; they heard plenty from their own leaders. The few publications that made their way to small cities and towns (for example, *The Advocate* and perhaps *Out* magazines) spoke largely to the detrimental effects on the queer community of “silent inequalities, unintended effects of isolation, and the lack of public access” (Warner, p. 7). Those that aired opposing viewpoints upending dominant spatio-temporal narratives of LGBTIQ lives (for example, *Radical Faerie Digest* and *Lesbian Connection*) found their audience limited, drowned out by the cacophony of urban privilege. Rural queers had, in Warner’s and other urbanist queer thinker’s views, literally no choice. If they stayed, then they were conscripting themselves to a life dis-oriented from the freedom of metronormative temporality and the associated social and economic capital: “To call something ‘rural,’ is to immediately invoke a scalar and hierarchical relationship in which the rural is distinct from the power, resources, and movement of the urban” (Brady, 2016, p. 114). Within this narrative, Matthew Shepard and Brandon Teena came to serve as figures for hate crimes against queer

individuals, sexual violence, and both the contradictory cost of identifying as queer *and* NOT identifying as queer outside of “safe” queer spaces (i.e., cities and a few exceptions, such as communes and intentional communities). Social critics on both the left and the right may have disagreed as to whether or not violence and discrimination against queer people was deserved, but on one aspect of queerness, all seemed to agree: rural queerness could be fatal.

That Shepard’s and Teena’s deaths were brutal reminders of the costs of exhibiting visible sexual and gender difference in a heteronormative society is indisputable. In an attempt to find “the enemy” behind it all, the geography and culture of rural North America itself, and the individuals, farms and desolate spaces that it was comprised of, all became suspect. What wasn’t necessarily visible must surely have been forcibly *invisible*: “If the closet is a major structuring element in identifying LGBT communities, and it cannot conceive of queer geographies, then it also cannot imagine the queer identities and communities that circulate in those spaces” (Schweighofer, 2016, p. 231). What metronormative queer visibility narratives fail to consider are the alternative temporalities and dynamisms of non-urban queer lives:

The ill-suited nature of visibility politics to the rural tells us at least as much about the problematics of such strategies as it does about the nature of the rural and the relationship of the rural to the urban and the global ... the ill-suited nature of visibility politics to the rural is, perhaps, less important than what this estrangement point toward: the ill-suited nature of the rural to the urban. (Thomsen, 2016, p. 261)

What cannot be left out of critical interrogations of rurality, agriculture, and agrarian lifestyles and queerness is one simple question: Is the suppression of queer individuals from

participation in agriculture, especially in rural areas, an accurate assumption, either historically or in the present (Bell, 2000, Fellows, 2001, Halberstam, 2005)? Furthermore, if these queer imaginaries fail to account for the greater breadth of queer identity than that which they prescribe, what are the costs? At very least, we must recognize that queer individuals and communities in North America's "heartlands" (i.e. rural areas) have invaluable perspectives to share: "our understanding of American [and Canadian] life will be grossly distorted unless we allow those individuals' experiences and perspectives at the margins to inform and shape ongoing debates" (Gray, Johnson, Gilley, 2016, p. 20). While the plains and farmland of rural America served as the backdrop for the vicious murders of Shepherd, Teena and others, are they also, in fact, illustrative of entrenched oppressions in the daily lived experiences of queer individuals on farms and in rural communities? We know that within many popular narratives Shepard and Teena died as queer individuals, but do these same cultural narratives truly elucidate how they lived their lives, of how "familiar spatial categories [can] cease to explain American's [Canadian's] experiences of gender and sexual difference and instead begin to raise new questions about those experiences" (Gray, Johnson, Gilley, 2016, p. 7)?

Halberstam, in their work *In a Queer Time and Place* (2005), writes that "certain sexual liberation discourses recapitulate the terms of the homo/hetero binary that oppress minority sexual subject in the first place" and, in doing so, they "become part of the very sexual hierarchy they seek to oppose" (p. 30). Framing their argument within the context of Foucault's concept of "reverse discourse" (when Foucault argues that "homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturalness' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified" [Foucault, 1976, p. 101]),

Halberstam speaks to the risks of trying to make sense of identity and construction when it does not “make sense,” of the importance of “emancipation struggles as strategically and historically necessary,” and of the dilemma represented when “a reverse discourse is in no way the ‘same’ as the discourse it reverses.” Essentially, Halberstam, like Foucault, recognizes that this “desire for reversal is a desire for transformation” (Halberstam, p. 30).

Halberstam also provides an excellent starting point for a consideration of what a queer perspective may bring to ecology and agriculture: “queer subcultures cannot only be placed in relation to a parent culture, and they tend to form in relation to places as much as in relation to a genre of cultural expression, and ultimately, they oppose not only the hegemony of dominant culture but also the mainstreaming of gay and lesbian culture” (2005, p. 30). Extended to ecology and agriculture, Halberstam’s critique offers a potential snapshot of a radically different perspective on nature, ecology, and agriculture. Ecologically, Halberstam’s argument would posit that any extension of industrial agriculture (the equivalent to Halberstam’s “parent culture”), to “new models” (i.e., organic), would only further entrench and continue to maintain those industrialized systems. Within such a perspective, large-scale, corporate organic agriculture, for example, not only fails to provide a true alternative to non-organic agriculture, but it also further entrenches the power, dominance, and market control of the industrialized agriculture systems that need replacing. More importantly, the envisioning (and subsequent creation) of new models free from the historic foundational weight of industrialized systems cannot take place if they are constructed as relational to those systems. Rather than adhering to models that simply shift the terms of engagement between oppressor and oppressed, a queer perspective on ecology and agriculture might suggest as a starting point the severing of

traditional binary / oppositional relationships between two models, much like the severing of oppositional relationships between the queer and rurality, and not only a comfort with, but a *need* for instability, otherness, the unknown, and liminal porosity within ecology and agriculture. Much like the “paradox of homonormative rights-seeking approaches: we are compelled to express like-ness through centralizing our difference” (Thomsen, 2016, p. 254), queering ecology and agriculture necessitates breaking from the compulsion towards articulations of difference in relationship to an oriented center, and articulating new perspectives and arguments that move well beyond making it “impossible to be authentically known without an articulation of this difference” (*ibid.*).

From a Halberstamian perspective then, the suppression of queer people within agriculture specifically and rurality in general may not necessarily represent reality, but rather an attempt to construct stable identities and sexualities within *urban* environments by queer individuals. Engendered within this possibility is a greater, if more problematic, proposition: that the suppression of queer people from agricultural practice, livelihoods, and agriculturally oriented communities may be as likely to occur (and to have occurred) *within* queer communities as it is to occur outside them: “when future historians sit down to write the story of lesbians’ and gay men’s fitful struggle to overcome what some have already characterized as the last and most important barrier to full social and political enfranchisement, they are necessarily going to have to contend with what we might choose to describe as the city’s limits within the landscape of early twenty-first-century American politics” (Gray, Johnson, Gilley, 2016, p. 6).

If Warner served as a founding member of the queer guard who warned the queer community that homophobia was as seemingly natural as homosexuality, queer theorist José

Esteban Muñoz offers the opposite. In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Muñoz argues for a radical departure from the theoretical premise presented by Warner. In the vision espoused by Muñoz (2009), “By my clock, we were queer before we were lesbian and gay. This understanding may lead to a critical looking back that may be a step forward” (p. 127). Muñoz’s is a movement towards Sedgwick’s call for “soft theory,” (2003) or ways of understanding that contribute to non-dualism and value the unknown, an understanding that in looking back needn’t be castigatory, but can be an attempt to identify new potentials. This is the queerness of agroecology in an industrialized age, of the value of the archaic because the innovative has not worked out so well. Such a rhetorical shift has profound implications for our understanding of queerness, suppression, and agriculture, especially within rural contexts: “In this respect, ‘rural’ is not entirely unlike ‘queer’ itself, a term that carries with it both a troubled and a troubling past, but one that is actively reclaimed ... precisely because it is indeterminate and unstable” (Gray, Johnson & Gilley, 2016, p. 8).

In *Just Queer Folks: Gender and Sexuality in Rural America*, Colin R. Johnson contributes an alternative historiography of gender, sexuality, and queerness on farms, in rural areas, and other spaces outside of the urban. In doing so, Johnson frames queerness in ways beyond those traditionally offered in queer theory: “normalizing discourses are always precisely that. They are not empirical descriptions of individual experiences or lived reality, although they do significantly reshape experience and reality” (2013, p. 3). Such an understanding is critical to discursive constructions of queerness outside of most traditional parameters, including around those of rural and agrarian North America. In this alternate queer North America, shifts or changes in gender and sexuality identities did not only take place in cities, but also occurred in

small towns, rural areas, and on farms. The rules and conversations may have been distinctly different, but they exist(ed) in both the present and the past:

rural and small-town Americans were never unaware that some people inhabited their bodies in slightly peculiar ways, or that others engaged in conduct with members of the same sex. And they were certainly never without their own evolving beliefs about what these behaviours and dispositions meant when they encountered them.

(Johnson, 2013, p. 4)

Johnson's perspective is critical, for it not only tells an alternative narrative of agriculture, rurality, and the queer past, but it also allows a more comprehensive understanding of its present and future.

First and foremost, an understanding of agriculture, and the participation and the suppression of the queer within it, should rest upon two starting premises: (1) queer individuals have always been part of rural and agricultural life in North America; and (2) agriculture, especially as applied to research and education, is inexorably tied to the construction and pathologization of queer sexuality. The queer, then, within agriculture and rurality, is no more or less stable than when discussed in urban, non-agricultural contexts. Simply put, an understanding of the history of agriculture and queer individuals and communities in agricultural settings necessarily involve the expansion of partially intact histories and the inclusion of new ones.

Certain histories of agriculture, queer individuals and communities are well told, if prone to what Johnson (2013) calls "the epistemic harm to women whenever we attempt to write about

the history of gender and sexuality at the same time” (p. 178). Queer women’s engagement with nature through agroecology, for example, is well documented within certain contexts. Nancy C. Unger, Catriona Sandilands, and many others have chronicled the significant contributions to queer identity, ecology, and agriculture by lesbians through the development of intentional communities and separatist communes in North America. Within these histories, agriculture, and most certainly agroecology, is critical: to farm and to intend to do so sustainably were simultaneously acts of defiance and determinism. For queer women, especially during the second half of the twentieth century, agriculture was part of a greater centering of nature. The agriculture and agroecology practiced in queer women’s communities were crucial components of deliberate efforts to “transcend the sexism, homophobia, violence, materialism, and environmental abuse afflicting mainstream society” (Unger, 2010, p. 173). Food production for women within such contexts was an effort to engage in a practical form of critical reflexivity: the food grown by queer women offered real sustenance and served as an alternative form of capital that supported the establishment of women-centered communities in an otherwise thoroughly patriarchal culture. By feeding and providing for themselves, queer women were able to break any reliance not only on male and heteronormative social and economic systems, but also on patriarchal temporality and spatiality.

Queer women growing food using agroecological / or organic methods represented a “new” connection between women and nature. It is a concrete alternative to those polluted urban places that offered more liberation, opportunity and safety for queer men than they ever did for queer women and trans individuals. Thus, agriculture and agroecology offer a shared historiographical lens through which we can see the “exhilarating rejection of society’s

condemnation of lesbianism” (Unger, 2012, p. 168). Simultaneous to the emergence of queer women’s self-selected and support spaces, however, is a history of queer women and agriculture that does not fit within such neat ecofeminist discursive narratives. If we need, Halberstam says, a “much more rigorous understanding of the gendering of domestic space” (2005, p. 8), then we also need a much more rigorous understanding of the gendering of agriculture and rurality and the privileging of class, education, and whiteness within both domestic and natural spaces to understand how “changes in gender relations did not merely follow the industrialization of agricultural production; they were crucial to creating it” (Neth, 1995, p. 216).

In her memoir *Two or Three Things I know for Sure*, Dorothy Allison reveals the precise terms that class, education, gender, and sexuality cast upon on the lives of women in rural North America, of having no sexual identity in a culture with rigid definitions of the “masculine” and the “feminine,” of coming of age viewing other women as so “different from us they could have been another species” (1996, p. 33). Allison here illustrates perfectly the complications, half-truths, and incomplete histories of rural queer women and agriculture. The pop-culture trope of the lesbian “earth mother” carefully tending her organic rainbow chard behind a padlocked gate may not be particularly harmful, but neither is it particularly illustrative of the dynamism and instability of queer identity in rural and agrarian settings. If “it is not always easy to fathom the contours of queer life in rural settings,” then it is at least in part because queer rural lives “are not well represented in the literature that has been so much a hallmark of twentieth-century gay identity” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 24, Fellows, 2001). Allison and other queer authors and theorists critically interrogating rurality, class, and queerness, are working to correct these historical

omissions of queer women and other historically marginalized queer individuals and communities in the construction of “modern” queer identities.

As with queer women, queer men have made their own unique contributions to agriculture and have their own unique histories that may contribute to new visions / versions of both the queer and agriculture / ecology. First and foremost, a historical accounting of the possibility of queer men within agriculture does much to inform current discursive constructions of gender and sexuality. Early sex research, as flawed in hindsight as it may be, was most certainly aware of the existence of queer men living (by some accounts openly) within the “masculine” realms of ranches, farms, and logging and mining camps. Alfred Kinsey, as cited in Johnson (2013), noted that “‘ranchmen, cattlemen, prospectors, lumbermen, and farming groups in general’ were all known to engage in same-sex sexual activities.” Furthermore, Johnson notes that, according to Kinsey, these men “live on realities and a minimum of theory ... such a background breeds the attitude that sex is sex, irrespective of the nature of the partner with whom the relation is had” (p.1) Johnson interprets Kinsey’s research as an example of the historical decoupling of identity and sexuality and of homosexual activity as pleasure for pleasure’s sake. Kinsey bears witness to Foucault’s canonical arguments on the “invention” of sexual identity through medicalization in the nineteenth century, even as Johnson undercuts it, as when he notes that Kinsey (as of 1948) was aware that even lay people had an awareness of the troubles that can occur when theory uncomfortably abuts reality, which is an attitude captured in the fascinating Kinsey statement that:

such groups of hard-riding, hard-hitting, assertive males would not tolerate the affections of some city groups that are involved in the homosexual [sic]; but this, as far as they can

see, has little to do with the question of having sexual relations with other men. (Kinsey, 2003, pp. 894-898)

Presented as we are with a paucity of first-person narratives and historical documentation of queer men and agriculture (aside from those gathered by Kinsey), we confront a dilemma: Does the scarcity of archival documentation reveal an “absence” or “suppression” of the queer in rural and farming men’s lives, or does it reveal the opposite, a tacit acceptance of queer sexuality among rural and farm men, and an omnipresence of queerness in the rural spaces, small towns and farmlands of North America significant enough as to engender its explicit admission unnecessary?

Johnson has sifted through the sheaves of historical documentation that seem to confirm the latter proposition, noting United States government labour research and associated documentation from as early as 1923 that identified the specific occurrence of male homosexuality as a “common vice” in migrant agriculture camps, farms, and ranches (Johnson, 2013, p. 102). Just how “common” was it? A glimpse can be found in Johnson’s etymological deconstruction of the pejorative term “fruit” to describe gay men. Originally documented in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as what might now be described as “naïve” or a “rube,” Johnson notes that by 1931 the term “fruit” had gained parlance in itinerant subcultures (where it was used to describe women) before its rapid evolution to a descriptor of “a sexual pervert.” What prompted this rapid evolution, asks Johnson? “One answer may be that, in California, hoboes and other seasonal agricultural workers were regularly referred to as ‘fruit tramps’ during this period” (Johnson, 2013, p. 93, Parker, 1920, p. 113). Indeed, there is the possibility that “fruits” aren’t just modern, urban queer men, but also their itinerant, unacknowledged rural and agrarian

queer brothers on whom the term was first applied.

Before we were gay (to again borrow from Muñoz), there is the possibility that the “hoboes” and “tramps” of the early twentieth century were at least partially composed of men who used their relative social, geographic, and economic flexibility within a patriarchal culture to construct what we might now identify as distinctly classed, racialized, and queer lives (or communities). This history is suppressed not only by the dominant heteronormative culture, but also within the patriarchal and capitalist culture that dictates the terms for urban queerness. As Johnson observes:

if rural and small-town Americans are mean to lesbians, gay men, and other transgressors of gender and sexual norms, it is not only because they live in rural areas and small towns. It is also because they have been pushed around and hit – “hammered,” to use Bageant’s term – by the same economic forces that historians of gender and sexuality have argued gave rise to queer urban culture. (2013, p. 195)

Rather than engage in a critical interrogation of the impact of the market and other forces that transformed urban queer identity, many queer people may simply castigate the rural and agrarian altogether, painting in broad, contemptuous strokes a vision of rural individuals, queer and non-queer alike, as uneducated, simple, and more like Allison’s “different species” than members of a shared oppressed community / population. Simpson’s concept of “metrosexuality” (1994) is sufficiently commonplace that, for many queer individuals, the idea that someone may willingly *choose* to stay on the farm, or in a small rural community, is incomprehensible. In mainstream queer culture, such individuals, and the lives and livelihoods that they represent, are anathema.

Of course, to paint the suppression of queer individuals in agriculture as a transgression mainly imposed by other queer individuals and communities is to contribute to the same historical and cultural inaccuracies and incomplete narratives that current queer and queer ecological theory seeks to correct. In very real ways, agriculture itself can be tied directly to overt suppression of queer individuals, including their participation within the agricultural sector itself. Eugenics – and in particular the pathologization of the queer in both nature generally and in people specifically – is a history that is inexorably tied to agriculture. On farms and within agriculture science departments, generations of North American farmers and scientists alike were raised to perceive queerness, whether expressed as same-sex attraction or gender difference, as particularly problematic within the fields of agricultural production (Johnson, 2013). Indeed, discursive constructions of intersexuality, the identification of only reproductive sexuality as “natural,” and the inability to sit comfortably within biological uncertainty and indeterminism might now be considered core components of mainstream agricultural science and practice (Edelman, 2004, Halberstam, 2011, Muñoz, 2009, Mortimer-Sandilands, 2010, Alaimo, 2010, Bell, 2010).

Against this backdrop, then, does urban agriculture, taking place as it does outside of both industrialized agriculture settings and rural spaces, offer an opportunity to open doors for queer people to participate and contribute to agriculture? The obvious answer is yes, insofar as urban agriculture, almost by definition, increases the opportunity for *any* urban resident to participate in and contribute to agriculture. A deeper answer, though, is that urban agriculture may not only offer new opportunities related to agriculture, but, for many of us who grew up queer in rural areas, it may also represent a way to reconcile past and present histories and to

repair relationships within ourselves, our families, and kinship circles. If reflexivity is a thematic conceit throughout this work, then urban agriculture and agroecological approaches to agriculture offer some, if not all, members of the queer community unique opportunities. For the queer individuals caught up in Weston's (1995) "great gay migration" from farms and rural communities to urban centers, urban agriculture may represent an opportunity to engage in activities that for many of us, retain real cultural value. For some in urban queer communities (myself included), participating in urban agriculture provides a very real bridge between our pasts and our present; it allows an LGBTIQ person the space to connect many narratives into one and to realize that they *just may not be incongruous*. I knew, as a young queer man coming of age in Montana, individuals who were queer and distinctly non-urban (mostly we referred to them as "gay cowboys") and I have lived all my life in the intermountain West. Yet it was not until moving to Vancouver, British Columbia that I ever encountered anyone who referred to themselves as a "queer farmer." Urban agriculture for these individuals, who likely come from both urban and rural backgrounds, clearly offers inroads to agriculture and queerness.

Similarly, agroecological approaches may also offer inroads for queer people to engage in agriculture, if for no other reason than that agroecology is, in some sense, the "queer agriculture" of queer agriculture. With its deliberate turning away from "the maximization of production and the maximization of profit ... without regard for their unintended, long-term consequences" (Gleissman, 2007, p. 3), agroecology represents the same failures within a conventional capitalist system that the queer does in a heteronormative one: the deliberate "not making sense" within dominant cultural narratives. Even the language aligns: the valuing of diversity for its own sake, the right to access, instability, and the role of disturbance and

succession (Gleissman, 2007). There is, within both agroecology and urban agriculture, something that feels deeply anachronistic and indefinable. In a culture that practically guarantees year-round access (and close physical proximity) to produce in any number of markets and grocers, the idea of growing food with minimal inputs and uncertain outputs is almost transgressive: it resists easy answers and does not, on the surface, really make much sense. It takes longer, it takes effort, it offers no guarantees; the futurity of any crop in a given season depends on the types of parcels available for most urban farming is suspect at best. And yet, queer people do it.

Within Vancouver and Victoria there are enough queer farmers to support an organized collective (The Rainbow Chard Collective, <http://rainbowchardcollective.wordpress.com/>) that produces an annual calendar and supports numerous small businesses. In their decisions to farm part-time, or to quit jobs and scrape together livelihoods on small-share community supported agriculture (CSA) businesses, members seem to be saying “enough.” And they seem to be identifying actual space and practice for physical difference in increasingly homogeneous queer and non-queer cultures alike.

As a young queer person coming of age on a large farm in rural Montana, I could not wait to escape many aspects of farming and farm. I would not have been able to identify precisely what “it” was that I, like so many queer youth who grow up on farms, hoped to escape, but in hindsight, it was at least partially the message, from both the queer and the non-queer alike, that in my “home” I was not welcome, that I did not *fit* there, and that if I stayed, it may cost me dearly. Some of the scholars with whom I have engaged in this chapter would question the veracity of this “truth,” but the reality is simultaneously profoundly simple and complex: I,

like most young queer individuals coming of age on farms and in rural areas, had no models to allow me to think otherwise.

1.2 Research Overview

This research project includes both qualitative ethnographic and autoethnographic components. The qualitative methodology is based on one-on-one interviews with queer farmers throughout British Columbia. In keeping with principles of a grounded theory approach, the key informant interviews contributed narrative data which were used to provide a theoretical framework for the rest of the research project.

This thesis considers the critical reflexivity between agricultural production principles and the practices, self-identification, and expression of queer individuals. Additionally, this analysis presupposes that queer individuals will identify distinct agricultural production principles and practices within different agricultural typologies (e.g., community garden vs. vineyard) and social / geographic contexts (i.e., rural vs. urban). Within the above analysis, this study proposes that a number of distinct identities and affiliations may emerge; these identities and affiliations may then be contrasted in relation to local social and political contexts. By interviewing a sample of queer farmers throughout British Columbia, I identify the similarities and differences of their lived experiences – amongst queer farmers from minority communities, of queer men, women, and genderqueer and non-binary individuals, and queer individuals from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds.

Importantly, this study is not without its limitations. While participants included individuals who self-identified as men, women, trans and genderqueer, this study compared nor

contrasted different perspectives within each of those self-identified gender categories, thus limiting potential understandings of the role gender plays in both queer identity and agricultural practice. Similarly, participant indicators including race, income, and age were also not included in demographic data collection. Thus, while some participants shared, of their own volition, self-identifying information about these categories, I acknowledge that this study, while groundbreaking in its analyses of queer farmers, is not able to attend to critical issues of race. Relatedly, this study took place on the traditional and ancestral First Nations territories of the Coast Salish Peoples; territories that remain unceded to this day. The lands on which these farmers live and farm are lands with histories of dispossession; in some cases successional dispossession (as in the case of those unceded Gulf Island First Nations lands that were subsequently stolen from Japanese farmers during WWII displacement and internment, and are now subsequently farmed by queer farmers). These are important questions; and in some cases these questions were raised (outside of the formal research questions) by the participants themselves. These are essential directions for future research on this topic.

This study draws inspiration and methodological commitments from several intellectual lineages, from queer theory to ecofeminism and dark ecology, to illustrate how agriculture might be transformed within a queer ecological context. Rooted in my hypothesis that understandings of agriculture and ecology are shaped by gender and sexuality just as understandings of gender and sexuality are shaped by practices and perceptions within agriculture and ecology, this work seeks to challenge heteronormative assumptions of both gender and sexuality and agriculture and ecology. It presupposes that queer sexualities can provide lenses through which queer farmers

are creating not only distinct agricultural practices and perspectives, but also new queer identities through their engagement with agricultural practices and production.

Finally, this work is rooted in a critical interrogation of binary logic, especially as applied to both “the queer” and “the rural.” The deconstruction of binarism within these contexts is an especially important analytical thread throughout this work precisely because it provides very specific analyses of those rules governing spaces, places, and bodies: *who goes where, who lives how, who knows what, and who does what* still very much matter, especially for queer individuals, and especially in places and geographical settings long held to be inherently or overwhelmingly (or both) hostile to queer lives. This iterative dissection of binarism throughout this work this serves to operationalize the theories discussed in the chapters reviewing the empirical findings of the study.

1.2.1 Research Questions

The survey’s primary research questions are: (1) As queer individuals, in what ways do participants characterize the role and / or contributions of their gender and sexuality to agriculture (i.e., farming practices, perspectives / perceptions of alternative production methodologies, perceived role of agriculture in greater queer community / communities) in British Columbia; (2) By providing an alternative to dominant heteronormative ecological and agricultural constructs, what new understandings and perspectives on agriculture might be created by queer individuals, queer ecology and agriculture, and ecologies of difference; (3) In what specific ways do gender and sexuality impact agricultural production and practice; what challenges, opportunities, and contradictions emerge that may potentially affect the development

of new agricultural practices and perspectives within the agriculture sector as a whole within British Columbia?

The primary research questions are exploratory in nature and aim to provide a context for new analyses that can be used to assess the role and / or contributions of gender and sexuality to agriculture in terms of specific innovations, practices, and applications. Specifically, I begin from the premise that (1) research on agricultural practices in British Columbia has not yet fully captured the role, contribution(s), and full range of activities related to gender and sexuality in agriculture; and (2) the identification of the above roles, contribution(s), and full range of activities related to gender and sexuality in agriculture can be used to further our understandings of the role of individual identity in agricultural production and practice, including the development of agricultural models that serve both as ecologies of social difference, and as methods to dismantle established heteronormative social and agricultural narratives and discourses. These research questions are operationalized within a framework of nine overarching themes leading to a more comprehensive understanding of agriculture as an ecology of social difference in British Columbia.

First and foremost, these themes center queerness within agricultural practice, including the requirement for self-identification as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or queer (LGBTIQ), and self-identification as current or past agricultural producer. In so doing, these thematic domains thus create a starting point for exploration of ecologies of social difference within queer farmers and queer farming communities. I define ecologies of social difference as the role of ecological indicators, settings, and contexts as mediators and moderators in the intersections of social difference (i.e. the role of ecology in shaping both positively and

negatively greater inequalities, inequities, injustices). Thus, this domain provides a logistical and even demographic foundation for this work's explorations of how agricultural practice and ecological setting mediate queerness and social difference in altogether different ways.

The third, fourth, and fifth domains consider the impact of gender and sexuality on agricultural practices, and the impact of gender and sexuality on livelihood, location of residence and land tenure security, and intentional improvement of agricultural sustainability. In considering the impact of gender and queer sexuality / identity on agricultural practices, it is my belief not that queer farmers farm "better" or even "different" from other (non-queer farmers), but rather that these queer individuals may themselves identify specific links between their queer identity and sexuality and the ways that they farm (including overarching methods and specific practices). In exploring queer identity and sexuality and livelihood, location of residence, and land tenure, it is my attempt to destabilize both metronormative and homonormative narratives that center the queer near exclusively in urban settings and which limit queer imaginaries concerning space, place, and even occupation. The fifth domain assesses the degree to which agricultural production methods practiced by participants are considered sustainable by participants.

The seventh and eighth domains consider LGBTIQ community engagement and LGBTIQ community development as part of farming practice, and are included to provide participants an opportunity to reflect on the ways that they work with and within their larger queer communities and specific queer farming communities to promote both community engagement and development through farming (i.e. workshops, seed saving and sharing, instruction, etc.).

Finally, the eighth and ninth domains consider intentional diversification of farming practices and the promotion or support of ecological biodiversity through specific agricultural production practices. These domains consider the ways that farming practice, and the promotion and support of ecological biodiversity through those practices, may be used as expressions of queer identity and may contribute to the establishment of ecologies of social difference.

1.2.1.1 Research Methodology

This study proposes that intersections of agricultural production, gender, and queer sexuality may relate to specific, unique agricultural practices and production structures (e.g., farm and garden typology) in British Columbia. Please note that “gender” in this narrative context is used to differentiate between four queer constructs that are shaped by gender: (1) lesbians; (2) queer trans men and women; (3) queer gender non-conforming / gender queer individuals; and (4) gay men. I recognize too that these are artificial designations with a great deal of variability (an individual labeled, for example, with a gender designation of female may identify as a “queer male” and yet not identify as trans). To paraphrase Judith Butler, here labels like identity are “necessary errors” (1993) that facilitate the coding and interpretation of themes identified by queer individuals.

Potential study participants were thus identified based upon meeting the selection criteria of: self-identification as an LGBTIQ individual, and current or past involvement / employment in agricultural production in either commercial, community / non-profit, and / or residential spaces. Involvement is defined as participating as either a paid employee or as a volunteer / intern for

any of the initiative outlined above. Participation by minors in interviews and research was not allowed.

Individuals neither self-identifying as an LGBTIQ individual nor affiliated in paid or unpaid capacities with agricultural organizations and initiatives included in the agricultural production framework as outlined above were excluded from the research. As noted above, minors were also excluded from participation.

Individuals participating in agricultural organizations and / or initiatives meeting recruitment inclusion criteria were initially identified through collaboration with the Rainbow Chard Collective, an advocacy organization serving LGBTIQ farmers throughout British Columbia. While I did have a prior professional relationship with this organization through my work as a board member of the Vancouver Urban Farming Society, the contact information for this organizations is publicly available on their website. The Rainbow Chard Collective was contacted via email and social media directly, and asked if they would be interested in participating as an outreach partner, at which point a formal, written invitation was extended to all interested individual members, member organizations, and initiatives. After invitation, I followed-up with organizations, selected representatives, and invitees to schedule a meeting to review the study aims, objectives and research questions, and to review the consent form and explain informed consent to all potential participants. Upon completion of the consent form and review of informed consent, interviews and field observations were completed. Upon completion of the interview, subject participants will be asked to extend a letter of invitation and contact information for other individuals who fit the selection criteria (i.e. “snowball sampling”).

Additional subjects recruited through referral and snowball sampling were then contacted in accordance with the recruitment methods and timeline as outlined above.

Self-identification lesbian, gay, trans, intersex or queer was necessary to prevent the inadvertent outing of an individual who neither publicly nor privately identified on the queer spectrum. For ethical reasons, I could not contact a possible participant blindly without referral and indicate that they had been identified as a study candidate meeting the recruitment criteria of LGBTIQ sexual identity. While individual participants did not need to be publicly “out,” for a referral to be followed up on with an invitation letter required that the referred individual had identified themselves as an LGBTIQ individual to the referral source. The recruitment invitation letter itself (Appendix C) included language to preclude outing and did not itself insinuate queer identity (“*If you identify* as an LGBTIQ individual you can participate in this study...” [emphasis my own]). While outness (and its merits and drawbacks) are discussed in my work, this decision was one that was made based upon the ethical considerations of individuals sharing deeply private information about other individuals.

The study recruitment was limited to British Columbia in recognition of its precedent-setting nature. As it was not comparative, and reflected new areas of scholarly inquiry, my doctoral supervisory committee felt that it would be better to concentrate on a specific geographic region, with future research tasked in expanding this inquiry into new regions and communities. This limitation creates both additional opportunities and challenges for interpreting and analyzing the study findings. While it may inform, for example, an understanding of knowledge transfer and dissemination within certain geographic or place-based settings (for example, the Gulf Islands or rural spaces in British Columbia), it also creates challenges related

to applying these findings to queer farmers outside of these settings, and also challenges relate to applying these findings to types of farming done outside of these settings (for example, ranching and large-scale industrial farming).

This research project utilizes qualitative methodologies. This included one-on-one, open-ended interviews with 25 British Columbian farmers who are between the ages of 26 and 66, as well as an autoethnography of the researcher. Representing diverse gender and sexual minority / queer communities, this study specifically explores the subjects' values and relationships to agriculture and ecology. To honour the principles of openness, gender fluidity, and gender non-binarism, although gender is included where necessary (for example, when a participant speaks to her perspective as a "queer woman") participants were not asked to identify by gender, but were asked to affirm that they self-identified either privately or publicly as either a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and / or queer individual. Study participants were, however, allowed to identify their sexual identity on their own terms (for example, "I am a gay man"), including the use of gender as a defining characteristic. Participants were also asked to affirm that they self-identified as having a current or past history within either formal or informal agricultural sector activities; if they answered affirmatively, they were then asked to clarify whether the agricultural activity was formal or informal in nature and whether it is a past or current activity. "Formal" and "informal" agricultural productions refer to the differences between licensed or otherwise municipally or provincially monitored, regulated, or recognized agricultural production and unlicensed or otherwise municipally or provincially unmonitored, unregulated, or unrecognized agricultural production. For example, participating as a volunteer at a city-sponsored community garden would be considered a "formal" activity because of the

official city designation, sponsorship, and associated rules and regulations, whereas backyard or “guerrilla” gardening, even on a significant scale, would be considered an “informal” activity because there is no formal relationship with a municipal or provincial entity and thus no formalized rules and / or regulations (Edward, 2007). Finally, to assure participant confidentiality and anonymity, neither specific place names nor participants’ given names were used. Geographic locations were masked by referring to regions in lieu of specific places (for example, “a southern Gulf Island” in lieu of “Gabriola Island”). Exceptions were only applied when participants themselves, in the course of the interview, identified their location by name. Participant names were anonymized by using a historical record of most popular baby names by year. For example, I was born in 1975, so for the purpose of research, 1975 would be set as the parameter for J names, with an alternate for “Joshua” randomly selected from the most popular names from that year. Thus, the only way of tracing identity would be through the knowledge of the participant’s birth year, which is not revealed anywhere within this study.

As the study is not comparative in nature (i.e., it does not compare the agricultural practices of queer farmers of non-queer farmers), the study sample was comprised of individuals who identified as a gender or sexual minority, and all had a past, current, or past and current involvement in formal or informal agricultural activities. All individuals provided informed consent to participate, and were given the opportunity to cease participation at any time, including up to publication. Respondent validation was offered anytime a direct quote was transcribed. The study method consists of a series of semi-structured interviews and field observations completed by the researcher and members of the sample population.

Responses were transcribed by hand, and when a direct quote was identified for current or future use, study participants were read the quote out loud, and asked to validate the accuracy of the quote and offer feedback or clarification before verbally affirming its accuracy.

Subject interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded using NVIVO and Excel software. Coding began by initially looking for broad categories and concepts, which were distilled further to open codes and keywords. Open codes were then categorized using axial coding into data themes that identified emergent trends. These themes, trends, and keywords were then refined using selective coding into a coherent dataset of three categories that allowed the analysis across categories and the identification and validation of relationships and those “categories that need further refinement and development” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; p. 116).

In keeping with principles of a grounded theory approach, the key informant interviews and field notes were refined into codes, axial codes, and open codes until reaching the grounded theory principle of theoretical saturation (“the point at which there is nothing to be gained by further reviewing of old data or collection of new information to see how it fits with emerging concepts or categories; new data are no longer illuminating” [Bryman, Bell & Teevan, 2012; p. 259]). In keeping with the principles of grounded theory, the defined dataset was then used to produce properties, hypotheses, and the “theoretical framework that explains some relevant social ... or other phenomenon” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 22, in Bryman, Bell & Teevan, 2012).

This study considers the critical reflexivity between agricultural production principles and practices and self-identification and expression as a queer individual. Additionally, this

analysis presupposes that queer individuals identify distinct differences in agricultural production principles and practices within different agricultural typologies (i.e.; community garden vs. vineyard) and social / geographic contexts (i.e.; rural vs. urban). This study also considers the number of distinct identities and affiliations that emerge; these identities and affiliations may then be contrasted in relation to local social and political contexts. Finally, this study is an ethnography and autoethnography of queer farmers throughout south-western and south-central British Columbia and acknowledges that by working with such a diverse population, there exists no singular representation of either “queer individuals,” “farmers,” and / or “queer farmers.”

This study recognizes the existence of ecologies of social difference, including the recognition that queer farmers are shaped, as is any individual, by class, race, gender, and different articulations and experiences of sexuality. These intersections, in turn, mediate engagement with agricultural production and practices. The research design, as noted, integrates a qualitative ethnographic and auto-ethnographic methodology based upon: (1) individual narratives (2) review of both local (British Columbia) and non-local (national and international) print and web sources (both academic and non-academic) related to gender, and especially sexuality, in agricultural production and practice, both within British Columbia and elsewhere.

1.3 Dissertation Outline

There are four chapters to this thesis. Throughout Chapter 1, I have presented my introduction to the topic, my study and research hypotheses, and my study questions and methodology and theoretical perspective. In Chapter 1, I have also presented a review of relevant literature that informs my research and scholarship. Chapter 2 presents an autoethnography of

my own experiences as a queer man who grew up in rural Montana on a farm and also my experiences living and farming as a queer man. Chapter 3 presents the first study findings of the study participants. In doing so, I outline the implications of binary privileging on queer identity, temporal geographies, and agricultural practice – specifically, agroecological farming methods. Chapter 4 presents the second set of study findings, specifically centering the acts of queer farming and agroecological practice in the theoretical conceit of the ecotone, briefly defined here as a transition zone between to ecosystems. Finally, the Conclusion presents my conclusions about the goals and hypotheses presented in this introduction, as well as a review of study limitations and crucial next steps.

Chapter 2: Farming Myself

“Only stories matter.” Authorship undetermined, quote unknown, I turn now to trouble my own history as a queer man of rural, agricultural background. In turning to myself, I also trouble the neat binarism of the narrative of researcher as separate from both their research and their “subject”. I do not start at the end and form a new beginning; I return to the beginning and form a new end. I retell the version of myself that I was never allowed to tell and undercut the rules of temporality and story.

“I have been waiting my entire life for someone to ask me these questions.” When my interviewee Morgan said this, its significance resonated immediately, for I felt the same way. I too had waited my entire life for someone to ask me the questions I listed in the previous chapter; for me, nobody ever did. As a result, I determined to share my own experiences; to tell my own story- to, as Michael Bell calls it, “farm myself” (Bell, 2004, p. 129).

I was born a fourth generation farmer. More accurately, I was born a first generation farmer, as the previous generations were ranchers. The 2,000-acre farm (sheep, corn, sugar beets, wheat, and alfalfa) was where my family settled after both maternal and paternal grandparents sold their ranches and relocated, for various reasons, to rural south-central Montana. I was one of eleven children; my childhood and adolescence, up until I left for university, could not be separated from an agricultural context. It can be difficult to explain, to those who didn’t grow up on farms or ranches how agriculture permeates all aspects of your life. To grow up agrarian, as it were, is to understand yourself – your earliest, most formative memories, one’s *self* – in relation to the ecology that surrounds you. Agrarian time is not city time; its rhythms, patterns, and

pulses are all its own. There is truth to the stereotype of “waking at the crack of dawn”; this is when day literally starts. This is when, with toilet plungers in hand, we left the house to pump irrigation water from the grid of ditches crisscrossing the farm into the fields. This is when the first lambing shift starts, if it even ended the night before.

Agrarian time is malleable. In summer, the days last forever and are filled from sunup to well beyond sundown with the circadian hum of production. Hay is cut; hay is baled. Bales are stacked; bales are fed. If Muñoz held a certain fascination with “quotidian gestures as laden with potentiality” (2009, p. 91), well, I may rebut that he may not have shared the sinking sensation of being ten years old and staring, hoe in hand, at ten acres of sugar beets that needed weeding by hand under a scorching summer sun, the steady din of grasshoppers the only sound. For me, and for my siblings, for my parents, this quotidian gesture held but one potentiality: if we were successful, if we achieved our potential, we would not have to spend our lives as farmers. Farming at the scale practiced by my parents and the generations before them troubles, in its own way, the neat narrative of binarism. It is backbreaking, but fulfilling; it, one’s work, is something to be proud of, but also something one works hard to escape *from*. One grows up knowing very intimately how essential the farm’s success is; bad crop years meant dinners of home-canned fruits and vegetables and rice boiled in milk with a pinch of cinnamon on top for flavour. Success meant hedging against lean times at every opportunity and galvanized drums of wheat stored in the cellar to be used in the flourmill for bread. To grow up agrarian is to feel the embarrassment of the relentlessly homemade when all you see on television is mass-produced.

Coming of age on a farm in rural North America is to live non-binarism. An orphaned lamb is taken in first for bottle-feeding, eventually acquires a name (Caesar), and is eventually

the ragtag companion of dogs, cats, rabbits, ducks, and children. Other lambs are eaten. Ducks are hatched from eggs at your country school and, if you have the space, they come home with you; they too are given names, and when they die, the family grieves. Chickens aren't ever pets; chickens are gathered up by children and prepared for freezing on a family assembly line led by my Norwegian grandma, who serves as executioner. Nobody grieves the chickens. The family makes do in lean times with powdered milk, because they could never bear to have another milk cow after the family's first was shot by hunters at the age of ten. Horses far outlive their usefulness and are fed, and coddled, until their mid-twenties (retiring as "swaybacks"), but injured puppies and kittens are dispatched with efficiency: a caution given to get used to it, for life cannot always be what we want it to be.

To grow up agrarian and gay is something altogether different. For me, and I believe for others, growing up gay in rural North America is to experience the disruption of the neat narrative of binarism in altogether different ways. In Colin Johnson's edited collection *Queering the Countryside: New Frontiers in Rural Queer Studies* (2016), two authors, independent of one another, describe the queer paradox of coming of age as queer in rural America: they describe "spaces that are simultaneously extremely public and private" that:

are both far from the hustle and bustle of everyday family life, yet structurally central to that world. Remote fields, empty barns, or a stretch of woods ... become just as conducive to queer sexual exploration as San Francisco's Castro or New York's Greenwich Village. (Schweighofer, 2016, p. 230)

These spaces mirror urban queerness, and like a mirror, the image they reflect is similar and totally different; even opposite. They constrict even as they offer freedom to “invent themselves according to their inclinations and standards.’... [N]ature allows space for the self-reflection and self-invention that Michel Foucault saw not as ‘a luxury or a pastime for lesbians and gay men,’ but as a necessity” (Hain, 2016, pp. 175-176).

Like that agricultural outlier agroecology, coming of age as gay and agrarian is place-specific; a life lived in perpetual grey areas where adaptations are made as needed. For me, I was startled to learn as an out young gay man that most of my gay acquaintances raised in cities did not have their first sexual explorations with other young men. Indeed, for me, 4-H may as well had a fifth “h” added to “head, heart, hands, and health”: homosexuality. 4-H, the Montana State Fair: this was where I had my first sexual experiences, mostly with other young men having *their* first sexual experiences. (They may also have been ready to begin exploring their heterosexuality with young women, but first, we explored our sexuality together.) These sexual acts weren’t particularly shameful; I never felt that they would be used to threaten, blackmail, or berate me. They seemed, at the time, simply the obvious choice. Most of us lived on large farms with few neighbours and even fewer outlets for sexual exploration. Sex among my friends was discussed, and examples of other young men “doing it” were provided to assuage any uncertainty or guilt. A friend at my school (an eighth grade graduating class of 13) told me in no uncertain terms that boys taught each other to masturbate. Despite what I might have thought, it wasn’t as self-explanatory as I had imagined, and he would gladly help me with a few lessons.

Sex, like many things in rural America (work weeks, wealth, leisure activities), doesn’t fit neat boxes outside of the confines of urbanity. It can be cloaked and even shamed in both

language and practice (what am I to make of my Norwegian great-uncle Whitey, who never married, was a farmer, and also “a famous character,” a “dapper dresser,” and “lifelong bachelor” who just “never met the right woman?”); I cannot remember, outside of a butch lesbian couple my father pointed out at the Montana State Fair, ever having my parents (or anyone else) identify anyone out loud as “queer.” In the agrarian coming of age story, sex super saturates *everything* even as *sexuality* can remain hidden from view. I literally grew up across the street from Big Sky Genetics, a large Black Angus cattle artificial insemination company, and there was never any illusion about what precisely the bulls provided: “breeding.” The same parents who stammered their way through my fifth grade sex-ed chat brought home Merino rams with testicles so large that they would sometimes graze the ground and thus necessitate castration. Stallions, those great Freudian workhorses, sported erections so large that one could quite literally not look away. Horses were bred. Sheep were bred. Everything seemed to perpetually be “in heat,” and with eleven children, it seems my parents were no exception.

As noted by Schweighofer, though, this open, unrestricted sexuality was everywhere, but because it was everywhere, it was impossible to escape. My own sexuality, trapped on 2,000 acres in the middle of nowhere, felt as obvious as all that sex around me. Somewhat ironically, this same lack of privacy concerning my own bits came to help me later, when my older sister, a lesbian, told me my parents had sat “the big kids” down when I was five and instructed my sisters that I was not to play with them, their dolls, or their clothes. My masculinity was not developing quite correctly, and I needed to be encouraged at every turn to “play with the boys.” I can remember, in Grade 7, in the middle of a circle jerk with three male friends in a sheep shed at the Montana State Fair, that this was something we all clearly *enjoyed* but something that

represented far different necessities for them than for me. For me, these early sexual interactions gave me a glimpse of what I wanted my *whole life* to be; for them, it needed no explaining, the interactions represented the almost complete sexual inaccessibility of young women to adolescent men in rural Montana. I didn't need any counsel to tell me that it was essential I play along and I didn't make it obvious that I enjoyed it all on its own and certainly not as a precursor for better things to come.

By the time I graduated eighth grade (class of 13, most of whom I'd known since kindergarten), it was clear that I didn't fit in, although this too doesn't fit the neat narrative of growing up queer in rural America. I didn't ever experience outright homophobia or bullying, more the sinking inner sensation, as I watched male and female friends begin dating, that this would be unavailable to me. Try as I may, I could not intuit the slightest tinge of homosexuality in any young men around me. I did not desire my female friends, neither was I desired. I felt neither need nor pressure to fake it, just the wearying despondency of the realization, pre-Internet, that the queer fecundity of my early adolescence was now on hold for the indeterminate future. This, perhaps more than anything, was when I first really felt that I couldn't "stay." I couldn't stay on the family farm and I couldn't be a farmer because I couldn't stand to imagine a life lived alone; my greener pastures were the urban imaginary that shaped perceptions of queer life even in rural and remote communities. I had neither the imagination nor the role models to conceptualize a life lived as a gay farmer, complete with gentleman farmer husband. As a young adolescent, I knew of two peripheral gay men in my life: one, by the name of Ronnie, had dated my older sister (coincidentally, the lesbian). She once described him to me as "bent." Asking what it meant, she said "you know, not straight. He doesn't like girls." The other gay man in my

life was my best friend Laura's uncle R., who contracted HIV and died in 1990 during our freshman year in high school. I came to know two things about R. as I witnessed Laura's family devastated by the loss of her mother's most cherished brother: 1) he was gay; and 2) he had died of AIDS, alone. When at twenty I came out to Laura (still my dearest friend after 36 years), she cried, and said only "promise me you will never die of AIDS."

1989-1990 was a big year; it was the year we all left the country school and went to one of two city high schools. I had little time to fret about sexuality as I began to experience that urban schoolmates could be every bit as cruel to a hick as they were to a homo. As I mentioned previously, for many farm families success is not measured by staying; it is measured by the ability of children to leave for cities, colleges, and professions. My parents were no different; married at seventeen, my father was the first on either side to graduate high school and enter college; he was pushed into agricultural economics at Montana State University, while my mother began her life as a mother. My father would eventually work his way up to a graduate degree at Rutgers (the pride of my paternal grandmother was having had a child live in Hartford, Connecticut) and then work as a banker and part-time farmer. Throughout all this, my mother engaged in the uncompensated (and very real) labour of being a housewife on a farm.

As a queer teenager who lived a half-hour from the city, my status as a "farm kid" was a never-ending source of grief. If I *did* get invited to the mall, I would need a ride; but weekends weren't for fun, weekends were when work was caught up on: mundane, mindless, backbreaking work. To someone who has never spent time on an actual working farm, when asked what it was like, I would say something like this: there were times as a teenager where I spent whole Saturdays next to my brother, following my grandfather's green Ford truck, picking up rocks

from the floodplain our farm on which was situated. Eight hours spent lifting water-tumbled granite stones the size of baseballs, footballs, and occasionally basketballs, from the dirt into a truck. No music, no shade, no break save for lunch. I would not stay.

To grow up agrarian in a family full of expectation and no money is also to know the class divisions of rural and urban America first hand. There was no more money for high school fast food lunches than there had been for Wonderbread; as a young queer man I self-selected into what nascent liberal intelligentsia Billings, Montana had to offer. I palled around with the children of doctors and lawyers, even one professional artist (they used a ladder for a Christmas tree and loved to slum around in mechanic overalls). There was never enough money to keep up with the Saabs and sunglasses, studies abroad and stereos. I ditched the friends I had in grade school, the farm kids without the luxury of a father's career. I couldn't risk losing what cultural capital I had as a smart-mouthed class clown by associating with hayseeds.

I wanted out, and I needed out. In the era of ACT OUT and Queer Nation, when magazines like *OUT* and *The Advocate* could be readily sourced even at the few bookstores available to me, there were no voices that spoke to me of my potential in rural, agrarian America, and all manner of voices that told me that to be me, to be queer, meant leaving – leaving the family, friends, dogs, and land that had raised me – all of the things, I didn't realize, that had made me “me.” The queer voices of my generation all told me this; it's impossible to overstate the invisibility of queer rurality in my youth. For me and many others, we did not embrace our queerness lightly: we read, we researched, we thought long and hard; our hopes and dreams were constructed of the meagre sources available to us. We struggled to reconcile the invisibility of ourselves in our own rural, agrarian lives vs. a cacophony of “magical faggots” who promised us

it would “get better.” It would get better if we just left and moved to cities. It would get better if we *left*. It would get better if we cut off families; if we were out the “right” way; if we looked, spoke, and acted “city queer.”

I calculated, as surely as balancing a ledger, the amount of time that would pass before I could reasonably imagine having a boyfriend, having sex. This, certainly, could not take place at home, could it? Surely we must all have to leave. I would have to go to college as the first step. So, I left. It wasn't easy: my family had no money for higher education, just the expectation that it would be achieved. For me and many other queer people who grew up on farms or in rural spaces, this expectation means two things: working full time while attending college, and nonetheless acquiring crippling amounts of college debt (most of us grew up well-versed in the cycle of debt, as we watched our family's struggle to maintain six-figure farm equipment bought with high-interest loans; it's no surprise that people feel/are trapped there). Like so many raised in rural communities who pursue higher education, my first landing place was a community college – in this case in a conservative town of 2,000 in rural Wyoming. I had sex there, and the man promptly told all my friends. One of them was honest enough to ask me; I don't think he cared, but nonetheless I denied anything had ever happened. After a succession of public intoxication tickets, and with a passel full of failing marks, I dropped out. I returned home to the farm, worked menial jobs, and accepted “provisional entrance” status at my hometown agricultural land-grant college. I earned more bad marks and dropped out again. With no known contacts in any cities, with no future on the farm, I did what any reasonable young queer would do. I packed my bags with my best friend and decamped to Alaska.

I was, by now, provisionally “out.” My closest friends knew I was queer, and the matter achieved a sort of “don’t ask, don’t tell” status. I had no interest in dating women, but I also was not comfortable dating men. Even if I had been so bold, I had no clue where I should have started: the grimy cowboy bar The Corral, with its purported gay leanings? I was too young. Personal ads in the local rag? Too unsafe. One false move in rural America, my queer elders made sure I knew, and it could be the end. So, the holding pattern of my sexuality had persisted. At least one thing hadn’t changed. I could count on crude jokes about sex with sheep, missing teeth, and inbred cousins should most people my age find out I grew up on a farm.

Juneau Alaska, a small city of 25,000, gave me my first queer footing despite all odds. I worked at a brewery and met a butch lesbian who was my age: she was androgynous enough to warrant a crush; she took one look at me, proclaimed me “a sister,” and went about pulling me out. She introduced me to her girlfriend, to her sister and parents, and eventually to a few gay friends. I was able to have sex for the first time *and* sleep over, and the only people who knew me knew I was gay to begin with. In the back-to-land culture that permeates Alaska to this day, my history as a “farm kid” didn’t even have the negative cultural baggage it did elsewhere. Yet for all that I loved about Alaska, the physical space and geographic distance was untenable: Montana is called “The Big Sky State,” and anyone who’s travelled there would agree that the name makes sense. It’s one of the few places in North America in which the Rocky Mountains and Continental Divide roar onto the plains and receive the sense of scale, distance, and openness they deserve. To live in these places is to embrace openness; to cloister such central parts of oneself feels incongruous. I missed it in a way that, again, is difficult to explain to someone who didn’t grow up on a farm. I missed hot days and cool nights, the smell of hay,

animals. I missed my family and their gregarious bad manners. I told my doctoral supervisor during my writing that one of the things that always strikes me about returning home is how loud everyone is compared to a city: yelling, laughing, crying, the range of human emotion can easily play out in one family BBQ.

I was homesick, so I returned home, but this time resolute in my determination to make the queer stick. I moved in first with my parents on the farm, and set about correcting two failed college careers. I knew from my early queer education that ending a succession of blue-collar jobs was one necessity of being queer full-time. I took over every course I had failed at either institution and earned A's. I found myself on the honour roll. I moved in with a woman friend in the city (population 100,000), and dove head first into the queer. I wore cigarette pants and pea coats, cobbled together a reading list of theory and philosophy, and smoked cigarettes and drank coffee in coffee shops. I met a boy my age who also grew up on a farm and who had left for Gonzaga University before a nervous breakdown brought him back to Montana. We listened to the Pet Shop Boys and Erasure and dreamed of moving to Seattle. One night, we wrangled an invitation to a party held by an older gay couple, doctors, and believed we had made it. We were smoking cigarettes on the porch when another gay man asked us where we grew up. After we told him we had grown up on farms outside of the city, he paused, breathlessly, and reached out a hand for effect: "wait- did you even graduate high school?" Eric left for Seattle within the month, and I left for Salt Lake City shortly after.

Salt Lake City is a paradox. It is another entry into the troubled non-binarism that defines me. At once deeply conservative, it's also liberal in a way that many people in coastal cities may find hard to fathom. Like Denver, it is a magnet for the castoffs who can't stay home in rural

America, but who find West Coast queer urbanity intimidating. Salt Lake City is the land of divorced queer fathers with seven children who live with ex-wives; of the Wasatch Gay Rodeo Association; of gay sharpshooting rifle clubs. It is a vibrant gay scene that is easy to navigate, peopled with individuals who share complex, grey-area stories, where closeted individuals drive into town and change genders in convenience store bathrooms for a night on the town; where butch women raise kids in suburban neighbourhoods next to polygamists. Many people don't know that the oldest gay bar west of the Mississippi, Radio City Lounge, was in Salt Lake City. Radio City, as it was known, opened in the 1940s, and operated continually as a gay bar since 1957 (*Q Magazine*); it closed in 2009, a victim of changing times and the internet.

More importantly, Salt Lake City was home to the University of Utah, where I headed after the desperate repair of my tarnished educational record. At the University of Utah, I found – quite without expecting to – that I could take a class with some of the leading queer theorists in the world. I read Judith Butler and gossiped about Kathryn Stockton's haircuts, found a job in a queer coffee shop, and had as much sex as I could. I got a Tom of Finland tattoo and shined boots in a leather bar. I dated a man with a handlebar moustache twice my age. We broke up, and I met Bradley, my (now) husband 18 years ago. At last, a compelling reason to come out. I called my parents, told them I was gay, and that I knew *they* knew (courtesy the lesbian sister). I said I was in love and that I wanted them to meet him, and that if they wouldn't oblige, I would cut off contact. I warned them that politics and religion were off the table for good. We drove home a month later.

My husband is from Chicago; he grew up in a John Hughes suburb. As we drove off the interstate to my parents' home, I broke into a cold sweat. It's difficult to explain rurality to

people who've never experienced it; it's harder still to quantify what it means to farm, to work the equivalent of two, three, or four jobs. It means projects get started and never finished, because there is quite simply always something more important to do. My family home is relentlessly shabby. It is, to be charitable, "care worn." It has not been painted since I was a child and still has its original everything. We have a saddle in the living room, a cherished memento of a true family scion, Dimples the Shetland pony, who died at 24 and rendered the entire farm heartbroken, horses included. How to explain to my new love, a 25-year-old manager at Banana Republic, that *this* was me?

My parents were polite, if distant at that first meeting. Over the years, they warmed up, if for some time only slightly. Brad was not included in the first generation of the family tree, but after half of my siblings divorced, he eventually made the cut through attrition and was added. It's difficult to explain how my parents interacted with overt queer sexuality suddenly part of their family; this was not a queer couched in "eccentricity" or the "inability to settle down." This was two men living together and making a life. When I explain this period to friends, I say that like myself, I truly believe my parents did the best they could without ever having had models availed to them. Eventually, I stopped apologizing for where I was from, and how it shaped me. I spoke about growing up agrarian, about my parents' upbringings without running water or electricity, and of my father using a Piper Cub to round up sheep on a 100,000-acre dry ranch in eastern Montana. I also spoke of the ways that my parents' unending belief that their children, that they could be whatever they wanted to be if they only worked hard enough, was a central part of why I have never really struggled, existentially, with my queerness. Always unspoken,

though, was the understanding that of course I left, of course I could not have stayed. I had worked too hard to be queer to stay.

Eventually, my women's and queer theory studies gave rise to work in the women's movement. When I found myself burning out on all the toxicity masculinity was bringing to the world, I found interest in the ways that space shaped identity. I read Lefebvre and returned to Foucault. I distilled collective efficacy and community self-determinism down to their most basic elements and came up with food. Producing food did interesting things to a community: when communities could eat, other issues were far less pressing. I started a Master's program in Urban Planning and within a week knew I would devote myself to urban agriculture. I wrote a thesis on establishing a best-practice framework for urban agriculture that assessed the risks facing urban areas' most vulnerable residents. I graduated with honours and received an award for my thesis. I applied to the University of British Columbia and received a fellowship. I began a Ph.D. in Land & Food Systems, largely devoted to quantitative research and mapping of secondary-school food-sheds. I spent two summers working on area farms for free because I couldn't work for money. I spent a summer farming with a trans man and women, one of whom was queer. I looked around and found that queer people seemed to be filling Vancouver's breadbasket. Some of us were from rural backgrounds and farmed to come to peace with what we'd left; some were from urban backgrounds and had left cities for rural areas to come to peace with what *they* had left. I found my first course of study at first mundane, then uninspiring, and ultimately came to realize I could not complete it. I took a walk and stopped dead in my tracks when I realized that I had come to devote myself to why food production mattered so much for everyone else but my community, my own queer folk. I made an appointment with my then-

supervisor and told him I wished to begin my dissertation proposal on a new topic: the relationship between queer sexuality and identity, and ecology and agriculture. He said, to paraphrase, “why on earth does it matter?” I left, and realized it wasn’t just that my own people had never been asked; it was that I had also always assumed my narrative was set. Two summers ago I returned home to Montana for my mother’s 80th birthday. She lives alone now; my father passed away seven years ago.

Everybody left; nobody stayed. The farm was sold, and now some of the most productive agricultural land in North America is buried under a grey wash of storage units, tire shops, and anyone willing to pay for acreage to subsidize my mother’s continued life in our family home. Not all queer farmers leave, as I did; I bumped into my sister’s high school boyfriend at the new gay bar in downtown Billings. He’s out in his way, I suppose (I no longer ask queer individuals if they’re “out,” for what does it mean; what does it matter?). He’s married to a man and he’s farming his family acreage less than two miles from where I was raised. He’s happy. I went on to complete a study of queer farmers. I realized I could have stayed.

Chapter 3: Non-binarism, Agroecology, and Queer Farmer Identities

3.1 Overview

This chapter's interviews with queer farmers in British Columbia, Canada provide analysis and findings that frame agriculture within larger queer ecological perspectives and within the critical constructions of the queer self that emerge among these farmers through agricultural production. These new identities differ significantly not only from the heteronormative stereotype of "the farmer," but also from the homonormative stereotype of "the queer." Emphasizing critical reciprocity between self and ecology, multiplicity and alternative ways of knowing/being, these queer farmers offer new understandings of the role of agriculture in the development of individual and collective identities within queer communities (even for passive community participants) and of the role of the queer in the development of new farming identities, including the identification of new models and perspectives that may lead to increased environmental sustainability of food systems and to increased social sustainability as well.

The rest of this chapter has three parts: first, I will frame the theoretical constructions in which queer farming, and this study of queer farmers specifically, is situated. The next section offers an overview and analysis of the interview findings, including the perspectives on the construction of both new farming and new queer identities from the participants themselves. The final section frames this study, and its findings, within the wider academic discourse on ecology, agriculture, and identity.

3.2 Farming the Margins

To me, it's because I identify as queer – and that's a very personal and political identity, and it intersects with my ideas about the world in various ways – being queer for me is about living in a space in society where I can see a bigger picture, and I have space for analysis of how things work in our world. It helps me see more clearly, and it informs my choices around those activities. As a queer, I see the world around me as privileging some people over others, or humans over other ecosystems. Being queer and being on the margins is my window into patriarchy, and racism, and how we oppress other cultures. And there's another part of me that is a mystery – my connections to the land are a reflection of my ethics, and keeping connections to land, and these mysterious things... Those who identify as queer are finding their own place – their own way, and looking at the bigger picture and trying to make a difference in some way. (Morgan, 2014)

“Nature” is a word brimming with expectation: to be within it necessitates that there is a state outside it; for every “natural” there is the “unnatural.” The word “nature” is unstable as a conceit and concept (Morton, 2010). Nature is the nostalgia of ecology. It is both regressive past and radical future; it is wild, it is untouched; it is refuge and chaos; it is by nature unrecoverable, for it has never existed. For many queer people, nature is a counterpart of queerness: it may evoke the places we escape from (rural areas, farms, countryside); for others, it is the place to which we escape (communes and collectives, areas free of the stifling sameness of homonormativity). Nature as popularly conceived may be the quagmire of rurality or radical potential of rurality. It is the “unnatural” of the queer lived experience; it is the “it's only natural” of the queer lived experience. What nature is *not* is ecology; what nature is *not* is natural

(Morton, 2010). If Bruce Erickson (2013) is correct, if the queer is “a category that defies articulation of the specific identity claims that normalize behavior” (p. 323), then we might propose that what we call “nature” is, *because* of its multiplicity, mighty queer. As a result, new perspectives might emerge that underscore how the queer can impact agricultural production in positive ways, specifically by contributing to a greater cultural shift that “suggest[s] that a fundamental way to move forward in the difficult business of agriculture is to cultivate new identities and new ways of farming in a culture of diversity and dialogue” (Coldwell, 2007).

Queer perspectives bring a critical eye to ecology and agriculture and, by extension, to ecological and agricultural studies. This chapter builds upon two central perspectives. First, like queer identity, agriculture and related food systems are not distinct from social and cultural power structures: they carry all the meanings associated with these power structures. Second, as a critical component of ecological sustainability, agriculture has the power to shape the daily experience of how people and communities understand their relationships with both their built and natural environments. This connection, and the emergent subjectivities this connection engenders, can be seen as critically important for queer individuals navigating the complex social structures and power dynamics of historically heteronormative cultural contexts, providing for potentially different resources and senses of self in relation to queer identity and broader features of environment.

The linking of ecological sustainability and social justice and sustainability is hardly new, and food studies in particular now devote significant research into the relationships between historically marginalized communities, food, and sustainability. Literally rooted in the act of utilizing ecological systems for production, agriculture represents a unique intersection between

ecology, human activity, and the role of space and place not only in physical, cultural, and economic development, but also in the development and construction of alternative, non-metronormative queer narratives and identities. As a result, agriculture provides an opportunity for critical analysis of queer identity and ecologies of social difference. Understanding agriculture as a means of production for both culture *and* commodity illustrates the ways in which ecology (broadly speaking), far from representing what Mazel calls an “ontologically stable, foundational entity” is rather a “discursive construction, something whose ‘reality’ derives from the way we write, speak, and think about it” (Mazel, 2000, p. xii). Simply put, if the construction of “nature” is itself unnatural (Morton, 2010), then we can re-engage what this construction means in relation to queer identity and queer politics.

In short, this work seeks to elucidate the ways in which agriculture within queer communities has the potential of “not only queering ecology, but of greening queer politics” (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson, 2010, p. 22). Simultaneously, this work also explores how agriculture and related ecologies of social difference may provide lenses to better understand the diversity of lived queer experiences. These lenses offer potentially practical solutions to environmental challenges, inasmuch as they “make society more adaptable by increasing the chances that some members of it will understand the problems we face and see solutions even if other members do not” (McWhorter, 2010, p. 75).

In an era of increasing environmental degradation and ecological uncertainty, sustainable agriculture is valued as a replacement model for traditional, non-sustainable farming and food production methods. More important, though, is a need to more thoughtfully articulate definitions of sustainability and sustainable agriculture. Building upon an agroecological

perspective, this work also seeks to better understand the ecological, social, and cultural benefits of sustainable agriculture as practiced by queer individuals in addition to its potential as a supplement to, or replacement for, mainstream agriculture and food production. Even as sustainable agriculture is emerging as a key-response to the increasingly high social, health, and economic costs of the industrialized modern food system, understandings of the full benefits of these activities remain understudied. It may be understood that sustainable agricultural production offers an alternative to industrialized systems that have contributed to food insecurity, poverty, and other social disparities. Still somewhat lacking, however, is a critical understanding of how industrialized agricultural production functions as a component of greater oppressive heteronormative social and political systems and of the social and environmental costs associated with this relationship (Coldwell, 2007).

By moving beyond assessing and analyzing the traditional costs and benefits associated with both formal and informal agriculture, this research contributes a more holistic understanding of the ways various modes of agricultural production and associated practices benefit diverse communities. These benefits may occur at the complex convergence of the fundamental human rights to live where one should choose, and to grow and consume nutritious food; the role of agriculture in the development of individual and collective identities within queer lives (even for passive community participants); and the identification of new models and perspectives that lead not only to increased environmental sustainability of food systems, but also to increased social sustainability as well: agriculture that meets our social as well as food security needs, one that is rooted in ecological integrity, social equity, and queer ecology.

It is important to note here that understandings of and relationships to ecological systems, including agriculture, are co-constituted with identity (and vice versa) and are neither rooted in, nor limited to, queer individuals. Indigenous and other gendered, racialized, and historically marginalized communities, importantly, also demonstrate deep connections to the roles that place, ecology and agricultural practice (including agroecological practice) play in the development of the self. Laura-Anne Minkoff-Zern (2012), whose work in *Indigeneity and Sustainability* explores the agricultural practice and the constitution of identity amongst Triqui and Mixteco immigrants in northern California, demonstrates that her study participants also utilize agroecological practice and principles to shape relationships with place, participation within community, and even the bridging of historical ethnic and cultural divisions amongst community gardeners. Just as this thesis draws connections between place, queer identity, and agricultural practice and ecological values, Minkoff-Zern (2012) roots her own work in other historically marginalized communities, exploring “the current articulation, construction, and deployment of indigeneity in the context of migration and agriculture, and its implications for immigrant opportunities and futures” (p. 381).

José Luis Escalona and Martin Jesper Larsson (2015), in their work on sustainability and rural communities and cities in Chiapas, Mexico, trace concepts, such as Indigenous self-determination and relationships to community roles and responsibilities, including bureaucracy, to demonstrate the ways that collective identity can be leveraged to create new models of governance and sustainability. These new models of governance are rooted in traditional values of the Indigenous peoples of Chiapas, especially “autonomy and resistance” and everyday processes of routinization and renegotiations of the frames of domination (p. 150). In these

models of new, Indigenous forms of governance rooted in sustainability and rural agrarian communities, Escalona and Larsson offer insight into the ways marginalized communities can institute new values at scales far outsized from their farming origins.

Tanya R. Wahbe, Eduardo M. Jovel, David R. Silva García, Vicente E. Pilco Llagcha, and N. Rose Point (2007) have outlined the ways that partnership, traditional Indigenous expertise and resource sharing amongst Indigenous communities across the global North and South provides an alternate framework for development, including sustainability initiatives, and how “contemporary exchange among Indigenous people in the Americas serves to reclaim these values and practices [respect, reciprocity, relevance, and responsibility]...and provides opportunities for sharing cultural, historical, social, environmental, and economic factors impacting Indigenous health” (p. 472).

For the purpose of identifying the unique role of Indigenous perspectives on co-constitution and construction of identity and ecological sustainability values, there may be no example more valuable than the “7th Generation Principle” outlined (but held as a social value for far longer) by the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy (Lyons, 1980, pp. 173 -174). Placing an emphasis on securing both social and ecological sustainability for unborn generations, the 7th Generation Principle is important for several reasons, not least amongst them that it is a principle that has been colonized in the name of both North American corporate green-washing (the 7th Generation line of groceries and home product lines) but, more importantly, that it is the foundation for many popular perceptions of heteronormative reproductive sustainability narratives. Through a selective, North American, white-settler reading of the 7th Generation Principle, which largely neglects the co-emphasis on social sustainability, we can see how

alternative ecological discourses can be reimagined, redefined, and repackaged to make them fit the neat narrative of patriarchal, heteronormative North American sustainability discourse (Zehner, 2012, Cable, 2012, Washington, 2015). Indeed, this colonization of historical values and Indigenous principles of sustainability, by emphasizing reproduction and child-futurism and neglecting social aspects of sustainability, also practically omits and excludes queer inclusion. All this despite the fact that North American Indigenous tribes have one of the more established precedences, including historical records and discrete terminology, of social egalitarianism in the treatment of gender non-binary and non-heterosexual individuals (Pruden & Jumper-Thurman, 2014).

3.3 Queer Farming and the Neat Narrative of Binarism

21st century North America has a fraught relationship with its social mores and semiotic constructions. On the one hand, the “do it yourself,” “boot-strapper” ethos is alive and well; the North American tropes of individual autonomy and libertarian self-determinism remain largely in place, especially in certain spaces and industries. On the other hand, however, there are firm (if unspoken) rules governing spaces, places, and bodies: *who goes where, who lives how, who knows what, and who does what* still very much matter.

Indeed, the urban centers of the “left coast” that embody radical self-acceptance are in many ways no less forgiving of outsiders and outliers than North America’s “flyover” rural areas. For different reasons, both share one common element: they can feel like exclusionary places. As with binary gender (those default “male” and “female” identities that ignore both trans and intersex individuals and identities) and binary sexuality (those default “gay” and “straight”

identities that ignore most of the potential spectrum of both gender and sexual minorities), binarism also shapes space and place; ways of knowing; livelihoods and lives lived. For those interested, then, in identifying essential new ways of being, living, and farming on this planet, one starting point is an understanding of the outliers who live non-binary lives in a binary world.

What does it mean to “be queer” and “live naturally,” to “grow organically” and “to farm sustainably”? Historically, research has reflected the culture within which it is embedded. The implications of this relationship are that such research in sexuality, rurality, agriculture, and ecology may simply follow / adhere to the dominant “parent culture” (Halberstam, 2005) it takes place within: it shares, reflects, and perpetuates and promotes a very real reliance upon what one might call “the neat narrative of binarism.” Binarism attracts because it reinforces coherence and refutes contradiction; it is a way of structuring the world in all its complexity into a worldview in which something “fits” or does not. The structural binary of both paternalistic heterosexism and urban homonormativity makes it easier to perceive queer individuals living in rural spaces, including British Columbia, as “out of place” rather than “at home” and as “trapped” rather than “liberated.” There is “rural” and “urban”; “gay” and “straight”; “closeted” and “out.” The neat narrative ignores the fringe of social fabrics; the fine texture that goes against the grain, the gradations of grey between black and white. We do not know what to make of people who walk away from success to eke out a living as a small share-hold farmer, who use less to reap less, who succeed by not succeeding in capitalist systems.

The neat narrative of binarism extends beyond self-identity to livelihood: there is success, and there is failure. For many farmers caught in the “boom bust” debt cycle of modern conventional agricultural economics, anything less than maximum yield is failure: failure to

produce, failure to pay the bills, failure to thrive, indeed, a failure to “feed the world.” Lost in the neat narrative of binarism is what failure itself means in a failing system: when the planet teeters on the brink of ecological collapse as a result of only a few decades of unrestrained growth in commodities markets, we need to ask: What does it mean to fail? The queer troubles the deeply embedded rationalism of binarism: it reminds us that things fit where they should not, and do not where they should. So too does agroecology.

Like the queer, agroecology resists easy classification and schematization; it is by nature, through its emphasis on interactions between diverse ecological inputs, difficult to define. Since its origins in the 1930s, the concept of agroecology generally reflects the application of environmental and / or ecological concepts to agricultural practice. The OECD, for example, defines agroecology as “the study of the relation of agricultural crops and environment” (<http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=81>). Others, however, offer more substantive definitions of agroecology. The Scientific Society of Agroecology defines it as a “scientific discipline that uses ecological theory to study, design, manage and evaluate agricultural systems that are productive but also resource conserving” (<https://agroeco.org/>). Even here, however, agroecology is framed as a generally monologic enterprise between farmer and farm, one that does not re-situate the farmer within the agricultural system.

Alternately, in their analysis of agroecology as a discrete science, Tommy Dalgaard, Nicholas Hutchings, and John R. Porter weighs agroecology against Robert Merton’s (1973) scientific norms, defined as “communalism, universality, disinterestedness, originality and doubt” (2003, p. 39). Here, the authors conclude that agroecology met these standards and that its integrative and interdisciplinary nature were essential to its scientific otherness. By

interrogating agroecology as both a “hard” and “soft” discipline, the authors present a dialogic model of agroecology that integrates physical and natural science and that also has potential application in the development of alternative forms of capital, individual and community self-efficacy, and other non-agricultural outcomes. In recognition of the dialogic framework of agroecology, I will use throughout this chapter Dalgaard, Hutchings, and Porter’s definition of agroecology as “the study of the interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment within agricultural systems” (p. 39). I further extend this definition to reflect agroecology as a dialogic agricultural and ecological practice. Thus, this definition also includes “the study of the queer self” in relation to the moderating and mediating factors included in Dalgaard, Hutching and Porter’s definition.

Similar to the ways that the queer troubles the socially constructed binarism of heteronormativity and gender, agroecology can be presented as the troubling of binary divisions between agricultural practices and ecology. Stephen R. Gliessman (2007) presents seven practices of industrialized agriculture that agroecology specifically diverges from: “intensive tillage, monoculture, irrigation, application of inorganic fertilizer, chemical pest control, genetic manipulation of domesticated plants and animals, and ‘factory farming’ of animals” (p. 3). By linking these practices specifically to an emphasis on productivity and profit, Gliessman also provides a framework to analyze the greater links between agricultural practice and social and cultural outcomes: focused on yield and profit, conventional agriculture undercuts the abilities of small shareholder farmers and racialized communities and other historically economically marginalized farming communities to compete at a scale that creates incentives to continue farming in rural areas, on family farms, and in areas where historically, small shareholder farms

predominate (p. 15). With this model predominating, agriculture becomes a problem, rather than solution, to making global food systems more equitable, and precludes the use and role of food in social, as well as ecological, sustainability: “as long as conventional agriculture is based on First World technology and external inputs accessible to so few, the practice of agriculture will perpetuate inequality, and inequality will remain a barrier to sustainability” (Gliessman, p. 16; Allen, Van Dusen, Lundy, & Gliessman, 2009, p. 34).

At its most concise, agricultural sustainability can be defined as “a version of the concept of sustained yield – the condition of being able to harvest biomass from a system in perpetuity because the ability of the system to renew itself or be renewed is not compromised” (Gliessman, 2007, p. 17). Importantly, Gleissman frames sustainability (and the role of agroecology in promoting it) in ways that also demonstrate potential value to a framing of queer identity in non-binary terms: “the proof of sustainability always remains in the future, out of reach ... it is impossible to know for sure if a particular practice is in fact sustainable or if a particular set of practices constitutes sustainability. However, it is possible to demonstrate that a practice is moving away from sustainability” (p. 17). Like the queer, sustainability is simultaneously what it *is* independently and what it *is not* in relation to something else.

Briefly, we might then consider that in departing from the parent culture of heteronormativity, the queer mirrors agroecology and sustainability in its ability to “never [be] fully owned, but always redeployed, twisted” (Butler, 1993, p. 19). Both agroecology and the queer can be said to question and trouble existing social power constructs by centering indeterminacy within farming practice and sexual identity alike. In a world of increasingly

startling complexity, it is perhaps the indeterminacy of the queer, of agroecology, and of rurality, that offers us our most valuable starting point in re-visioning sustainability.

Queer farming and agroecology both offer at least the potential of new solutions found under stones unturned. We turn inward, towards each other; we farm the self, as I tried to do in the previous chapter. In doing so, we reject reproductive futurism, not because we embrace the horror/terror/violence of Edelman's "queer death drive," but rather because of the startling premise that a sustainability that tells us what it is not, as much as what it is, is itself enough, for now. We do not need to farm differently in order to create different market systems; we need to farm differently to farm *differently* because, as in Muñoz' quotidian utopia, we cannot yet envision the potential of ecologies of social difference.

3.4 Critical Ecological Reciprocity: Relationships Between the Farmer and the Farmed

In identifying ways in which queer sexuality impact understandings and relationships with agriculture and ecology, study participants voiced a number of different narratives that simultaneously reflected the ways that agriculture and ecology impact their understandings of and relationships to queer sexuality. Critical ecological reciprocity, a core theme of this research, defined here as the reciprocal relationships between internal (the self) and external (agricultural and ecological practices) values and the role and necessity (i.e. critical) of those relationships to each other in the development of identity both as queer individuals and as farmers / agricultural producers. The construction of a queer self that is rooted in agrarian practice and of agrarian practice that is rooted in the queer self reflects values of intentionality, sustainability as justice (for self and for ecological systems), minimizing harm, and strengthening relationships between

farmer and the natural world. Among the queer farmers interviewed, there emerged strong themes that agricultural practice and relationships with greater ecological systems reflect ways of living and greater ways of being that participants identified as unique to queer individuals with agrarian livelihoods.

In describing the role of queer identity and sexuality in shaping agrarian practice, and conversely, agrarian practice in shaping queer identity and sexuality, the study participants identify and acknowledge that construction of the queer self through farming practices both occurs and is intentional:

Let's talk about that sense of dominance. I think as queers, we have a very different sense of dominance – in the traditional model, man is the center of things, and he would exert his influence on land, and also on his subjects. His wife. His chattel. His animals. I think as queers, we're really actively looking at alternative models to that ... I think we should fight dominant models, and integration. (Rocky, 2014)

Here, Rocky offers the most succinct example of how queer farmers perceive conventional farming practices and narratives and of why it is important for queer farmers to depart from Halberstam's ideas about parent cultures (Chapter 1). By articulating how the queer falls outside of greater patriarchal and heteronormative cultural values like dominance, Rocky is able to provide a new imaginary for his farming practice, one that decenters farmer from farmed. Where Coldwell's (2007) research on "traditional" gender identity construction in young Australian male farmers found evidence of how farming could be used to reinforce masculinity (the honest man's "good" work outside as a farmer), Rocky and others do the *opposite* and intentionally

refute what Coldwell labels the “oppositional character of monologic masculinity” in favour of what Peter et al. (2005) identify as the “social and environmental interrelations and openness to change stressed by sustainable agriculture” (p. 225).

For the queer farmers interviewed, the historical outsider status of queer individuals creates imaginaries that, while intentional, are not necessarily perceived as overly complex. Tanner frames his queer farming identity as queer scepticism of the status quo as a bisexual man, “of feeling different, of being an outsider” and how this allows him to “look at how things are being done conventionally, and think ‘we don’t have to do things that way.’ We can do things different.” Jack too values collective difference and how his queerness means that he does not “see things conventionally – in any part of my life [including agriculture]. For me, it’s the conventional stuff that looks wrong, or weird.” Departing from the conventional facilitates “these options, to try and do things differently.”

For these queer farmers, the historical outsider status of the queer also provides a critical lens on daily farming practice that they feel demonstrates the unique agricultural contributions of queer individuals: the intentionality of Malcolm figuring out his queer self encourages him to “figure out” how he farms and where he belongs as a farmer. Individual and collective experiences of oppression create space to envision new possibilities and to try “new things and new practices in whatever we do,” including farming. Queer farmers identified having personally experienced the destructive impacts of heteronormativity, homonormativity, and metronormativity. Casey sums up this triad as “the damage of [that push for] uniformity,” and how heteronormativity, homonormativity, and metronormativity encourage an almost reflexive need to push back against dominant agricultural practices like monocultural planting: because

other farmers may encourage monoculture as part and parcel of “successful” farming outcomes like profit, these interview subjects identified it as the opposite: its widespread acceptance immediately discourages them from adopting the practice and thus creates room for departure and new ways of farming.

For other queer farmers, critical ecological reciprocity is practiced through the creation of social and ecological justice narratives that bridge complex personal narratives. Casey frames farming as a butch lesbian woman as an act of “real resistance” to the destructive forces of patriarchal and heteronormative modernization. For Casey, her farming is “a kinder, gentler way of being on the land, as a woman ... or even as a queer person of Irish descent.” Here, farming honours Casey’s status as both a butch queer and Irish woman and is part of a personal narrative that revisits “ancient histories for me – these are queer, and they are heritage.” Casey and others view farming as an act of social and ecological justice that allows queer individuals to identify how “respect for biodiversity is a queer value” because the queer community has witnessed the destructive potential of homogenization / uniformity: Casey “think[s] we as [queer] people push back against monocultures. I think we are truly the natural allies of biodiversity.”

For Dan, who grew up a fifth-generation farmer on a northern Gulf Island, farming can queer both social and ecological justice in new ways that differ from the popular queer social justice narratives that seemingly identify arrival points for having “made it” within society through “inclusion” and / or “equality.” To Dan, farming as a gay man is “transgressive” and is a way to demonstrate that he is part of a community “that has been on the edges.” He honours and relishes this role: he does not WANT inclusion for his queer community, and farming is one way

he demonstrates that pushback against inclusion through his lived experience. In a sense living Halberstam's *Queer Art of Failure* as a personal narrative, Dan:

regret[s] the integration of the queer community somewhat because to succeed in patriarchal, heteronormative culture is to give up that role we have traditionally played in art ... I don't want our community to lose that feeling of being open and accepting ... of trying new things and new practices in whatever we do.

Including farming. Stuart also values how his queer identity has prevented him from being "normal" and how farming does the same:

It [queer sexuality] has definitely made me more open to alternatives from normal [i.e., heterosexual] farmers. If I was straight, I think I would have been so fucking normal! [laughs] I always wanted to be so normal ... but when I accepted it, and realized that I was different and acceptable, it changed everything.

Morgan was one of several farmers, including Dan and Casey, who gave voice to queer farming as an act of political resistance and revolution: to be queer is "a very personal and political identity" that *is* the structural imaginary of lived narratives. Flipping the script of post-structuralism somewhat, Morgan and other queer farmers readily identify the ways that their queer sexuality shapes institutions as readily as they identify how institutions shape their queer sexuality. In Morgan's words,

To me it's ALL about how I identify as queer – and that's a very personal and political identity, and it intersects with my ideas about the world in various ways – being queer for

me is about living in a space in society where I can see a bigger picture, and I have a space for analysis of how things work in our world – it helps me see more clearly, and it informs my choices around those activities.

For Malcolm, to be a queer farmer is visionary because, to live as a queer man working in what is traditionally perceived to be a masculine, patriarchal livelihood, is to live life in “a place where people don’t experience privilege.” Malcolm’s queerness is “a real gift” because it is “a window into what it’s like to be marginalized” and it allows him to

see the way dominant cultures pave over people and things. And to be queer is to have that window into the things that could get paved over, or even ignored ... as I tried to figure out my sexuality, it definitely challenged me to figure out how and where I belong.

For many interview subjects, social and ecological justice are lived through outsider status, resistance, and transgression. To participants, these ideas are framed as almost sacred queer cultural values, and these values provide a vision that strongly impacts in very real, practical ways their agrarian practice. Self-acceptance of difference, for example, facilitates acceptance of difference in farming practice *and* of others; outsider status encourages agrarian values that deliberately deviate from what the subjects perceive to be the values of “conventional” farmers: maximizing inputs, the use of pesticides, and the separation between “farmer” and “farmed.” For some queer farmers, social and ecological justice is an imperative, an essential way of living that is reflected in their non-agrarian values as queer individuals. Morgan speaks of queerness as that which can cast light onto ways that even concepts like “food justice” can reinforce oppression and shape division:

I think people share my experience of being queer, and that kind of analysis – of questioning, of looking at things differently, shapes your farming and food. Food justice, for example – you’re [as a queer person] looking at it from a lens of patriarchal privilege, and white privilege, and how that shapes society.

Minimizing harm and working in partnership / eliminating boundaries between farmer and farmed emerged as another key theme of critical ecological reciprocity. For many queer farmers, sustainability is both an individual and a collective concern, and farming practice is one way to demonstrate meaningful impact. Morgan discusses queer farming and sustainability as recognizing that “things just need to be taken much better care of, and agriculture is one of them.” There is no identified need for measurable outputs or outcomes; queer farming is enough for its own sake because at its core her practice is based simply in taking better care of the things she farms.

Critical ecological reciprocity for Randal and Martin was demonstrated by the ways that food, culture, and compassion merged for queer men during the early days of the HIV epidemic. Having lived through the darkest days of the epidemic and having survived long enough to access life-saving (and epidemic altering) HIV drugs that emerged with anti-retroviral therapies (ART) in the mid-90s, these participants viewed food (and later farming) as fundamentally inseparable from the queer self. Randal shared how:

from the HIV movement, and the social justice movement – a lot of our early relationships with other lesbians and gay men, our conversations were always focusing

about food – and it was really an evolution – we could use organic in a holistic way – not just the way that we grew food, but the way we became queer.

Food was community; community was food: to grow food was to grow one’s queer self. To grow one’s queer self through community and food during the height of the AIDS crisis was, in a very real sense, to nourish the queer self and focus on wellness when queer lives were defined by what Butler calls “precarity” (and by extension, ungrievability) of male queer lives (Butler, 2009).

This placing of the queer self inside of ecological systems as but one of many partners, rather than as an external force that manipulates those systems, was key for some participants. Agroecological and biodynamic farming methods like site-specific planting, the use of natural inputs, conservation, and farming as land stewardship all align with the individual ecological values shared by participants. The evolution towards integration of self and nature reflects the experiences of many queer individuals into what Jack humorously labeled “everything analysis”: for some, coming of age as queer and living as and being queer is not to question oneself (self-analysis), but to question one’s relationship to *everything* (everything-analysis). For queer farmers, this questioning continues as a result of the integration of the queer self as a partner in ecology and agricultural practice. Micah describes how:

As far as farming, when I saw what I was “supposed” to do – I looked around me, and it wasn’t what my heart was telling me what to do – my queerness helped me put the brakes on, and totally stop this “what you’re supposed to do” thinking. Like critically thinking – what does it mean to even call it “a farm,” or “to fence,” or the ways that people

previously and historically related to this land? My queerness is the opportunity to wipe the slate clean, and say – “here we are, this the land, and what will we create?” and that creates more questions than answers.

By integrating self and ecology, queer farmers felt more receptive to alternative agricultural methods because their lived experiences directly shaped the ways that they view the natural world. The relationship between queer people and their pets, for example, was identified by Casey as having tremendous impact on both her farming practice and greater farming practices in general:

Even viewing animals as family – the reduction of hierarchies, and a recognition of interdependence, of respect for motherhood, for example, in domestic animals ... Our hands, as queer people, have been instrumental in undoing the factory farm, and pollution. We make a good resistance – a healthy resistance. Less invasive husbandry, less controlling techniques.

To intentionally insert and integrate the queer self into ecology, to act as partner, grants some participants the freedom to adopt sustainable farming practices and perspectives that have no real designation or counterpart in farming literature. In ways, it allows these queer farmers to act as agents against the extension and values of the North American industrialized food system. These farmers could be said to deliberately extend, through farming practice, a protection for plants and animals against the “politically induced condition of maximized vulnerability and exposure for populations exposed to arbitrary state violence and to other forms of aggression” (Butler, 2009). Through low or no-till farming, they helped worms and other soil micro-biota

thrive; through demonstrating kindness to worms, they in turn help their plants grow. Casey, farming as a queer woman in a remote, very rural northern Gulf Island community, spoke, positively, about what Catriona Sandilands calls the “botanical queers” (2014) of ecological systems. Casey speaks of treating “baby plants like babies” and how taking “the plant’s feelings into account – this is queer.” Participants spoke directly to their feelings that to be a queer farmer is to take the non-human perspective into personal account: of considering where plants “want to be,” of reserving some agricultural produce for wild animal forage; and of practicing the agroecological principal of site-specificity in new and deliberate ways. Non-productive areas are not drained, or propped up with fertilizers and artificial inputs, but in some instances deliberately left alone so as not to produce what the site “speaks” or “decides” for itself. Morgan shares how:

I work with my land as a partner. I believe in letting beings exhibit their natural behaviours ... the chickens get to be chickens. The wood lot gets to be a wood lot ... the weeds get to grow, and *we* navigate which spaces *they* get to grow in.

Casey referred to this navigation and critical reciprocity between the queer self and ecological systems as a logical extension of queer rights to ecology:

Queer rights are really connected with the rights of the natural world, I think – it’s so much how we are part of the world. There are certain freedoms I think we all recognize – the freedom of an animal to be an animal just as they are, just as we should have the freedom to be queer.

Randal suggests that this freedom “to be queer” creates opportunities for a new, holistic connectedness of individual, community, and agrarian livelihoods:

We use ritual – playfulness, queerness; we do things differently. Things you could never, ever do or conceive in a city – we play, we are doing things differently sexually, and we’re safe for women as well. I guess the theme is that everything is connected.

It is in this moment, it is in recognizing one’s outsider and marginalized status as a queer person, that freedom to consider new ways of being (of collaboration, partnership on the planet) presented itself to some subjects. For Nicole,

I do think that just by – you know, that moment in your mind where you realize “I’m queer” – that script stays with you in every moment for the rest of your life. You always know from then on that there is not only one-way to do something.

If, as noted above, being queer presents the freedom to construct new ways of being through self-privileging of outsider status and marginalization, agroecology, then, through its own outsider status and marginalization within modern, industrialized agricultural systems, offers the freedom to construct new models of sustainability.

3.5 Growing Alternative Narratives to Reproductive Futurism

For many of the study participants, queer identity allows, through agrarian life and farming practice, the development of alternatives to heteronormative reproductive futurism. As outlined by Lee Edelman in *No Future: Queer theory and the death drive* (2004), reproductive futurism can help us better comprehend the inherent heteronormative biases towards heterosexual reproduction that are foundational in popular agricultural and ecological sustainability narratives. For example, the popular “7th generation” conceit discussed previously

is not just the name of a recycled goods company, but a way to frame sustainability as essential in order to preserve “nature” for the “children” and those “future generations” to which it is purported to rightly belong (Seymour, 2013, Edelman, 2005). From an objective perspective, this framework represents an ecological fallacy: it decouples sustainability from the here and now (we are no longer sustaining the present, but rather some idea about the future), and, in doing so, neglects the very real impacts environmental degradation and ecological devastation have on our collective present. Additionally, and relatedly, it frames sustainability as an issue of importance only for those who have children (who will presumably have their own children for six subsequent generations).

Queer sustainability, as framed by participants, invokes again the idea that the queer self cannot be excluded from ecological narratives; that “doing” ecology and sustainability is about decentering patriarchal, heteronormative narratives, and centering the margins, the queer. This historical exclusion of queer individuals and communities from mainstream heteronormative narratives has meant, for some study participants, the extension of this exclusion into mainstream ecological narratives. As Tanner said,

When you identify as queer, or as part of “the other” I think it has an impact on how you approach everything – not just sexual partners. I spent so many years being evasive, and self-deluding, and that couldn’t not affect me – I kept reinforcing the fact that I was really different, and not the same. When you spend, and I’m not sure if this is the same with other queer people – when you spend life as part of a marginalized community, it’s something you can’t separate out from everything you do. I was having a discussion with my boyfriend, and he said “why don’t you just grow things the way they [are usually /

conventionally] grown?” and I said that I was different, and [this difference] even could impact the things that I grow.

To grow new or different things, or to grow them in new or different ways than those around you, is for some participants a way to grow new sustainability narratives rooted in ecologies of social difference. For Casey, queer sexuality, queer *natures*, have a unique role in influencing agricultural sustainability:

I think queer people tend to be sensitive about the egalitarian nature of nature and relationships. I do think there are common values that we as queer people share in regards to respect and the land – cleaner, kinder, ways of farming ... of raising things ... no separateness, no deprecation. The idea that everything has rights! Like, let’s let this potato plant live through to flowering! Queer rights are really connected with the rights of the natural world, I think – it’s so much how we are part of the world. There are certain freedoms I think we all recognize – the freedom of an animal to be an animal just as they are, just as we should have the freedom to be queer.

In this queer sustainability, binarism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity are part and parcel of an environmental and ecological status quo that no longer need “sustaining.” Ergo, where the “seventh generation” conceit frames sustainability as the right of future generations to the planet we live on now, Casey frames sustainability as the idea that everything and everyone has rights to the planet we live on, and queer, animal, and plant rights are no exception.

Here, Casey echoes Julian Agyeman’s concept of “just sustainabilities”: ecological sustainability that is done for no reason except that it is the “just” way that things should be

done. This is Rocky's and Dan's resistance to queer acceptance and integration: they wish for queer farming to be left alone, just as it is (an outsider culture), and not risk losing social justice and queer ecological values through cultural translation back into the "straight" world of farming.

For Douglas, "just" sustainability is his belief that, as a queer farmer, he is not a "real farmer" and that this is indeed a compliment. I regard this as another example of Halberstam's "queer failure" in action:

Real farmers are doing it for profit, for us, it's more of a lifestyle choice – the chance to do something unique – we are much more willing to experiment with things than the farmers across the road. I think you get more influence from other people if you were gay than you would if you were straight ... historically, we were definitely doing things differently at our first farm in [an upper Midwestern US state] – they were growing corn, or soybeans, but we were doing things organically.

One younger queer farmer from northern Vancouver Island spoke to a type of queer sustainability rooted in the ecological pessimism that he also experiences. As a queer man, Jacob says, only as a half-joke, that mass extinction events are felt more acutely by queer individuals who then farm in ways that support biodiversity:

But maybe there's more likelihood that someone who identifies as an outsider is likely to support biodiversity – I mean species that are going extinct are also clearly marginalized groups (laughs). But I don't know if there's something there that hinges on queer sexuality ... I don't know (laughs), but I know the reason the world is dying is because of

the patriarchy and really poisonous ideas about masculinity. So there's a question about people being outside that paradigm being more tuned in for sure.

For Sean, another young queer man farming on northern Vancouver Island, agroecology and organic farming are valuable primarily as a means of constructing a queer difference within what is perceived to be a homogenous queer imaginary that privileges queer monocultures not just in food, but also in lives. For Sean, working on a WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) site is a way to:

show the greater spectrum of what our community represents ... I think it would help our community. We're not all in the city, we're not all going out to clubs ... some of us just want a different lifestyle, a simpler life. I think it helps young queers with how they represent themselves. When I was younger, I felt like there was one queer model – that I had to be super femme, or just one way. And as an older person, and as a queer farmer, I feel like it's really helped me to come to an understanding of who I really am as an individual. It would have helped the younger me a lot.

For many of the farmers interviewed, “sustainability” in agricultural practice thus reflects the broader cultural values of patriarchal privilege and heteronormativity. Rocky, an urban farmer, utilized the term “regeneration” in lieu of “reproduction” to describe his practices in permaculture, which draw from the myriad of ways (not all of them reproductive) that ecosystems, including farmed ones, sustain themselves:

When I take a look at permaculture, for example, when I talk about permaculture and its focus not only on sustainability but regenerative design, in a standard classic model, you

focus on two ideas – the male, the female, and their offspring, When you look at the greater web in models like permaculture, you realize all components in the web are important – gay and lesbian, all these things have a place as well.

For Rocky, agriculture, and permacultural agriculture specifically, is an opportunity to expand food production beyond a concentration on yield and output as exclusive objectives, to also consider the role of non-production metrics – here, of expressions of queer identity.

As a queer man, Joseph also shares the perception that certain unsustainable farming practices (monocultural ranching, for example) are, for many queer people, a non-starter. They are so because they are rooted in the popular imaginary as “tradition” as surely as any other heteronormative and patriarchal values and privileges are:

Yes ... I think there's a negative correlation between traditional farming practices and the queer community. I don't know of any queer people who are doing “traditional” things like ranching, or wheat farming ... and if they did, they were probably doing so because they were “born into it,” whereas as a choice, things like organic or other types of agroecological farming are really more about a deliberate choice ... people may not go into the more traditional types of farming because of associations with certain homophobic elements ... agroecology is so community based, at its heart, that I think there may be a perception it is more open.

Living in ways that promote the value and sustainability of biodiversity and ecosystems for their own sake is not just a queer perspective, but a farming perspective, according to Dan and others.

Taken together, queer farming is not just about the queer as farmer, but is also the act of queering farming to do new things and to sustain in new ways. For Dan,

I think for us, as farmers, yes ... we value that [biodiversity, and its promotion to others]. We promote it as much as we can ... I think gay people, we're more attuned to the "here and now." We don't necessarily have future generations ... or being saved when we die ... all those "magical thinking" things that take away the imperative to do things right now – in the here and now. Right now.

Other farmers trouble the idea that to be a queer farmer is to farm "sustainably," inferring that any reduction to binary "right" or "wrong" designations is yet another way that heteronormativity replicates itself through farming practice. Whereas some participants avoided pesticide use and other conventional methods altogether, others acknowledged that to be a queer farmer is to practice ecological sustainability in new, flexible ways. In a quotation that I've already adduced, Tanner frames his queer identity as something that cannot be separated out from his identity as a farmer, including what he grows and how; yet he also recognizes that his status as a marginalized "other" means that he occasionally looks at things from a queer perspective in ways that appear contradictory to "outsider" viewpoints. Tanner, for example, reduces but does not avoid pesticide use altogether because as a vintner, "you can only do so much to reduce monocrops." Pesticides, in this context, allow a greater diversity of agricultural inputs to be utilized, can reduce the risk of altering soil chemistry or structure, and thus can even promote biodiversity.

Malcolm practices a lived sustainability that is sympathetic to both his own queer identity and the identity of “traditional” farmers:

And then there’s also that cultural acceptance and lack thereof of farming ... even in farming families, people tell their kids “don’t farm!” and even in broader culture, or in the queer community, it’s viewed as this kind of backwards thing ... We need to get people out there ... we need that visibility, not just for the queer community, but for the entire community. That welcoming is essential for agriculture – it’s so hard to do now. Even the big, conventional farms – we’re all recognizing just how hard this business of farming is. All farmers need support, and the fact that the queer community has that spirit of support, that really positively impacts us as farmers.

Visibility, which is one’s ability to see *and* be seen, is both an individual and ecological sustainability narrative for some participants. Queer farmers farm differently because they can “see” differently from their outside perspectives, but queer farmers (and queer farming) must be seen in order to impact greater agricultural practices and environmental and ecological sustainability narratives. Having grown up on a farm in the mid-western United States, Douglas acknowledges that being queer may give one the vision to do things differently, but that “if you’re from a farming background, it takes a lot of guts to choose to do it a different way. And traditionally, it can create tension between those two.”

Jack notes that there is no pure “difference” in farming, wherein sustainability is achieved; for him and his husband, agricultural practice is the proverbial journey, not the destination. He notes that his farming practice is partly “being aware of super masculine energy

in even organic farms, and recognizing that we don't want to do that"; he further observes how "being queer has been the piece that allowed us to see that – we as queer people see things differently." Such re-thinking extends to criticisms of "sustainable" farming practices (for example, maximizing organic crop yields for profit through hydroponic and other resource-intensive methods) that continue to replicate the patriarchal and heteronormative values associated with masculinity explored by Coldwell (2007), Bell (2003, 2004) and Peter et al. (2000).

Caleb is one among the study participants who drew connections between queer sexuality, community, and agroecological farming methods. For these participants, ecological sustainability cannot be achieved in a vacuum; farming methods and outcomes are but one component of what it will take to create more environmental and ecological sustainability. To Caleb, community sustainability is a prerequisite for environmental sustainability:

I definitely felt like there was more of a draw to small scale, more ecological farming ... and I think the appeal is that [these foster] equitable, more democratic communities ... and having worked with both conventional and nonconventional farms, you know – there's really specific personalities that are drawn to each. Conventional farming, you know – sitting in a tractor all by yourself – that's a certain type of farmer, but small shareholder farming ... working shoulder to shoulder. There's that sense of collaboration ... I feel like I always had more of an acceptance of who I was from the farming rather than the queer community. I think that it's almost transgressively radical to be a queer farmer anything that challenges that social meme of the, you know, stereotypical

[solitary] male farmer ... anything like that appeals to my personal interest in justice and social action.

Casey, like Caleb, shares the belief that queer community and collective efficacy are essential components of greater environmental and ecological sustainability. In her telling, queer community is the “how” that allows the “what” (i.e. sustainability) to be achieved:

I believe our culture is a culture of sharing. There's no trade secrets or formulas in my experience. The queer farmers that I know have all been really, really willing to share – everything. Seeds. Practices. Knowledge. I think our community probably was the genesis for farmers markets, and a return to more ancient ways of doing things.

In practical terms, what Casey calls the queer “culture of sharing” is the idea held by participants that conventional farming and sustainability narratives are reliant upon heteronormative, masculine, and patrilineal forms of knowledge transfer: farmers transfer seeds, ecological knowledge and observations, and related farming practice(s) only insofar as such transfer benefits the self. By fostering alternatives, such as seed sharing, alternative ways of knowing, and farming practices oriented around the collective efficacy and collective determinism, queer farmers are constructing new farming and sustainability narratives and imaginaries through action.

Malcolm, having worked closely with both queer and non-queer farmers as a farmer and as a board member for a farming society, proposes that conventional farming is by nature inhospitable to queer individuals and so he tries to foster alternative methods and new sustainabilities in the queer farming community:

The only queer farmers I know would fall in the organic category ... the conventional industry is much more of a macho “boy’s club” – I mean that’s a stereotype, but it’s just so much less welcoming. And the challenges of farming- mentally, emotionally, financially – you have to have a community that accepts who you are – and the queer community is so much more open to emotion, and recognizing who you are and how you feel – and I think those attitudes really make our community more open to organic farming.

For some of the farmers interviewed, collaboration and communication are activities to which they devote significant energy. John, who grew up in a farming family in eastern Canada, spoke to his work with his husband in promoting farmer education in order to foster collective success within the queer farming community of his southern Gulf Island home:

Yes, definitely – that’s the point [intentionally promote diversification of agricultural production practices] of the food program, and the farmer newsletter- the knowledge is definitely shared, we do the workshops, or if someone has experience in something that others don’t, that knowledge is definitely shared. I mean, even when you’re waiting for the ferry, you’re always talking to everyone about things you’re doing, or offering advice on chickens, or the bees, or the mold – like, we know that some lesbians who raise bees, and everyone is really excited, because we need that expertise.

John speaks to the essential informality voiced by other participants as a crucial means of knowledge transfer and creation of alternative sustainability imaginaries. Randal describes the

importance of community relationships based not upon how things “are going” but “how things are growing”:

The majority of our relationships are queer farmers who are doing things just like us. I mean, everyone is going to gravitate to like-mindedness. We are surrounded by queer people, and almost all of our relationships are agriculturally related, and with folks who are growing things the same way – you bump into people in the grocery store and discuss how things are growing.

Randal expands further and describes how moving to a small Gulf Island from Toronto meant having the opportunity to translate his experiences in an urban queer community to a rural one, for the benefit of *all* residents, queer and non-queer alike, through doing the “heavy lifting for the community”:

This house was hated by the community – because it was bought in Vancouver and shipped over, and plopped down here in this beautiful valley, and it was horrible – and so we planted, and painted, and tried to create this Eden – to make it a beautiful space where people would stop, and so in a sense we tried to “gay the neighbourhood.” And we brought our sense of *queer* community making to a community that had community making, and so we merged to different models – it was a really great mix! It was this old school, farming rural, life – the traditionality of community, and potlucks, and some of these people had definitely never met “out” gay men. And we were seen as activists, but in a really loving way. And I was concurrently working in social justice, and developing an educational curriculum, and so I was frankly working with these kids – and raising

their kids, and people started to pay attention. Our queerness was supporting the straight community's vision of a better, healthier world – we brought food, and health, and community activism together. As HIV positive men, we had to pay attention to what we ate – and we're both Taurus's (laugh) and so we were both really drawn to natural beauty.

Micah shared Randal's perspective that community, and the visibility that it can bring, is essential for creating new sustainability narratives in rural places, for queer and non-queer farmers alike. As a young man working in viticulture in Australia, he was surprised to find that he did not encounter homophobia from rural residents and that, in turn, impacted his perceived role as a farmer on a southern Gulf Island a world away:

I think in general, exposure is always better – a family friend asked about my experience as a gay man living in rural Australia in my 20s, doing viticulture for about three months, and there wasn't one instance where I felt unwelcome or judged, but mostly what I encountered was curiosity. It was these guys who were my age, and who were always kind of self-policing or monitoring for fear that they would offend me! It caught me off-guard, because in cities, most people have no questions. Everyone knows queer people. And in rural areas, that's not necessarily the case – so it's so important that we contribute to that exposure – and to show the world how different it is to be queer, and the ways that we live on land, and grow our food – it's so important.

For Casey the willingness of queer people to practice risk through living in what many queer people might consider foreign environments (i.e. rural spaces) demonstrates for all

residents the potential for alternative ways of being. For Casey, sustainable farming demonstrates potential for new ways of living for the entire community and for repairing historical schisms between production and consumption:

I think some people think it's truly lost. There's so many ways to do it! So many people have no idea of how to even grow a houseplant! So culturally, when people see you grow something, whether a houseplant, or food, or even in my case medicine, they're really amazed that I have this skill! I don't think they're surprised that a queer woman can do it; I think they're surprised that ANYONE can do it. So, I get a lot of leverage or leeway in my community because of my knowledge – I'm like a foreign person to them. They literally can't imagine how to go about this.

For study participants, to be queer is to engender altogether new sustainability narratives that are not exclusively future-oriented, and indeed may even contribute to the reparation of past harms. These queer sustainability narratives not only frame queer identity against greater cultural privileging of heteronormativity, they reflect how the participants' specifically queer ecological values and practices are *deliberate* departures from the parent narratives of conventional agricultural practices and “mainstream” sustainability narratives.

Chapter 4: Queer Identity, Agroecology, and Ecologies of Social Difference

4.1 Overview

This chapter interrogates the ecological and agricultural perspectives, practices, and production outputs that co-constitute queer identity for queer farmers in British Columbia, Canada. Specifically placing the analysis within agroecological and ecological contexts, this work challenges the dominant agricultural discourse of farmer as actor upon the land, and instead proposes that queer farming situates and integrates the self within farming practice and the liminal spaces of farms and rural areas. Hypothesizing that queer farmers live particular ecologies of social difference that both mirror and replicate ecological and agroecological values, this work uses the concept of the ecotone as a theoretical starting point to explore how ecological transitions can foster new zones of contact for both agriculture and farmer alike. Drawing upon the findings of the ethnographic study of queer farmers in British Columbia, this chapter frames queer sexuality by analyzing it through the lens of agricultural production generally and agroecology specifically, including the agroecological principles of networks, cycles, energy, partnership, diversity, and dynamic balance. In doing so, I argue that queer farmers are creating unique lived models of ecological and agricultural sustainability.

The “farmer” is the agent who “farms” the “farm.” The “farm,” in turn, is “farmed.” The outcome, culturally, is a distancing of the relationship between active and passive components of the agricultural system that excludes “the farmer” from the closed loop of “the farmed.” This distancing may then help explain the ecologically damaging methods and practices associated with conventional farming, as the farmer’s role within such a construct is largely resource

exploitation. Other models exist, however, that situate the farmer not outside the farmed, but inside it. Agroecology, with its emphasis on principles that include networks, partnership, and balance, is one such model. By examining farming cultures and communities that have adopted agroecological models, it is then possible to examine the impacts of this re-situation of the farmer not only to the individual, or individual farms, but also to community, ecological systems, and even greater society and culture.

This chapter seeks to further agricultural and ecological research through presenting the results and analysis of an ethnographic study of queer farmers in British Columbia, Canada. This chapter is presented in three parts. In the first part, the ecological and agricultural concept “ecotone” is defined to serve as a theoretical basis to situate queer farming and ecology. The second section examines studies on the relationship between farming and the construction of the self. The third section examines queer farmers queering space and temporality in British Columbia. Specifically, this component of the study addresses the ways in which these queer farmers not only practice agroecology on their farms, but also in their own daily lives through what I call “dialogic farming,” by which I mean farming that is rooted in the practices that shape identity, while also being informed by the ways that identity shape farming.

4.2 Ecotones: Farming the Margins of Self and Place

Alternatives to conventional agricultural system are frequently typified by their marginalization: small shareholder farmers, for example, may farm neither solely for self-sustenance, nor to produce agricultural outputs that would allow them to compete with conventional farmers and conventional farming methods. Rather, they do so to support self and

community through sales at highly localized farmers' markets. Whereas conventional farms are typically found on lands and in areas that have long been used for intensive agricultural production, alternative farming models may take place in new, liminal spaces: small tracts of self-cleared forest, vacant city lots, or even in the repurposed front and backyards of city residents. While the intent of "growing food" may be shared with conventional farmers, the spaces, places, and methods of these alternatives emphasize Victor Turner's conceptualization of liminality: "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony" (Turner, 1969, p. 95).

In these "neither here nor there" farming activities and farmed spaces, farmers may be liberated not only from conventional farming practice, but also from the social and cultural ties and influences associated with conventional / traditional farming. Thus, the intentionally practiced difference in farming becomes a way of intentional practice of difference in daily life, a way to bridge new cultures, develop new family and social structures, and gain new, alternative ways of knowing and being on both land and in community; a way, through farming practice, "to farm the self" (Bell, 2004, p. 129).

Eugene Odum and Gary Barrett, in their seminal work "Fundamentals of Ecology," define the ecotone as "a transition between two or more diverse communities as, for example, between forest and grassland or between a soft bottom or hard bottom marine community ... The ecotonal community commonly contains many of the organisms of each of the overlapping communities and, in addition, organisms which are characteristic of and often restricted to the ecotone ... This tendency for increased variety and density at community junctions is known as the edge effect" (1971, p. 157). For this study, then, the ecotone serves as a particularly valuable

theoretical grounding point, as it allows, first and foremost, the re-centering of “the farmer” as one of liminality; a site of overlap and porosity that contribute to and co-constitute the ecology of “the farm.” Furthermore, the ecotone serves as a theoretical grounding point to deconstruct the farming identities of queer farmers themselves: in its recognition of the role of overlap and porosity in ecology, we may find entrance into the complexities of the *queer* identities of those same farmers. If Butler and Johnson are correct, if “the queer must “never [be] fully owned” (Butler, 1993, p. 19); its identities (across individual, community, and ecological systems) must be “always riven, unstable and discursively entropic” (Johnson, 2013, p. 7), then the ecotone may provide a new framework for understanding. Through the lens of the ecotone, we may see queer identity as constructed in individuals with livelihoods that may be new to them (farming), living in what traditionally were neither queer places (the rural) nor farms (forests), nor queer spaces (the farm), and who frequently farm using methods themselves that resist easy categorization (biodynamic farming, for example, with its focus on non-linear planting, tonics, and planting and harvesting according to moon cycles).

Queer farming, then, may reflect ecotonal areas in both its traditional ecological sense, but also in new ways. These ecotonal imaginaries may include the integration and translation of farming knowledge, cultural and social adaptation, and the creation of “neither here nor there” market models that still rely on capital, but do so in “new” ways, including using older models of exchange in new contexts (bartering, for example). These ecotonal imaginaries accord with Coldwell’s concept of “institutional reflexivity,” which he identified in his work with male farmers on conventional farms in Australia: “Institutional reflexivity sees the propositions of these expert knowledge systems transformed, from a supposed universal validity to a more

contestable status in democratic and dialogical public spheres. In this process, traditional meanings of knowledge derived from a formerly sacrosanct science are disembedded from their local context and transformed to ‘dialogic expert knowledge,’ which is shared across time and space” (Coldwell, 2007, p. 89; Beck et al., 1994, p. 203).

This chapter contends that, by situating and integrating the queer self into the ecotonal imaginary of farming, queer farmers are not just farming, but they are also creating and living ecologies of social difference. They are not just queer individuals farming; rather, the act of farming itself – from methods to the produce grown – is queered. Simultaneously, in the ecotone of queer farming, the queer self; its relationships with others, and with culture and society, its sex and sexuality, even its regeneration are farmed. Queer farming, then, does not transplant two oppositional forces onto or into one another, but rather creates something altogether new out of the sum of its parts. In a time of ever-increasing climate, ecological, environmental, and social uncertainty, this creation of new ecotonal imaginaries is critical, as it presents altogether new understandings of sustainability and self out of what were previously considered stable, static, and even oppositional forces (the queer and the farm).

4.3 Queering Space: Rurality, Urbanity, and Sexuality

If one cannot conceptualize queer sexuality outside of the physical contexts in which queer lives are lived (Butler, 1993, Halberstam, 2005, Johnson, 2013), to understand the role of space and place on queer identity is to understand how space and place not only shapes identity, but can also be used to break both heteronormative and homonormative monologic constructions of queer identity in favour of dialogic ones.

In their canonical work *In a Queer Time and Place* (2005), Jack Halberstam offers a foundational argument about the role of space, place, and popular imaginaries of gender and sexuality on queer lives. Halberstam's case study of Brandon Teena, the trans man murdered in Nebraska in 1993, offers perhaps the greatest scholarly contribution to date on the need to trouble and deconstruct the idea that rurality is inherently any less a place of ontological instability than the queer is. Indeed, Halberstam's analysis provides a compelling case for how rurality itself may be queer as both a physical and temporal construct: "Since certain sexual liberation discourses recapitulate the terms of the homo/hetero binary that oppress minority sexual subjects in the first place, then these discourses become part of the installation of the very sexual hierarchy that they seek to oppose" (2005, p. 30). To Halberstam, the siting of the queer within urban imaginaries says less about the creation or reality of urban "safe spaces" for queers than it does about the ability and willingness of queer individuals to play active roles in the ongoing construction not only of safe spaces for queer lives, but of *unsafe* ones as well.

Wherein queer theory and cultural studies are largely rooted in the idea that cities and urban spaces are essential components for the development of subcultures, including queer ones, Halberstam posits that these subcultures are at their queerest when decoupled from the creation of "community" and instead rooted in "unbelonging and disconnection" (p. 153). Halberstam reframes the queer outsider, in their lives unmoored from both heteronormative and homonormative narratives, as both the guardians of the historical queer, and the vanguard of alternative, even new queer identities:

At a time when "gay and lesbian community" is used as a rallying cry for fairly conservative social projects aimed at assimilating gays and lesbians into the mainstream

of the life of the nation and the family, queer subcultures preserve the critique of heteronormativity that was always implicit in queer life (p. 89).

Thus, we see Halberstam's potential queer subcultures in new spaces like rural areas and on farms not in spite of, but *because of* the very oppositional heteronormative social imaginary that these contexts provide: to stay in a city in the queer community or family that is frequently used to describe urban gay scenes, is by nature, assimilationist. To extend Halberstam's argument, a queer farmer who is farming using conventional agricultural methods may be queer and simultaneously also assimilationist because this farmer may be rooted in unbelonging and disconnection with rural spaces, but are replicating the heteronormativity of these same spaces. Alternatively, a queer farmer living in a rural area who farms agroecologically is doing something altogether different, is creating bona fide subculture, by both living and farming in unbelonging, disconnected ways from those individuals, communities, and methods that surround them.

4.4 Queer Farmers, Ecology, and Liminality

As noted earlier in this chapter, the concept of the ecotone, which describes ecological zones of contact, liminality, and porosity, provides a useful theoretical and thematic framework for discussing the imaginary of queer farming. For queer individuals, including farmers (and indeed, for agricultural activities that we might consider to queer farming), liminal spaces and margins, overlap, and transitions are frequently defining characteristics of their lives. Coming out narratives, for example, may be framed as ecotones of the queer self – detailing the liminal personal spaces experienced by queer individuals (those feeling torn between two identities,

straight and queer; rural (heteronormative) and urban (homonormative); male and female (genderqueer, trans, and intersex individuals). The queer farmers interviewed for this study carried over this ecotonal imaginary into their own agrarian values and practices. In their stories, we hear themes of porosity over hard boundaries; flexibility over rigidity, the non-binary over binarism.

In discussing the ways that queer sexuality and identity shaped their farming practices and beliefs, many of the queer farmers interviewed describe centering the queer self in the farm and farming activities: they reorient both farming and queer identities as a new, ontologically unstable imaginary. Many of these farmers, for example, framed their agrarian values and practices as mirroring the “grey” areas of their sexuality: coming of age between black and white oppositional forces (closeted and out, for example) gave them lived queer experiences and perspectives that provided queer experiences and perspectives on agricultural practice. For Morgan and Rocky, queer sexuality itself is uncertain and, as such, represents a perhaps unique match for ecological and agricultural sustainability in a time of climate change and environmental instability. Morgan states that:

I feel like my words don't always describe things ... it's hard for me to put into words. I think there's a really strong connection in the work you're doing. This is such an interesting time. And I think queer folks have so much to bring to these uncertain times ... we live in the gray areas of the world. Our feet are frequently in two places at once, and in figuring out how to bridge gaps. I see queer people starting to do things in our society where things just need to be taken much better care of, and agriculture is one of them.

Rocky, an urban queer farmer, landscape architect, and lecturer at a local college, shares Morgan's "black and white" queer perspective and frames the ecotone of queer and farming identities as the practice of living life (including teaching agriculture and horticulture techniques to students) outside of predetermined categories. Rocky uses "boxes" as the metaphor that distinguishes queer farmers from non-queer farmers:

Being a gay man, my perspective on life is different from the norm ... I believe our perspective on tradition is slightly different. We don't fit into a box, and we don't think in boxes ... originally when I started farming, I grew food exactly as my grandparents had. As I started to explore my sexuality, I started to think about farming practices really differently. I am really into permaculture, for example. I don't think of nature as "black and white" – and that has given me a really different handle on farming ... Absolutely. I teach in my models and methods how the world is not as black and white as we might think. A big component is permaculture ... what I usually do is teach traditional models of agriculture, and then I teach my own model (permaculture), and then I have my students debate it amongst themselves.

The analogy of queer and farming identities as "gray" areas both reflects new, uncharted liminal spaces between the polarities of "black" and "white," as when Rocky describes not fitting "in boxes," yet simultaneously it references those polarities as points of departure, as when he describes initially growing food exactly as his grandparents had. For Rocky and others, then, techniques like permaculture and the promotion of agroecological practices and values is not only a way to farm, but also a way to manifest queer sexuality. Morgan does not describe having "feet in two places at once" solely as a starting or departure point, but rather as an essential

component of queer orientation and identity, one does not bring queer sexuality from Point A to Point Z, but rather bridges Point A and Point Z and thus *creates* something queer.

For other study participants, ecotones of queer and farming identities reflect liminality, but also liminal tension, wherein centering the queer self in agrarian values and practices is an ongoing process of negotiation, calibration, and oscillation between polarities. Caleb describes the complexities of being a queer farmer not as Morgan's bridging of gaps, but rather as an ongoing process of lived complexity in a world that relies on easy categorization:

Yeah, although at this point in my life, I don't know how many people still recognize me as a farmer ... I mean the ag community still sees me as a farmer, but I'm not specifically out to them as a gay man. So the farmers accept me, but don't know I'm gay, but the queer community recognizes me as gay, but not a farmer ... so I have this reputation as a dual gay / ally / farmer.

While this oscillation may be perceived as a critique, for Caleb, it suggests the new queer orientations described by Morgan and Rocky from a different perspective:

I think in some ways, I mean it's the complex construction of gay identities ... for some reason, to me, rurality is really, really appealing. I can't wait to meet someone and say "hey. I found a 20 acre farm and we're leaving" so I think there is something about that small shareholder farming ... off the grid ... it appeals to some of us. Not the hyper masculinity, but the community ... the sexiness of farming as it's being portrayed. I definitely think that the rural township, it could be an assumption. I think we as a

community have this idea that rural communities are more discriminatory, but it could just be this greater reliance on each other, and an inability to hide your shit.

Caleb's queering of farming is part of a lived queer ecotone that resists easy categorization in favour of his "complex construction of gay identities." This queer complexity does not resist the rural, rather it is drawn to it, to its "sexiness" in portrayals of (presumably) traditional agrarian ideals and to the way it counteracts the pervasive "hyper masculinity" that contributes to that traditional sexiness. The rural may still be the place of shit-kickers and isolation, but one can queer that isolation, reorient it, redraw it, and reframe it. Caleb, for instance, describes the assumed "discriminatory" practices of rural communities as one facet of lived experiences that reflects collective reliance and critical openness, rather than inherent closed mindedness; these are communities where individuals have an "inability to hide your shit."

Dan provides a similar perspective when speaking not to the rural, but rather to the urban queer experience. Describing the urban gay male lifestyle as "empty" and "consumer oriented," Dan values the openness of his rural northern Gulf Island community as mirroring his own openness as a queer man, to "new things – or to old things, and bringing it back." Dan's existence as a queer man in rural Canada is a reaction against urban homonormative values through its recalibration of traditional agrarian values, so long as "we don't let tradition influence us too completely." Despite the cultural perception of rural areas as closed minded, Dan articulates the opposite: as a queer man, the openness he values aligns with the openness to "new or different techniques" that he finds farming on his family farm on a northern Gulf Island.

Many study participants identified the tensions and margins between queer identity and rural and / or urban spaces as an ecotonal imaginary. While Dan found the rural area where he grew up as a 4th generation farmer to foster openness and multiplicity, for others rural spaces evoked isolation, and the frustrations of not having an urban queer community to provide social interaction and sexual and romantic relationships. Many participants spoke of the tension of being young queer farmers, priced out of agricultural land in Metro Vancouver, who were unwilling to trade queer community for a rural life they felt was too remote and removed from other queer individuals. Caleb, on his life in Vancouver, states:

I live in Vancouver – I used to farm in Richmond, but my motivation to move was definitely based in part from a desire to be part of a larger queer community – even when I farmed in Richmond I lived in Vancouver ... part of moving into that space was wanting to be part of a bigger queer community. And my friends ... and even be able to go out. It's important to me to have that option.

Jamie and Joseph second Caleb's reservations about the challenges of being a young queer farmer, and the importance of community:

Having queer community is important to me, and in my experience there's bigger queer communities in urban areas. Especially being young, queer and single, living in a rural area has some challenges – especially in finding some community ... but that's not to say that I wouldn't move to that area for a different reason, but living in an urban area with a large queer community is a strong draw – I definitely feel torn ... between wanting to farm, but also wanting to live somewhere with a large community. Jamie

Absolutely. I lived in a rural environment for a few years after coming out ... I found it very restrictive. In the Okanagan, there's no real gay community to speak of ... especially young people ... maybe my brother is finding it to be different. And maybe social networking is changing things ... but when I was growing up it was restrictive. So, when the opportunity came up to live in an urban environment, I definitely took it. Joseph

For Malcolm, Morgan, and Joseph, the “queer conundrum” of deciding to farm or live in a larger urban area with a visible queer community was also, in part, a reflection of the struggle of day-to-day life as a small share-hold farmer. Morgan spoke of how difficult it was, after a breakup from a former romantic and farming partner, to find themselves in a situation in which they are no longer “part of a couple where there is a bread winner of somebody working so that the bills get paid while the other one works the land ... it's really hard.”

At the same time, Morgan reflected on attachment as a construct, and it fits (and doesn't) within their queer farming identity:

On a practical basic level as an out queer person to my family, they're really supportive of me, and my wider community of older queer folks have been really supportive, including during my breakup (with the former co-owner), and I think sharing this identity with others has really given me some support that has held me up. At the same time, not being part of a couple where there is a bread winner of somebody working so that the bills get paid while the other one works the land ... it's really hard. And I have a definite lack of interest in sharing land with a romantic partner! It's part of my desire in

polyamory and non-traditional relationships. I want my own space, I want my own level of security in land tenure.

Malcolm shares Morgan's sense of isolation, not one necessarily created by heteronormativity, but rather by the space and distance of rural spaces and by what that means in practical terms for both dating and farming. For Malcolm, to move to a rural area does not necessarily mean moving someplace homophobic, although it does mean willingly consigning oneself to a life in which many of the queer supports and sexual and romantic possibilities (the same supports that facilitate successful farming) become more difficult to find on an order of magnitude:

I did my internship in Ontario on an organic farm – rural, but alternative, a lot of straight people, but a lot of folks on the queer spectrum. It was great, but I ended up out here because I wanted to be in Vancouver, but honestly, I have yet to meet a rural, gay male farmer. I've met lots of lesbians, but I have not met "that guy" (laughs) ... and I feel like if I farm in a rural setting, I will be alone for the rest of my life (laughs). So, in the city, I might not find a farmer, but I might find a man – and honestly, as a small farmer, you almost have to have a partner with an income to help support you. And in rural areas, finding a partner is really just non-existent. So, honestly, that's why I haven't left the city. I know over on the island there's a few, but I don't know them ... and when I think about leaving the city, and losing my queer community, I wouldn't have that if I left. I mean I don't have a queer farming community, but I have a queer community – and I didn't realize how important that was, until I finally found it. So I don't want to leave the city, until I find someone to leave the city with.

Farming and queer identities also manifested themselves in ecotonal tension, reflecting participant's occasional conflicts between "rightful" land tenure as someone who has an agricultural background and an almost perceived imposter status as queer individuals living in rural areas and working in a non-homonormative fields. Joseph states:

Sometimes I feel like I don't, like in the back of my mind I have this nagging doubt that it's not really my domain ... and maybe it's internalized homophobia, you know? But the other part of me is able to be rational, and say "I deserve to own land as much as anyone," and specifically, as someone who knows how to farm, even more so. So, I guess to me that's maybe even the most important determining factor.

For others, including a couple who had owned a large farm in a rural and remote part of the prairies, the physical and metaphorical ecotonal spaces of queer farming are neither inherently queer-friendly nor homophobic. Rather, they are extraordinarily complex. Stuart described buying their farm from an individual who now might be considered gender-queer or trans and the complexities of living as a queer couple in a traditional Ukrainian and Mennonite community:

Our first farm had been owned by a drag queen for 50 years in Hatisville, Manitoba ... We went out to this farm – and it was a nightmare! We almost left – there was garbage everywhere, it was falling apart! And then this old man in a bonnet and lipstick came around the corner, and we stopped and said "oh my god we have to talk to her!" And this guy had all of these male animals living with him – all roosters! All bulls! And he would always wear a bonnet and full makeup, and he had affairs with all of these men who lived

in the area! But he identified by name as a woman, Phyllis Berries, and he did get beat up a few times – but I will tell you this, the locals took care of him. He was one of their own – they would check in on him, and feed him, and make sure he was okay. So, we bought his farm, and it took a great deal of work – and that overhaul, that really got us known in the community. We had to ask for advice, or help. I mean, my dad was the same way. So, we got to know all of our neighbours right away – the neighbours were always helping each other. Dredging our land when we got flooded, the mushroom lady taught us how to forage; and it was this old Ukrainian and Mennonite community, and they just accepted us. I’m sure some of the older ones just assumed we were “bachelors.” But, we definitely weren’t closeted.

For Stuart and Phyllis Berries, rurality thus did not foster isolation as much as it fostered connection: the transition areas between both physical place and sexual identity were marked by interdependence, mutual reciprocity, sharing knowledge and resources, and a much-higher degree of community and social acceptance than many might anticipate. Indeed, in Stuart’s telling, Phyllis lived a life that could hardly have been *more* queer, from an emphasis on raising only male animals, to living life as a gender non-binary individual in rural Canada in the 1980s, to what appears to be a fairly active, if occasionally troublesome, sex life. Tellingly, in Stuart’s brief biography, Phyllis Berries is not held up as a victim, even when discussing the beatings she occasionally endured; nor was this violence framed as homophobic; rather it was presumably linked to the affairs she had with local married men.

Other interview subjects experienced Joseph’s dissonance between farming and queer identities in *opposite* ways. For Jamie and Caleb, it is not just rural communities that create

isolation; so too do the metronormative values of queer urban centers. Jamie spoke humorously of their experience as a queer urban farmer and feeling that urban communities are so disconnected from food production that most queer individuals do not ever consider things like queer sexuality, farming livelihood, and land tenure:

I think that people don't even know it's a thing to accept! (laughs). In urban areas, a lot of queer communities have a big disconnect with farmers ... when you tell people you're a farmer, you get a lot of people who can't relate, or don't relate ... it's out of the dominant realm of thought. In rural areas, you can identify with people on the farmer level, but not as a queer person ... I guess it's a matter of how your identity is pronounced in each area ... I guess my perception in rural areas is ... I never actually had a negative experience in rural communities? I mean people will look at you ... but I've never had any outright negative reaction from people in rural communities, including farmers.

Stuart and John echoed these sentiments when recounting their decision-making process and priorities when looking for new farmland outside of Manitoba. As a long-term queer couple, for them acceptance of queer sexuality was paramount, but, as previously noted, not necessarily something they did not *already* have in rural Manitoba. Indeed, the couple readily identified other gay men and friends who lived and farmed in the Manitoba community. For Stuart and John, then, the progressive values they were seeking related less to acceptance of queer sexuality (which they had), but rather to affordability and a shared community acceptance of both queer sexuality and new, sustainable ways of farming:

In rural Manitoba, where we used to live, there were more ranchers, and the gay men we knew from ranching families, they all farmed very conservatively – they would never do anything outside the box. Here, gay, straight, everyone does everything differently – small farming even – this is something that is so new to us! In SK and MT, small farms are only now just starting to happen. And here, when you go to the farmers markets, when you see the number of gay men and lesbians selling produce at the markets, I think it definitely is influencing a number of new farmers who might not have considered farming before. John

At first, we just really wanted to get out of the city. We never even thought about picking a community that would have gay men, or be gay friendly. We just needed it to be affordable! So, that determined our first stop [in Manitoba]. But when we moved to [the southern Gulf Island where they farm], it definitely was a consideration – we knew there was a built in gay community, and a gay community that shared our values around a food. Stuart

Finally, for many of the participants interviewed, visibility emerged as an ecotone between geographic place, rural and urban space, and queer identity. In constructing new ways to farm, as well as new ways to be queer, participants often lived in ways that refuse neat categorization. Outness, defined here as the willingness to publicly identify one's queer sexuality, expressed itself in complex ways amongst participants. For Morgan, outness represents “a really big challenge for me – both my gender identities and sexuality, I feel like it's really challenging to be here and carry those identities here, and to find community.” Yet, for Morgan they identify this challenge as an opportunity to develop their “own communities of identity”

marked by “queer corners ... a queer neighbour; a queer intern ... I have to look and work harder to make that support for myself, in a city I could just have it presented.”

For Nicole, as a queer woman, outness provides unexpected benefits in developing social capital with other older, male, and more established farmers on the southern Gulf Island where she lives. Nicole’s queer sexuality does not create a gulf or schism between herself and the older, presumably straight, “traditional” farmers she farms alongside. Somewhat unexpectedly, her out queer sexuality creates a sense of sexual distance and fosters equality between her and local farmers. Her status as a sexualized woman is, in her telling, neutralized in ways that benefit her as a farmer:

In this community, certainly, I feel totally equal. I feel safe. And raising sheep, I have to reach out to these older straight male farmers that I honestly would not reach out to in the city. I mean, I am a young queer woman, and I think my sexuality, and this is funny, but it takes a certain energy off the table (laughs). Like, I’m treated as a colleague, or a friend, or a daughter, because my sexuality is off the table for these individuals. I’ve known this guy who moved here, and he had such a dominant personality, and he used to squash ideas, and was this really patriarchal type guy, and I’ve seen how living here has changed him, and how open minded he is now ... I think there are so many queer people farming here, I swear we’re like 50%, that we’re not out of the norm – we are the norm.

Casey too expressed how out queer sexuality can open doors, rather than close them, in surprising ways in rural communities. As a gender non-conforming lesbian woman living in a very remote community, one might expect such visible expressions of queer sexuality to create

spaces of tension and conflict for Casey, since she refuses to conform to greater heteronormative ideals around both femininity and sexuality. On the contrary, queer visibility provided Casey *greater* community support than if she presented as a gender conforming straight woman:

In my current situation, my land is on First Nations territory – so I get asked what “right” I, as a queer, white woman, have to be on this land. And I can really only say that it has called to me. And funny enough, I’m this butch, androgynous dyke, so I actually think that works for me – people look at me and think “she can do this.”

For Casey, then, queer farming is a complex issue that touches not solely upon queer sexuality, but also upon white colonial legacies and the act of farming on un-ceded tribal lands in a First Nations community. Tellingly, Casey’s queer sexuality and presentation as a “butch, androgynous dyke” is what “works,” in her account, in allowing her to navigate the extraordinarily complex dynamics of living as a white woman in a traditionally First Nations community.

For queer agrarians, farming serves as an exercise and enterprise that allows them to navigate agrarian livelihoods, rural spaces and places, and queer sexuality in surprising ways. As noted earlier in this work, the concept of the ecotone provides a useful theoretical and thematic framework for discussing the imaginary of queer farming. In describing such liminal spaces, such transitional areas, we find an analogy for the complex lives of queer farmers. These are lives often defined by transition, existence between binary / oppositional identities, and identities and lived lives described by more than one individual as “grey areas.” For queer individuals, including farmers (and indeed, for agricultural activities that we might consider to queer

farming), liminal spaces and margins, overlaps, and transitions are frequently defining characteristics of their lives. The queer farmers interviewed for this study carried over this ecotonal imaginary into their own agrarian values and practices.

4.5 Agroecology as Lived Queer Practice

We have fought for inclusion – for the right to be variant, and be different in the ways the we dress and behave. I think that respect for biodiversity is a queer value. I think we as a community see the damage of uniformity – I think we as a people push back against monocultures. I think we are truly the natural allies of biodiversity. Casey

Just as ecotones provide a fitting ecological foundation for a new queer theoretical model that re-centers queer identity within nature, agroecological practice provides a useful lens to describe not only the ways in which queer individuals farm, but also the ways in which, as farmers, they orient their lives in concert with the greater ecosystems that they themselves both exist within and exert their presence upon (as agrarians). As noted previously, agroecology, like queer sexuality, also resists easy classification and schema. Organic agriculture has a clear nomenclature in both scientific and popular sectors, and indeed these terms frequently align in both science and popular culture. The layperson may describe organic agriculture as “farming without pesticides,” and most North American organic standards (especially those put in place by municipal, provincial, or federal governing bodies) would agree. Other forms of alternative agriculture, however, resist both easy scientific and popular definition. Agroecology presents a particular challenge, as it may represent both “super organic” agricultural production (as when the promotion of biodiversity is included in an organic farming plan) or its diametrical opposite,

non-organic farming (as when a vintner, presented with limited inputs, selects a traditional pesticide to better preserve overall soil health and biodiversity). Originating in the 1930s, agroecology generally describes the agricultural practice of integrating environmental and / or ecological concepts to farming methods. For this paper, I use Dalgaard, Hutchings, and Porter's (2003) definition of agroecology as "the study of the interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment within agricultural systems" (p. 39). It is important to note that in using this definition, I do not refer solely to academic study, but also to the careful analysis and study conducted by farmers themselves.

Agroecology in practice emphasizes all or some of the following established agricultural principles: networks, cycles, the use of solar energy, partnerships, diversity, and dynamic balance. According to the authors cited above, when applied to agricultural practice, there must be five additional practical principles of agroecology: enhanced recycling of soil inputs and outputs, development of favourable soil conditions through management of organic matter, microclimate adaptation as a way to ameliorate losses associated with natural inputs (light, water, air), species diversification, and enhanced biological intersections and synergies among farm components. Tellingly, as noted in briefly in the description of the differences between organic farming and agroecological methods, there is no inherent principle, value, or practical application in agroecological practice that outright prohibits the application, use, or benefit from non-organic agricultural inputs.

For some of the farmers interviewed, agroecology is an agrarian practice that allows them to connect both queer identity and farming practice. For Casey, this means honouring the variance she has fought for in her own life and respecting it in the animals, crops, and lands she

tends to as a farmer. Having pushed back against the defining role of heteronormativity and patriarchal power systems in her own life, Casey actively seeks to work against equivalent monocultures and binary power structures in her farming practice:

I think queer people tend to be sensitive about the egalitarian nature of nature and relationships. I do think there are common values that we as queer people share in regards to respect and the land – cleaner, kinder, ways of farming ... of raising things ... no separateness, no deprivations. The idea that everything has rights! Like, let's let this potato plant live through to flowering! Queer rights are really connected with the rights of the natural world, I think – it's so much how we are part of the world. There are certain freedoms I think we all recognize- the freedom of an animal to be an animal just as they are, just as we should have the freedom to be queer.

Through the utilization of agroecological principles and farming methods that prioritize the development of symbiotic networks amongst inputs, the privileging of diversity and dynamic balance in farming, and the role of partnerships, Casey identifies the ways in which agroecology provides opportunities for the queer farmer to create queer connections that emphasize (somewhat) queer cultural values of collective efficacy, the refutation of normativity (both hetero and homo), and alliance with greater social justice movements (here, animal rights).

Casey elaborates on specific agroecological practices and the complex relationships queer farmers have with agroecological principles, such as balance, the promotion of biodiversity, and enhanced biological intersection. To Casey, developing rich tapestries of texture and color matter in plant and site selection, as they trouble monocultural farming in ways no less important than

planting a diversity of crops. Companion planting, for example, may promote the health of native pollinators, but for Casey it is also a way to develop “diversity upon diversity” in farming:

Oh yes, absolutely! Companion planting, encouraging diversity upon diversity on my farm – not just “carrots” and “kale,” but different kinds of both! Planting for color, and texture – really, really mixing things up as far away from a monoculture as I possibly can. I try to take care of things. I take care of the worms. I think biodiversity could even be just within your garden – the sunny, steep part of my garden is its own unique piece, just like the wet shaded piece is – and I want both of them to just be what they are. I don’t want the whole farm to be like the dry, hot space. And I think that’s my own vision of biodiversity.

Jamie neatly sums up the relationship between Casey’s queer polycultures of the self and queer polycultures of agriculture by describing this relationship as simply “valuing diversity in yourself and your community, and valuing diversity of agricultural practices and crops.” Jack sums up this relationship even more concisely as the ability of queer individuals to recognize “the value of things that don’t look valuable.” Casey, Jamie, and Jack imply that if a queer farmer does not value and promote diversity in their farming practices, then they may not value diversity in their own queer self and greater community.

John describes this relationship as the “realization” that he and his husband had found in the most unlikely of places: a rural, remote community that has provided them an opportunity to live fully as both queer men and agroecological farmers in what his husband Stuart calls a

“balanced space.” This is a space that mirrors the agroecological value of dynamic balance not only in farming practice, but also in daily queer life. John describes how:

We came here, and saw not just farmers, but gay farmers – that realization that we needed a community that we can totally be ourselves in was essential. And not just gay – but people who took food seriously, and organics, and the environment.

In their like-minded community, the couple has found that they are no longer outliers in either their queer sexuality or farming practices. What may seem radically different elsewhere is instead a greater community promotion of biodiversity as a queer value. Stuart describes how:

Every single gay farmer we know is really interested in biodiversity; I mean, obviously a lot of straight farmers are too, but even more so the gay community. We always do it first, it seems (laughs). We’re always the leaders. It’s time for the rest of the world to figure that out!

Malcolm found echoes of Stuart and John’s recognition of the role of community in agroecology not in a rural or remote area, but in Metro Vancouver, where he owns and operates a small CSA. For Malcolm, the relationship between queer farmers and organic and agroecological farming methods results partly from a refutation of the “me first” farming ethos of conventional farming and its associated “boy’s club” patriarchal values. It also results from recognition of just how hard it is to be a successful small shareholder farmer today. Without a supportive queer farming community, Malcolm seems to question whether he could, as a single gay man and farm owner, be successful. This support from his queer community helps him to adopt agroecological principles. Indeed, there is a positive feedback loop of agrarian practice, wherein queer farmers

are more open to “alternative ways of doing everything,” and to Malcolm this includes support, collective efficacy, and resource and knowledge sharing that is less common in conventional agriculture. Similarly, the organic movement is also open to new ways of doing things (in this case farming methods) and thus may be more open to queer sexuality and queer farmers. As such, new queer farmers may be more likely to learn agroecological farming methods from both queer and non-queer farming mentors, because of those respective communities’ reciprocal openness to *both* queerness and agroecology. In Malcolm’s telling:

The only queer farmers I know would fall in the organic category, so I would say yes – but also people who are more open to organics are more open and interested in alternative ways of doing everything – so the organic movement just makes it more accepting for queer farmers just getting started – it’s more accepting, more welcoming – the conventional industry is much more of a macho, boy’s club – I mean that’s a stereotype, but it’s just so much less welcoming. And the challenges of farming- mentally, emotionally, financially – you have to have a community that accepts who you are – and the queer community is so much more open to emotion, and recognizing who you are and how you feel – and I think those attitudes really make our community more open to organic farming.

Morgan also found this within her own community, which is a smaller, much more rural (and traditionally agrarian) community on Vancouver Island. The questioning engendered by agroecological farming practices in turn shapes the queer community Morgan live in, which echoes Casey’s earlier linkage between agroecological farming methods and greater social justice movements; this is also the counterpart to what Randal describes as queer’s unique

capacity to shape alternative agricultural practices like agroecology and permaculture. Morgan's farming practice, then, while rooted in strict adherence to organic and agroecological methods (they host a certified WWOOF site), creates ripple effects that go far beyond the minimizing negative ecological impacts by promoting and practicing farming in accordance with the principles of agroecology:

I'm not an expert, but the people who I know who are queer and involved in agriculture are all practicing certified organic organization, or more ecological based ways of farming. I think people share my experience of being queer, and that kind of analysis – of questioning, of looking at things differently, shapes your farming and food. Food justice, for example – you're looking at it from a lens of patriarchal privilege, and white privilege, and how that shapes society.

Morgan and Randal came to value this constant intersectional critical analysis not through work in urban food justice, but in the simple acts of agroecological production: of “soil conservation. Minimizing off farm inputs that aren't from local sources ... especially trying to minimize mined minerals. Water is a big issue – creative water harvesting is a big deal. Being really cognizant of my activities and the impacts on ground water.” Agroecology and permaculture then are not only shaped in practical ways by queer farmers (as in through the development of specific farming practices), but also in more intangible, innovative ways, such as the linking of food accessibility, food system racism, and patriarchal privilege to non-agroecological farming practices, for example.

Tanner, while sharing many other participants' distrust of monocultural systems and also the other farmer's valuing of agroecological principles, nonetheless applies these principles in ways that may surprise those readers who associate agroecological practice with the strict organic practices espoused by some of the practitioners and "back to the land" narratives created most prominently by early environmental writers including Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson. For Tanner, popular culture adoption of "easy" green practices is no less inherently insidious than the practices espoused by industrial or conventional agricultural producers. Tanner acknowledges that marketing green viticultural practices is "an attractive thing for any winery to do," but he identifies his family winery as practicing "thoughtful farming" through the deliberate exclusion of strict adherence to any one regimen or practice. If Tanner disapproves of those "guys [who] go out, they spray whatever is recommended, or whenever, they just follow a chart," he also neither "farms by numbers" when it comes to organic practices. He thus pushes back against what he sarcastically calls the "nobility of organic farming." For Tanner, agrarians should be no less suspicious of the dictates of organic farming than they should the dictates of conventional or industrial agriculture:

There's a sanctimoniousness to that type of thing. It's not necessarily better! And that comes back to my scepticism of the status quo – if it becomes part of mainstream culture, I become suspicious In a vineyard, because it's a perennial crop, it's an ecosystem. Anytime you go for a broad spectrum solution, you've risked creating a very sterile environment, you're risking creating a monoculture that puts you at risk for having everything wiped out – even if you're using organic methods. In viticulture, creating a biodynamic environment is hugely important – microbes in the soil, or even things that

are growing that shouldn't be there; but they're not harming things! We've had random squash flowers growing, or sunflowers, and our reaction was maybe to first tear them out, and then it was sort of like "why – it's not hurting anything"! You can have all these things in the vineyard, and if there only in one small section, why would you go through the entire vineyard and spray – it could just create a whole other host of problems!

It is perhaps not surprising that agroecology seems such a natural fit for Tanner and many of the study participants. By emphasizing farming practices rooted in balance, thoughtful process, and reciprocity and symbiosis, agroecology provides a valuable starting point to "farm differently" that mirrors the difference the queer farmers explicitly identified as intrinsic to many areas of their life, from gender expression, to location of residence, to the ways they navigate space and place as queer-identified individuals.

4.6 Dialogic Farming and Queer Farmers

For queer farmers, agroecology may be conceptualized as the practical application of difference to daily life. Thus, agricultural practice and farming methods are the external indicators of difference, but there are also internal demonstrators of difference rooted in the ways that identity is constructed among the self, as farmer, and that which is farmed.

Malcolm, an urban farmer and CSA owner in Vancouver, identified the value of diversity broadly within the queer community as a starting point for dialogic farming. Sexual diversity in the community, for example, fosters an acceptance of diversity of perspectives:

I mean, we may have our divisions, but we look at things like “we are a diverse group of people. And that diversity is essential to us” and I really think that we then turn around and look at other things like farming, and it encourages us to think about things like farming in a really different way. We need to support ourselves! We need to maintain our diversity. The uniqueness – the individuality. We cannot rely on others to do that for us. And apply that thought to agriculture – to that focus on monocultures. Our values are so in line with battling to keep diversity in farming. We need to support all different kinds of farming, and produce, just like we support our community! And of course it’s not easy – but we should recognize as a community the value that that work entails! We know how to deal with hardship! So why are we afraid to take on that challenge?

Caleb, as both an urban farmer and farming educator, spoke of the need for “middle ways” of farming, of the importance to “meet people where they are” as a way to break down barriers not only between farmers, but greater community. Casey echoed Caleb, when she spoke of the ways that queer farmers, through agroecological and other farming methods, are “farming in all these beautiful ways” that “really break down these barriers” between urban and rural individuals and communities, including queer ones. As a new farmer, Sean is part of what is likely the first generation of farmers who are learning how to farm from queer farmers who have come before them. For Sean, the farming methods that he has learned from his queer elders include those in line with agroecology and make sense in context of being part of a community in which dialogue is an essential component of queer identity:

From what I have seen, the queer community seems really attracted to new models of sustainability – biodynamic farming, permaculture, organic, etc. and I think that’s

because as queer individuals we have had to questions ourselves, themselves, and life ... and we are already use to asking tough questions about life, so it's easy to extend those questions into things like farming methods.

Like Sean, Nicole is part of a generation of farmers that is coming out as queer and coming to farming simultaneously, as mutually reinforcing indicators of difference. Nicole “came out as both a farmer and a queer person at the same time” and describes this as shaping who she is in profound ways; she describes her situation as “pushing boundaries in general” and “making all these profound changes all at once.” Whereas some participants may have returned to farming later in life, for Nicole and many of the participants, farming is but one aspect of deliberate choice to reorient and realign not only what it means to be queer, but also what it means to live life in the twenty-first century.

Randal, one of the older generation of queer farmers who have paved the way for younger queer farmers on British Columbia's Gulf Islands, describes the ways that dialogue between farming methods and queer identity has developed out of histories of difference:

We could use organic in a holistic way – not just the way that we grew food, but the way we became queer. Really, what covers all of it is our sense of queer politics – that framework, it was informed by community models – our queer sensibility was about doing things differently, including growing food – we had an idea to do things differently from the get go as part of our queer identity.

For Randal then, moving to a rural community and farming is not, as more metronormative queer narratives might suggest, a step back into the closet, but rather a way to “become queer” in new

ways, just as being queer was an opportunity to grow food differently. As an HIV positive individual who came of age during the worst of the HIV & AIDS epidemic, returning to “the land” as a farmer was a way to help save himself when nobody else would:

I mean, what is people’s relationships to land? My health, my vitality, is really wrapped up in the idea of land stewardship, and how I relate to land. And even people in the city might have to confront that – it’s about roots. We have established queer roots for ourselves, and for others. We can name at least 15 people who have moved here because of us – I am not shy to say we have actively recruited individuals to come here.

Vancouver is a transient, rootless society – and that is not healthy. We were so at the whim of a system that was supposed to help us – this neo-liberal, consumer based model that was supposed to help, it did nothing to help us. We came here, and we took it upon ourselves to educate, and to get educated. I did not even start reading about queer history until we came to Salt Spring. I just took it for granted ... We moved as soon as the meds came out, and we thought we might live. We got the fuck out.

While many may associate farming, rurality and agrarian values with close-minded, politically conservative individuals and communities, interview participants voiced the opposite: their queerness is not an obstacle, but rather a dialogic entry point to farming, rurality, and agrarian values. In turn, farming provides them an opportunity to subvert both heteronormative and homonormative values around both queer identity and ecological sustainability.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

My queerness is the opportunity to wipe the slate clean, and say – “here we are, this the land, and what will we create?” and that creates more questions than answer...I think queer people are the change makers- we look around the corners. For some people, straight people included, we have this kind of mysticism- people look to our community for what’s important. For centuries, they looked to us for culture, and art – and for me, that our community is looking to us for food, and sustainability, that’s what’s maybe most profound. Micah

There is a question that I quickly became used to hearing: “Why queer farming?” Throughout my research, coding, and writing I heard it posed often, and often heard it more than I liked. At times I would feel defensive about it, as if I was being asked to justify why both the contributions of queer farmers and my contribution to food system scholarship were of any value. Over time, however, I came to view this question differently. First, the fact that most people (including members of the queer community) do not inherently understand the value or contributions of queer farmers to farming and food production speaks loudly to my research, to themes of visibility and invisibility, power, and institutionalized homophobia, sexism, and transphobia. Second, though, whether intending to or not, the question “why queer farming?” also speaks to the need to recognize the *queering* of farming – that is to say, the need to adopt new, “queer” ways of growing food, of being on land and of participating in the essential work of feeding ourselves, our communities, and our planet.

To be certain, I did not begin my doctoral studies expecting to study queer farmers and farming. Nor did I anticipate spending several summers as a farmer in Metro Vancouver, participating in some of the local farming for which Vancouver has become semi-famous. As someone who grew up in a farming family, when I left rural Montana for college, I assumed I had left farming behind. While my Master's research was devoted to urban agriculture, I conducted it from a distinctly academic distance. In very real ways, both this research and my return to farming grew out of my status as an international student: under the conditions of my study permit, I was prohibited from seeking paid employment and thus volunteered to help a friend with their newly founded community-supported agriculture business in Richmond, BC.

It was a fantastic summer to farm. The weather avoided the drought conditions that can typify Vancouver summers and was temperate and punctuated by occasional rainy days. In many ways, that summer served as my awakening to the realities of non-industrialized food production. On the farm where I grew up, inputs like pesticides and herbicides were just a fact of life and certainly not anything for concern. Summer days were spent playing in crop-dusted fields and swimming in irrigation ditches filled with runoff from the fields. Crops were planted, grown, and harvested with a variety of machines. There was a distance between the producer and the produce. Farming on the "incubator farm" (as it was called by the non-profit that administered the land for the City of Richmond, BC) could not have been more different. While it likely comes as no surprise to most people that organic farmers do not use most pesticides and herbicides, what this means in terms of actually *growing food* is far less obvious, or at least it was to me. Even after completing a Master's thesis devoted assessing risks, benefits, and best practices of urban agriculture, I assumed that organic agriculture was mostly a case of utilizing

different inputs: in my understanding, organic producers simply utilized organic herbicides and pesticides. Imagine my surprise when I found myself on my hands and knees, spending entire afternoons picking cutworms off of kale plants by hand. In organic and agroecological farming, *I* (that is, my labour) was the alternative input! I was pesticide, herbicide, and harvester rolled into one.

If summers spent on small-shareholder organic farms made me aware of ways of farming that closed the distance between producer and product in very tangible ways, this farming also changed my perceptions of what it meant to be “a farmer.” Growing up, the farming I saw in my family and community was largely a solitary activity. Mostly men (and occasionally my mother and other farm wives) spent long hours in near-total isolation. To farm was to sit in a small cabin on a combine, or a tiller, or a bailer, or any number of machines that have made industrial-scale agriculture possible. Here too, I learned how different farming could be. If the farming of my youth was typified by solitude and isolation, this farming was typified by community and collaboration. In Vancouver, our “farm family” would meet between 6:00 and 7:00am and then bike an hour from downtown Vancouver to the farm plot on the banks of the Fraser River. Our days were spent quite literally shoulder to shoulder, usually talking about food policy, social justice, and queer politics to help pass the time as we engaged in the work of agroecology. This was farming as dialogue, as dialogue between land and producer and between self and others.

If this type of farming differed in both method and activity, if this farming was rooted in conversation and collaboration, then it was also marked by one additional delineating feature that was every bit as much a marker of difference – indeed, perhaps its *key* marker of difference. Growing up, the farmers in my family and community were men and, inasmuch as I can

accurately recollect, heterosexual ones. The “family farm” is a stereotype rooted in demographic reality. While my family was large even by farming measures (eleven children), most of the farm kids I grew up with also came from large families. I always understood that farmers had large families at least in part to guarantee a steady labour force; mine was a childhood in which people learned to drive farm trucks when they were eight or nine years old; they also skipped school to stay up all night during the height of lambing season. In farm families like mine, gender always played a defining role. Men were farmers, and women were farm wives. Make no mistake, both lived lives typified by long hours, thankless work, and uncertainty. Boom and bust informed both the lives of women and men. So, here too was my return to farming an awakening. By contrast, the farm manager my first season in Richmond, BC was a self-identified genderqueer trans man who also occasionally identified sexually as lesbian and who preferred the use of “they, them, theirs” pronouns. My other coworkers on the farm were all women, both bisexual and straight, and the farmer of the incubator plot next to ours identified as a gay man. On this farm, gender too played a role, if only inasmuch as serving as a reminder of just how very *different* these farmers were from my own past experience.

Against this backdrop, I studied agriculture and was specifically interested in the role that “informal” (briefly, unlicensed and unregulated) agriculture played in local food systems, individual and community empowerment, and self-efficacy. In hindsight, the process of connecting the dots between my work as a farmer, and my work as a student, took far longer than one might have expected. I largely ignored what is now obvious: I was a queer farmer working with other queer farmers, farming in ways that are “queer” when compared to mainstream and industrial agriculture methods.

So let me ask that question again: Why queer farming? Nearing the completion of my research, what now strikes me most about it is how easily the answers flow when I am asked. First and foremost, it is ethical and just to work to ensure that diverse voices and perspectives in farming are heard. Vancouver's food justice ideals have helped earn the city a reputation as a global leader in sustainable agriculture, and expanding food justice to consider the roles and perspectives of queer farmers, including women, the urban poor, and racialized communities, is simply a matter of honouring the work and contributions of the many queer individuals working to seek sustainable solutions to challenges facing food systems in Canada's third largest city. Second, and related, it is important to acknowledge that the perspectives and practices of queer farmers are unique, insomuch as gender and sexuality provide a critical lens through which queer individuals orient themselves in this world, including agriculture. Third, and perhaps most importantly, in an era in which global food systems are increasingly defined by the intersections of climate change and rapid demographic shifts, it is essential to consider the contributions of many diverse communities and agricultural producers, including queer ones. It is equally essential in this context to consider altogether new or diverse methods of agriculture and food production, including what we might call queer ones.

“Queer farming” is our entry point to a more just food system, one which honours diverse and different communities, practices, and perspectives. It is simultaneously a call to action in an age in which we need “all hands on deck” to provide solutions to an ever-increasing number of challenges in feeding the world's peoples, and especially to increasing access to healthy foods that are grown sustainably and in localized systems that can better absorb the disruptions of increasingly decentralized and volatile food and agricultural commodity markets. Queer farming

is the acknowledgment that alternatives do exist: we do not need to ceaselessly toil to modify or “fix” the problems of mainstream and industrialized agriculture, to seek solutions within these systems to the very problems that these systems present, when altogether new models and perspectives exist. Right here, just before our eyes.

This thesis seeks to illustrate the complex ways that queer sexuality and identity shape agricultural practice and relationships with ecology and simultaneously how agricultural practice and ecology shape queer sexuality and identity. By exploring critical ecological reciprocity and the development of alternative agricultural and ecological sustainability imaginaries in queer farmers, we can see the ways in which farming shapes these individuals in relation to both their own queer identities and to their place(s) within greater queer communities and culture and even society more broadly. Through sharing their knowledge and understanding, new discourses and ways of being as both agricultural producers and queer individuals emerge.

The themes, narratives, and imaginaries expressed by participants simultaneously exist in relation to, emerge from, and react against the discourses of “traditional” agriculture, including the methods and characteristics of “the farmer,” and the spaces and places where such farming occurs. These queer farming identities find fertile ground in areas of opposition and manage to create new forms of capital: they are queer bodies in rural spaces, who trouble the “family farm”; they are queer women who advocate for non-reproductive regeneration and the development of alternative markers of success in the form of new agricultural and ecological capital. The fact of queer farming identities indicates that agrarian identity is not fixed and suggests the potential to develop new, non-binary forms of farming identity. Perhaps most importantly, for the farmers interviewed, agrarian practice is an “active” process of choice, collaboration, and communication

with nature, the self and community. Against a backdrop of an agricultural industry and ecological world in crisis, queer farmers provide evidence that change is possible and that new farming futures may be imagined.

In an era in which many of the historical defining characteristics of queer life (discrimination, HIV, urban migration) and farming life (industrialization, intensive farming methods, ever-increasing yields) have changed significantly, queer farmers provide new promise for queer individuals, farmers, and farming. The gift of queer farming is the ability to envision food sustainability in new ways, by envisioning farming and farmers in new ways, and to ask, as the study participant Malcolm does, “what will we create?” In my work documenting queer farming in British Columbia, I have demonstrated the ways that queer farmers are doing just that: they are creating new ways of farming, of being on land, of living queer lives in new ways and, in doing so, they are providing critical new lenses into both agrarian livelihoods and ecological sustainability.

This study considered the critical reflexivity between ecological values, agricultural production principles and practices, and self-identification and expression as queer individuals. Specifically, this study presupposed that queer individuals would identify distinct links between ecology, queer sexual identity, and agricultural production principles and practices within a variety of different agricultural typologies (i.e. community gardens and vineyards alike) and social / geographic context (i.e. rural and urban alike). In all these areas, my hypothesis was confirmed to a greater degree than I ever might have hoped.

As this work of better understanding the queering of agriculture, and indeed of queering green politics and greening queer politics continues, there remain essential questions to ask and future areas of inquiry to study. First and foremost, we should seek to better understand the areas of commonality, liminality, porosity and even difference between agriculture and ecological values among queer individuals and other historically marginalized groups and populations. In her important foundational study “Black, White, and Green: A Study of Urban Farmers Markets” (2008), Alison Hope Alkon identified the ways that “As actors pursue ecological integrity and social justice through the green economy, they transform these goals from social movement priorities to everyday discourses and practices of production and consumption” (134). The StatsCanada 2016 Census of Agriculture (<https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/ca2016>) presented several intriguing developments in Canadian farming related to the findings of this study and farming practice, production and consumption. First, small farms across Canada present a complex picture. Total farms in British Columbia have decreased overall, yet urban farms within Vancouver have increased. Especially telling, the total number of hectares farmed in Vancouver have increased almost 200% since 2011. The future of farming in BC’s largest population center isn’t only increasingly urban – it is also more organic, younger (median age has decreased by four years) and female (a 33% increase since 2011) (Saltman, 2018). This indicates that future research should consider the intersection of factors shaping queer farming- including affordability for all queer farmers, but especially younger farmers and women; the role of property values in displacement of urban farms, and the role of organic and agroecological farming methods in the development of sustainable economic farming livelihoods.

This work largely grew out of my own experiences as a queer farmer in Vancouver, and specifically, the important role I felt queer farmers were playing in sustainable agriculture efforts throughout the city, across the Lower Mainland, and in British Columbia as a whole. Thus, an important next step in this research is to better understand how queer farming is transforming not only agricultural practices, but also playing a part in transitioning agricultural markets and commodities as well. It is also crucially important to address, in future research, the roles and contributions of queer individuals in larger scale farms and ranches, including the perspectives and practices of those who practice or identify with industrialized food systems. Because this study utilized snowball sampling, to a certain degree “like attracted like” and large-scale farmers and ranchers were neither referred nor represented within the sample. Similarly, future scholarship should focus on areas not contained within this study, both within British Columbia, as well as other areas throughout Canada, North America, and the world.

As noted in Alkon, the eminent food justice scholar Patricia Allen identifies the ways in which the development of “socially just and environmentally sound agrifood system[s] must include representatives of all the groups who participate in the agrifood system. This will require reaching beyond the class and color configurations of the traditional farm and environmental constituencies” (Alkon, p. 133; Allen, 2004, p. 211) Allen’s directive presents additional notable areas of inquiry into the intersection of queer identity and agricultural and ecological values and practices. We must better understand, within the context of social justice in agriculture and food systems, the relationships (and lack thereof) between queerness, class, race, education, and other intersectional identities.

This work is largely devoted to a single entry point (the queer) into a better understanding of the role identity plays in ecological values and perspectives and agricultural practices. However, this work also recognizes the crucial need to better understand the multiplicities within the queer, including in identity, and to better understand common themes and critical differences within actors. In 1982, some nine years before Kimberlé Krenshaw presented the scholarly conceptualization of intersectionality, Audre Lorde famously reflected that “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.” (2003, p. 138). An additional future area of inquiry into queer farming specifically and agricultural and ecological studies generally, then, is to better understand and articulate the role of intersectionality in the development and framing of ecological values and perspectives, agricultural practice, and especially, the daily lives of queer individuals in relation to both. It is the hope of this author that this work presents a starting point for new works devoted to more comprehensive inquiries into this topic- to understand the areas of real difference between queer men, women, and genderqueer / gender non-binary individuals; between white queer individuals and queer and trans people of color (QTPOC) and their communities; between the real privilege demonstrated in the lives of some participants and the abject poverty demonstrated in the lives of others.

Additionally, while this study was centered upon queer individuals, and their role, practices, and perspective in agriculture and ecology, it also recognizes the need to continue decenter queer ecological theory from solely human actors. We need to continue to study and better understand animals, Timothy Morton’s “strange strangers,” and how in doing so we can recognize how “ecological interdependence multiplies differences everywhere” (2010, p. 277). We might also further engage ecological thought within Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands work in

critical plant studies, and in doing so center the queer in the ways that plants and plantings can represent “queering natural space...creating a site of ‘holy’ queerness for the dispossessed whose history is written out of conservative national heritage-natures, and especially for those whose erotic possibilities are eradicated by homophobia and surveillance” (2013, p. 350).

Finally, this study focused on queer farmers living now. Even in the stories they shared, there emerged the previously hidden histories of those who came before – of Phyllis Berries, who today might consider herself trans; or the elderly queer “homesteader” who farmed for decades on a southern Gulf Island and was too ill to participate in an interview with me, and who passed away shortly thereafter. Or of my great Uncle Whitey, whose own story and history are now lost to time. May future research work to uncover and share these stories, in order to retell and recover a more comprehensive story of queerness, and queer contributions to agriculture, before it is too late and the stories of countless queer men, women, and all those in between are lost forever. A related line of inquiry is to continue, and encourage, the identification and interrogation of intersections of queer identity and ecology in art; to further reclaim queer ecology from Stephen Guy-Bray, Vin Nardizzi, and Will Stockton’s (2016) “tyranny of historicism”; and in so doing “refuse to let our backwards gaze be restricted either by the fetishizing of historical accuracy or the needs of contemporary gays and lesbians – needs that in any case too often been assumed to be monolithic and easily summarized” (p. 2). In looking to queer our present and future ecologies, let us not forget to queer our past ones.

Drawing from several intellectual lineages, from queer theory to feminist political ecology, this study sought to explore the ways in which agriculture might be transformed within a queer ecological context. Rooted in the investigator’s belief that understandings of agriculture

and ecology are shaped and impacted by gender and sexuality even as understandings of gender and sexuality are shaped and impacted by practices and perceptions within agriculture and ecology, this work disrupts heteronormative assumptions of both gender and sexuality and agriculture and ecology. It presupposes that queer sexualities can provide lenses through which farmers are not only creating new agricultural practices, but new queer identities through the engagement of queer sexualities with agricultural practices and production.

This study proposed that intersections of agricultural production, gender, and queer sexuality related to specific, unique agricultural practices and production structures (i.e. farm and garden typology) in British Columbia. Within this context, “gender” was used only to differentiate between four queer constructs that are shaped by gender: 1) queer women; 2) queer trans men and women; 3) queer gender non-conforming / gender queer individuals; and 4) queer men.

Through this interrogation, discussion and analysis of the role gender and queer sexuality played within a variety of different agricultural settings and contexts, and across a diverse geographic catchment area, it was hypothesized that is possible to identify the complex mechanisms through which agricultural practices (and associated outputs) inform and are informed by gender and sexuality. Similarly, it was also hypothesized that it is possible to identify the complex mechanisms through which gender and queer sexuality are informed by agriculture. Through a thoughtful examination of the range of production practices impacted by the intersections of sexual identity and agriculture, my findings illustrate new understandings of queer sexuality, agriculture, and place. It is my sincere hope that these findings transform not only farming, through the identification of new perspectives, practices, innovations, and

understandings of agricultural and ecological sustainability, but also the daily lives of queer individuals- farmer and non-farmer alike.

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Appendix A Study Framework

1. Survey questions are developed by Joshua Edward
2. Survey questions are reviewed by Eduardo Jovel and Art Bomke and edited as needed.
3. Survey is pilot-tested on a sample of representative participants previously known to graduate student researcher. All consent and interview protocols will be applied to pilot-testing.
4. Individuals and /or organizations are contacted based on meeting inclusion criteria included in Section 5.4 of University of British Columbia Human Ethics Application H14-01285.
5. Individuals and / or organizations are contacted via phone: the study (and affiliated paper) is explained, and the individual and / or organization is asked if (if interested) to identify an agency / organization representative to invite to participation via hard-copy letter. Invitations are then made via email.
6. Follow-up phone calls are made to individuals and / or organizations and selected representatives to assess interest in participating one week after mailing of hard-copy invitations. During follow-up phone call, a date is identified for a preliminary meeting to review study protocol and consent.
7. Interview data is collected continuously and is stored securely on an external hard drive in Eduardo Jovel's office at UBC Vancouver.
9. Data is analyzed upon completion of the interview process, with results coded by the student researcher. Initial results are to be used in a doctoral dissertation to be submitted to the University of British Columbia in January, 2018.
11. Results may be used in future academic publications and conference proceedings, and in masters and doctoral theses by the graduate student researcher and by Principal Investigator Eduardo Jovel

Appendix B Recruitment Criteria and Strategy

Inclusion Criteria:

Potential study participants have been identified based upon meeting the selection criteria of: self-identification as an LGBTIQ individual, and current or past involvement / employment in agricultural production in either commercial, community / non-profit, and / or residential spaces. Involvement is defined as participating as either a paid employee or as a volunteer / intern for any of the initiative outlined above. Participation by minors in interviews and research will not be allowed.

Exclusion Criteria:

Individuals neither self-identifying as an LGBTIQ individual nor affiliated in paid or unpaid capacities with the organizations and initiatives included in the agricultural production framework as outlined in inclusion criteria above will be excluded from the research. As noted above, minors are also excluded from participation.

Recruitment Strategy:

Organizations and initiatives outlined as meeting inclusion criteria will be identified through collaboration with the Rainbow Chard Collective, an advocacy organization serving LGBTIQ farmers throughout British Columbia. The graduate student researcher has a prior professional relationship with this prospective participant through his work as a board member of the Vancouver Urban Farming Society, and the contact information for this organizations is publicly available on their website. The selected organization will be contacted via telephone or email by

the graduate student researcher directly, and asked if they would be interested in participating as an outreach partner, at which point a formal, written invitation will be extended to all individual members, member organizations, and initiatives via email to the individuals identified by the organization as selected representatives. One week after invitation letters are distributed, the graduate student researcher will follow-up with organizations and selected representatives to schedule a meeting to review the study aims, objectives and research questions, and to review the consent form and explain informed consent to all potential participants. Upon completion of the consent form and review of informed consent, interviews and field observations will be scheduled at the earliest convenience to the organization and selected representative. Upon completion of the interview, subject participants will be asked to extend a letter of invitation and contact information for other individuals who fit the selection criteria and may be interested in participating (i.e. “snowball sampling”). Additional subjects recruited through referral and snowball sampling will be contacted in accordance with the recruitment methods and timeline as outlined above.

Appendix C Invitation Letter

Invitation to Participate

Study Title:

Uncommon Grounds: LGBTIQ Individuals, Agriculture and Ecologies of Social Difference

Purpose and Introduction:

My name is Joshua Edward, and I am a graduate student researcher and doctoral candidate from the Faculty of Land and Food Systems at the University of British Columbia. I am currently conducting a study which aims to identify and assess the unique multifunctional contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer individuals to agriculture production in British Columbia. Through this analysis of the contributions of LGBTIQ individuals and communities to agriculture, I hope to broaden the discussion of who farms what, where, how, and why. As one component of this doctoral project, an interview-based survey and assessment tool has been developed to analyze distinct models of agriculture practiced by LGBTIQ farmers throughout British Columbia. This tool will provide a semi-structured format for interviews with a range of LGBTIQ agriculture stakeholders in British Columbia. What are we asking from you? If you self-identify as an LGBTIQ individual, you can participate in this study by allowing me to interview you on behalf of your farm, organization, or as a member of a private or non-profit farming or community gardening initiative. Specifically, I would like to conduct an in-person interview with you in order to learn about your vision and activities as a farmer; including learning about your specific agricultural production activities. Each interview will take approximately one hour to complete. I would also greatly appreciate the opportunity to tour your site with you in order to learn more about the physical environment in which you work. As an important note, all participants will be kept anonymous unless they specifically choose otherwise as part of the consent process, and participant confidentiality and anonymity has been taken into account at each step of my research design, including the safeguarding of data through encryption. What are the benefits of participating? Participation in this ground-breaking study, the first ever focusing on the unique contributions of LGBTIQ individuals to agricultural production in our province, will help inform a more comprehensive understanding of the agriculture initiatives that are taking place throughout British Columbia, and how concepts of self, gender and sexual identity are positively impacting agricultural production in our province, including increased environmental sustainability, innovation, and sustainable livelihoods for LGBTIQ farmers. By participating, you will also have the opportunity to deepen your connections with British Columbia's robustly growing agriculture network, including other LGBTIQ farmers, agricultural workers and volunteers, and network with organizations and researchers working on related issues. Upon publication, I would be honoured to send a copy of my dissertation that will include highlights your work. Please contact us with any questions or concerns, or to schedule an interview time.

Thank you very much for your time and support!

Primary Contact: Joshua Edward (jbedward@alumni.ubc.ca, 778-986-2924)

Faculty Sponsor: Eduardo Jovel (Eduardo.jovel@ubc.ca, 604-822-3338)

Appendix D Assessment of Risk and Group Vulnerability

The study population sample (agricultural producers throughout British Columbia) is not considered to be members of a vulnerable population. While demographic features including sexual orientation are present in the data to be collected, it's important to note that the emphasis of the research is upon agricultural practices, land tenure and agricultural livelihood, and do not inherently confer any risk beyond those experienced by any agricultural producers in their daily lives. Informed consent will be carefully monitored throughout the research process to ensure that interview / survey participants are clear in their understanding that answering any and all questions, or declining to complete the interview completely is acceptable and a matter and decision of their own free will. After responding to the invitation letter, potential study participants will be contacted, and appropriate consent forms will be reviewed before signing.

As “Uncommon Grounds” represents an asset-based approach to developing new indicators to measure the positive impacts of gender and sexuality on agricultural practices and benefits within the British Columbia, the interview questions should be considered low-sensitivity. Potential risks for completing the interview and observation components of the study are unlikely. The use of semi-structured interviews may create a scenario in which study participants share thoughts, feelings or opinions outside of the scope of the study; in such a case, researchers will be instructed to use appropriate prompts to review the response in context, request verbal permission to use such responses in the study, and reiterate the participants choice in determining responses to be contained in written materials. The interview questions are based upon identifying positive metrics for use in assessing the role of gender and sexuality in agriculture, and as such should not inherently present any risk to participants, as the questions relate to their

everyday experiences as agricultural producers. Additionally, as only individuals who publicly or privately self-identify as LGBTIQ meet selection criteria, risks of labeling or stereotyping to participating study members is minimal (i.e., the graduate student researcher will not identify or label a study participant as LGBTIQ; only the individual participants may choose to do so for themselves). Activities and livelihoods (agricultural production in formal or informal sectors) described throughout this proposal are not in themselves inherently associated with risk or group vulnerability, and as such the associated risk of stereotyping is minimal. In fact, by expanding agricultural research to include and honour the perspective of LGBTIQ individuals, who are so overwhelmingly absent in existing scholarship, this work actively seeks to dismantle, not create, stereotypes about members of the LGBTIQ community by highlighting the unique contributions they have made towards agricultural innovation, diversification in production practices, and agricultural and ecological sustainability.

Finally, while certain demographic features (i.e. sexual orientation) will be collected, individual names and identifying information (job title, name of farm or agricultural production site) will not be collected unless a participant gives informed consent to do so, and all collected data will be anonymized through the use of general, not specific, location names and individual pseudonyms, making study participants unidentifiable. No participant information will be released to the public as part of the study and associated paper without the signed consent of respective participants. Upon completion of data collection, data will not be analyzed to label or identify negative attributes or findings, including within or across sub-populations within the study sample, to prevent the potential for stereotyping across different demographic features present within the sample population.

Appendix E Risks, Benefits, and Impacts on Community

Risks:

Describe what is known about the risks of the proposed research for participants.

There are no known risks associated with the proposed study for participants.

Benefits:

Describe any potential benefits to the participant that could arise from his or her participation in the proposed research.

Participating organizations and selected representatives will be included in a doctoral dissertation highlighting innovative agriculture practices occurring across British Columbia. Organizations and selected representatives may additionally use the study findings and articles for their own agency promotion, including collections of press materials.

There are multiple benefits for research participants. Each participant will contribute to develop a vision for healthy living and sustainability of their communities. They will have an opportunity to share with each other unique and exciting aspects and knowledge of their culture, agricultural practices, and agricultural initiatives, and build personal and community-level supports and networks as LGBTIQ individuals working in agricultural production.

Impacts on Community:

If your research involves an identified group or 'community', outline the likely impacts of the research on the community.

It is hoped that by identifying how gender and sexuality affect the agricultural practices and production throughout British Columbia, a future framework may be developed that can better support agriculture as an ecology of social difference, and provide a strong argument for public

and private support and investment of LGBTIQ farmers and agricultural initiatives. Obtaining Consent

Specify how potential participants will be invited to take part in the study. Include details of where the consent will be obtained and documented, and under what circumstances.

1. Who would approach the participant to obtain consent:

Contact will initially be made by email and/or telephone using publicly listed email or telephone contacts. During the initial contact, an invitation letter including a short description of the study will be provided, and the individual will be asked to provide consent for the interview and field observation on behalf of their organization / agency / personal activity. A follow-up phone call will then be placed (if necessary) and the study description and introduction will be reviewed with the designee. Upon review of the study goals, objectives, and associated publications, the designee will be asked if they would be willing to participate. Upon a verbal confirmation of willingness to participate, the research team will ask the designee to provide a day and time of their convenience to review the consent form, sign the consent form, and complete the interview.

2. Who would inform and take the consent from the participant:

A consent form will be provided to all participants. As the interview questions will be administered in person, the student researcher will request that the study interviewee / participant review the consent form by signing. By signing the consent form, the participant is consenting to participate in the study.

3. What is the relationship of the person obtaining consent to the participant:

The consent will be obtained in person. The researcher team, including the Principal Investigator

and graduate student researcher, will be identified by name with contact information provided on the consent form. Owing to the nature of the agriculture community in British Columbia, some / all members of the research team may be known formally or informally to some / all potential study participants. In the event that a study participant is known by / knows the interviewer, they will be asked if they would prefer to have the interview completed by a member of the research team unknown to them.

4. Time to Decide

How long after being provided with detailed information about the study will the participant have to decide whether or not to participate? Provide your rationale for the amount of time given.

Upon initial telephone contact, the organization / designated representative of the organization will be provided at least one week to review an electronic summary of the study (provided via email) and consent form. Upon one week, as available, study participants will be asked to sign a physical copy of the consent form and complete (or schedule for completion) the study interview. As the semi-structured interview consists of only nine base questions, one week has been identified by the research team as sufficient for review of the study summary, all questions that will be asked during the interview, and the consent form.

Researchers will follow recommendations as outlined in TCPS Art. 2.4 regarding informed consent.

Appendix F Research Questions

1. Self-identification as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or queer (LGBTIQ)

Question: Do you self-identify, either privately or publicly, as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer individual?

2. Self-identification as current or past agricultural producer

Question: Do you have a current or past history within either formal or informal agricultural sector activities? If so, please describe, including whether activity was formal or informal in nature, and whether it is a past or current activity.

3. Impact of gender and sexuality on agricultural practices

Question: Do you recognize a unique role and / or influence of your self-identified gender or sexuality on your agricultural practices? If so, please describe.

Question: What do you perceive to be the relationship between LGBTIQ sexualities, agricultural production in general, and specific typologies of agricultural production and practice(s)?

4. Impact of gender and sexuality on livelihood, location of residence and land tenure security

Question: Do you recognize a unique role and / or influence of your self-identified gender or sexuality on your location of residence (i.e. rural versus urban)? If so, please describe.

Question: Do you recognize a unique role and / or influence of your self-identified gender or sexuality on literal and figurative land tenure (i.e., do you as a self-identified LGBTIQ individual feel supported, both literally and figuratively, as a rightful owner and steward of agricultural production land, even if it is temporary)?

Question: Do you feel recognized and accepted (across the social ecological model) as an LGBTIQ agricultural producer? Please describe.

Question: Do you believe that increased visibility and social acceptance of LGBTIQ agricultural

producers throughout British Columbia (including rural areas and small population centers) would positively or negatively impact location of residence and land tenure security of LGBTIQ agricultural producers?

Question: Do you believe that a lack of individual and community visibility and social acceptance of both LGBTIQ individuals and LGBTIQ agricultural producers specifically within rural areas and small population centers has negatively impacted agricultural production in British Columbia (i.e., are LGBTIQ individuals made to feel unwelcome in traditional agricultural production centers, or within the sector of agricultural production)?

Question: Do you believe that increased visibility and social acceptance of LGBTIQ agricultural producers throughout British Columbia would positively impact the numbers of LGBTIQ individuals working in either formal or informal agricultural production? If so, please describe.

5. Improve agricultural sustainability

Question: Do you aim to improve agricultural sustainability? If so, please describe.

Question: Do you recognize a unique role and / or influence of LGBTIQ sexuality in agricultural sustainability? If so, please describe.

6. LGBTIQ community Engagement

Question: Do you actively involve other LGBTIQ individuals and / or parties in shaping your work, developing a shared vision, goals and/or in writing policy, deciding what foods are grown where and how? If so, please describe.

Question: What strategies are used for LGBTIQ community engagement? Please describe.

7. LGBTIQ community development

Question: Do you aim to promote LGBTIQ community development through agriculture? If so, please describe.

8. Diversification of farming practices

Question: Do you intentionally promote diversification of agricultural production practices? If so, please describe.

Question: If no to the above question, do you believe you currently promote or have promoted (unintentionally) diversification of agricultural production practices?

Question: Do you recognize a unique role and / or influence of LGBTIQ sexuality in the diversification of agricultural production practices? If so, please describe.

9. Promotion or support of ecological biodiversity through specific agricultural production practices

Question: Do you intentionally promote ecological biodiversity in British Columbia through specific agricultural production practices? If so, please describe.

Question: If no to the above question, do you believe you currently promote or have promoted (unintentionally) ecological biodiversity in British Columbia through specific agricultural production practices?

Question: Do you recognize a unique role and / or influence of LGBTIQ sexuality in the promotion or support of increased ecological biodiversity in British Columbia through specific agricultural production practices? If so, please describe.