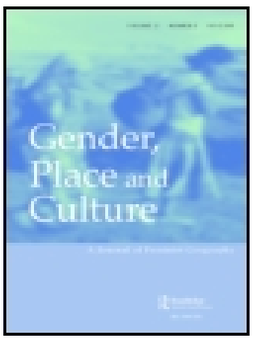

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Becoming 'enchanted' in agro-food spaces: engaging relational frameworks and photo elicitation with farm tour experiences

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ABSTRACT

Ecofeminists maintain that seemingly diverse and naturalized socio-ecological issues are in fact rooted within a particular cultural framework that perpetuates inequality and severs relationships among human and more-than-human communities. This important yet perhaps abstract understanding can be made tangible via examination of the 'conventional' food system, in which human and more-than-human communities are simultaneously otherized, marginalized, and exploited, realities largely hidden in a global industrial food system that disconnects production from consumption and obscures embedded relationships. Yet as consumer awareness rises, more people wish to know and move closer to the sources of their food, fueling community-based agro-food alternatives. When endowed with an ethic of care, such alternatives can be transformative for individuals and communities across scales.

This article situates conventional and alternative agro-food systems within relational frameworks of ecofeminism and care ethics and uses participant-driven photo elicitation (PDPE) to engage with experiences of consumers participating in a community farm tour. Findings suggest that such 'enchanting' experiences can begin to (re)embed food 'products' within contexts of place, people, and process, contributing to a relational consciousness that is central to an ethic of care. Findings also illustrate that PDPE can serve as a valuable window into experiences of reconnection, particularly useful for feminist researchers interested in learning more about enchantment and the transformational potential it holds.

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Introduction

We live in a time of social and ecological crises from local to global scales. Understandings of these crises are often fragmented into separate realms, approaches to address them inappropriately segmented into discrete problems. Ecofeminist scholars argue that these seemingly diverse issues must be understood within a relational framework that acknowledges their shared

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roots within modern cultural assumptions that delink relationships among human and more-than-human communities (Warren 1990). This crucial yet abstract understanding can be made more tangible within examination of the 'conventional' food system, in which human and more-than-human communities across the globe are simultaneously otherized, marginalized, and exploited, collectively contributing to global crises. Yet these realities are largely hidden in a global, industrial, and corporate food system that quite literally disconnects production from consumption; obscures relationships among people, place, and process; and holds grave implications for consciousness and care (Sage 2012).

Yet as consumer awareness rises, increasing numbers of people are seeking to know and move closer to the production of their food, fueling localized agricultural alternatives that hold potential to "reconnect food producers and consumers in a new and direct way, a relationship largely severed in recent years by the dominance of corporate multiple retailers" (Sage 2007, 2). Scholars maintain that when endowed with an ethic of care, such alternatives can be transformative (Kneafsey et al. 2008) for individuals and communities from local to global scales. In order to better understand this potential, agro-food scholars have been called to "examine the ethical, emotional, and reflexive spaces of 'reconnection'" (Kneafsey et al. 2008, 3) such as farmers' markets and community supported agriculture (CSA).

This article situates agro-food disconnection and reconnection within relational frameworks of ecofeminism and care ethics and engages with experiences of visitors participating in an annual community farm tour, an innovative model of producer-consumer reconnection (Johnson, Schnakenberg, and Perdue 2016). Participant-driven photo elicitation (PDPE) interviews with farm tour visitors provide a valuable window into their experiences, answering calls for more studies on the emotional and experiential aspects of agro-food reconnection (e.g. DeLind 2006; Kneafsey et al. 2008; Sumner, Mair, and Nelson 2010). Findings suggest that these 'enchanting' agro-food experiences hold potential to begin to shift cultural perceptions toward a deepened consciousness of relations, a shift that must be made if we are to imagine and move toward alternative futures guided by an ethic of care. Furthermore, findings illustrate that PDPE can serve as a valuable window into experience, emotion, and meaning, of particular value for feminist researchers.

Ecofeminism, agro-food systems, and an ethic of care

Cultural disconnections are at the heart of ecofeminism, which maintains that "(u)nderneath almost every identifiable social problem we share, a powerful way of ordering the world can be detected, one we have inherited from European culture and that alienates consciousness both from

nature and from being" (Griffin 1995, 10). Rather than an essentializing framework only concerning women and nature, as it is sometimes critiqued (e.g. Sargisson 2010), ecofeminism in the sense that this article employs the term uses gender as a lens from which to make visible, examine, and critique foundations of Western culture that shape both human and more-than-human worlds. With roots in the Enlightenment, this cultural foundation can be referred to as modernity; while far from a singular concept, ecofeminists and other critical scholars emphasize central cultural assumptions that delink humans from nature, male from female, reason from emotion, mind from body, white European from 'other,' and other hierarchical binaries of power that perpetuate structures of inequality.

Such binaries veil realities of interconnection and interdependence, perpetuating social and ecological crises evident everywhere in the world today. From an ecofeminist perspective, then, we must understand that our deeply embedded cultural assumptions are flawed, that the "alienation of human society from nature has led to many different kinds of destruction, not the least of which has been the fragmentation of consciousness" (Griffin 1995, 9). For, as Griffin (1995) explained:

> In the Western habit of mind … a forest exists for lumber. Trees for oxygen. A field for grazing. Rocks for minerals. Water for irrigation. Inch by inch the earth is weighted and measured for its uses and in the process the dimensions of the universe are narrowed. Consciousness has been diminished by this disenchantment (57).

This 'disenchantment' is rooted in the perception that division and fragmentation are possible, that the more-than-human world is separate from and inferior to humans, and that particular human 'others' are 'naturally' marginalized alongside it. There is perhaps no better way to examine the interconnections between such environmental and social exploitation than in the industrial food system, in which humans, non-human animals, and the natural world are simultaneously marginalized and exploited.

Today's industrial or 'conventional' agro-food system is rooted in modern structures of inequality and assumptions of human mastery over nature (Mann 1990). While upheld by some as a triumph of science, technology, and 'rationality' that has allowed us to 'feed the world,' from other perspectives our global agro-food system is completely irrational, rapidly deteriorating social and environmental landscapes around the world (Araghi 2001). Chemicals pollute soil, water, air, and bodies. Global expansions of agricultural land contribute to deforestation and climate change (Sage, 2012). Structural agricultural reforms and corporate food systems disrupt local economies, communities, and cultures (Araghi 2001). Tenets of efficiency, scale, and technology force non-human animals into appalling conditions (Jordan and Constance 2008). Global supply chains rely on fossil fuels and exploited human labor (Sage 2012). In this system, food is divorced from

these realities and reduced to abstract product, "a commodity like any other, to be produced at the lowest price and subject to corporate processes" (Sage 2007, 3). Places, processes, and people involved in its production are blurred, censored, and forgotten, propelling the disconnecting, disembedding, and disentwining (Wiskerke 2009) of holistic systems and the relationships that persist within them. Such disenchanting trends hold serious implications for consciousness and care, as disconnection occurs not only in structures and processes, but also in perceptions and imaginaries (Feagan 2007; Kneafsey et al. 2008).

Yet, while the conventional food system obscures relationships, community-based agro-food alternatives offer opportunities for reconnections. As consumers become increasingly disenchanted by the industrial food system (Sage 2007) and seek more sustainable, equitable, and healthy models of food production and consumption (Kneafsey et al. 2008), community-based food systems can "provide opportunities to reconnect people with people and people with food, opening up spaces for 'ecoliteracy' to develop through shared and reflective learning" (King 2008, 123). New socio-spatial arrangements such as farmers' markets and CSA programs can "serve to reconnect food producers and consumers in a new and direct way" (Sage 2007, 2). Scholars exploring emerging spaces of agro-food reconnection have found more-than-economic, community-oriented motivations, particularly among women (Jarosz 2011; Delind and Ferguson 1999; Hintz 2015), which scholars (e.g. Jarosz 2011; Kneafsey et al. 2008; Cox 2010) have linked to an ethic of care theorized to endow agricultural alternatives with radical, potentially transformative potential (Kneafsey et al. 2008).

The central focus of a care ethic is "on the compelling moral salience of attending to and meeting the needs of the particular others for whom we take responsibility" (Held, 2006, 10). Whereas structures of modernity and neoliberalism privatize and feminize care and care work, deemed irrational and subjective, a feminist ethic of care extends the reach and centrality of care in society. Contrary to the embedded forces that divide and disconnect, an ethic of care encourages a "social ontology of connection" (Lawson 2007, 3), one that is relational and emotional rather than reliant on notions of separateness and individuality. An ethic of care aspires to propel the reciprocal 'flourishing' (Cuomo 1998) or well being of human and more-than-human beings, requiring that we "cultivate a renewed sense of interconnectedness … a feminist-inspired ethic of care can assist in developing such a sensibility, as can various pragmatic strategies for turning our ordinary moral dispositions – as consumers, as citizens – toward more just and sustainable ends (Popke 2006, 510).

Many agro-food studies have identified caring motivations among both producers and consumers "that include caring about aspects of food

production that affect the natural environment, people and animal welfare" (Charles 2011, 367). In her study of CSA, Jarosz (2011) found women farmers' motivations centered on an "ethics of care that defines their work as centered upon nourishing themselves and others" (308). Hintz (2015) identified the centrality of love and relationship to land among women farmers in the Midwest, noting a connection to place that included "a sense of the rights of future generations, seasonal cycles, interconnectedness, nature as a relation, and reciprocity" (np). Similarly, in their examination of motivations for involvement in five different agro-food projects of reconnection, Kneafsey et al. (2008) found that care notions permeated both producer and consumer discussions of their involvement in alternative food schemes. While many such studies have focused attention on spaces of producer-consumer reconnection including farmers' markets and CSA (e.g. Charles 2011; Hayden and Buck 2012; Jarosz 2011; Sage 2007; Schnell 2010; Starr 2010; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007; Wells, Gradwell, and Yoder 1999), this article examines an innovative project of agro-food reconnection, annual community farm tours, which moves consumers beyond markets and CSA pick-ups and into embodied spaces of agricultural production.

While tourism generally is "emblematic of globalization" (Coleman and Crang 2002, x) and has been theorized as an "essentially modern practice of constructing self-consciousness by locating oneself at a distance and differentiated from the 'other'" (Di Chiro 2000, 277), alternative tourism (such as ecotourism, cultural tourism, toxic tourism, and agritourism) holds potential to move beyond the voyeuristic tourist gaze (Urry 1990) and facilitate place-based learning: "The subject doing tourism makes lay knowledge through a complexity of awareness that is immediate, diffuses and interactive and far more complex than a detached vision and sign-reading. We 'know' places bodily and through an active intersubjectivity" (Crouch 2002, 214). In one of the only studies on community-based farm touring, a relatively new phenomenon, Spurlock (2009) argued that "through sensory appeals and the rhetorical power of witnessing … personal experience becomes an important vector through which tourists are invited to rearticulate 'nature' and 'culture' by engaging instead with performance of ethos (guiding beliefs/ethics) and paths (emotion)" (6). Farm tour participants, she maintains, are positioned simultaneously as witnesses to "wounded places" and "co-performers in narratives of healing and sustaining" (Spurlock 2009, 8). This unique form of touring, then, warrants greater scrutiny.

Research context and methodology

This article employs a case study of the Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture (BRWIA) High Country Farm Tour in Western North Carolina. Distinct from

farm tourism in general, this model of annual community farm tours facilitated by grassroots organizations is a relatively new and innovative approach to agro-food reconnection that is becoming increasingly prevalent in many states across the U.S. and is particularly common in North Carolina, which offers networked farm tours in each of its three regions every year. While tours take various logistical approaches, in common the facilitating organizations all partner with community-oriented farmers who host visitors on their farms for a day or weekend in order to share agricultural places, practices, philosophies, and products. Participating producers all operate working farms that are for mostly not engaged in farm tourism during other times of the year; thus, rather than a simplified, romanticized, and sanitized portrait of farming, the goal is to share authentic farming realities with consumers. In an effort to strengthen sustainable local food systems in the High Country[1] with an emphasis on supporting women farmers, the nonprofit organization BRWIA hosts an annual community farm tour in which family-scale working farms[2] employing a range of ecological and ethical practices[3] host visitors to their farms. The event's goals, as articulated by BRWIA, are to provide farmers with economic opportunities, to educate the public about local food and sustainable agriculture, and to connect producers and consumers.

From May through September 2014, I employed a feminist ethnographic and participant action research methodology in the High Country, collaborating closely with BRWIA as they prepared for, implemented, and evaluated the eighth annual High Country Farm Tour. Prior to the tour, I attended BRWIA meetings, advertised and sold weekend passes at area farmers' markets, and conducted interviews with participating farmers. During the two-day tour, I volunteered at a participating farm and attended the tour as a visitor. Following the tour, I distributed surveys via email to visitors and farmers, held a farmer focus group, and conducted PDPE interviews with visitors. While this article focuses on PDPE interviews, relevant data from visitor surveys are included here for brief background and context (for more see Johnson, Schnakenberg, and Perdue 2016).

In June 2014, 20 farms[4] in two countries, Ashe and Watauga, participated in the eighth annual BRWIA High Country Farm Tour. The farms hosted visitors from 2-6 p.m. on Saturday, June 28, and Sunday, June 29. Visitors transported themselves to the farms by car and were free to visit as many as they could over the two-day period, though they were advised to select three or four farms a day – descriptions and details of each farm and their offerings was provided to visitors along with their passes. Weekend passes cost $25 per carload, available at farmers' markets, local businesses, and online. Visitor survey data[5] reported that a total of 448 visitors attended the tour with an average of 77 visits per farm and a total of 1,540 farm visits. While a majority of visitors considered themselves to be already interested in

agro-food issues, less than a quarter of visitors reported that they considered themselves active in their local food community.

The remainder of this article examines data from PDPE interviews with visitors in order to understand the reconnections made during the tour, engaging with dimensions of experience, emotion, and meaning, elements difficult to access through traditional research methodologies due not only to hierarchical researcher-subject dynamics but also to the difficulty of expressing largely intangible things. Photo elicitation interviewing is an innovative yet under-used method (Loeffler 2004) "based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview" (Harper 2002, 13). In PDPE interviews, the research participant is provided with a camera and takes photos, which then become the driver of the interview. PDPE allows for "deep interviews" (Van Auken, Frisvoll, and Stewart 2010) that can access more complex elements of human consciousness than words (Harper 2002). The method was first used in 1967 by John Collier, who noted that photos "sharpened the informants' memory, and reduced the area of mis-understanding" (Harper 2002, 14). It is particularly useful in terms of events of experiences, in that the photos can act

> as a memory anchor for the participant as he or she recalled the moment of the photograph, its intention, and the affective context surrounding it. Having that anchor set against the passing of time freed the participants to describe the meaning of their experiences … Participants used photographs to capture and preserve the sense of awe, mystery, beauty, tranquility, solitude and peace (Loeffler 2004, 345).

PDPE's ability to access both tangible and intangible elements (Clark-Ibanez 2004), particularly those pertaining to emotion, care, and connection, is of immense value in feminist research. A 'pleasurable' and collaborative methodology (Harper 2002), PDPE also serves to 'decenter' the authority of the researcher and eliminate hierarchical dynamics, providing participants with freedom and agency (Ortega-Alcazar and Dyck 2012). Collectively, this methodology aligns closely with key tenets of feminist research such as the multiplicity and partiality, the transcendence of binaries, the inclusion of the researcher as a subjective person and, similarly, the research participant not as an object but as a person, and the possibility for relationships between the researcher and the researched (Reinharz 1992).

Following the 2014 tour, I conducted participant-driven photo elicitation (PDPE) interviews with 14 tour participants. Individuals purchasing tickets at county farmers' markets were offered the opportunity to participate in the PDPE project, incentivized with $20 credit at a local farmers' market, or, if they were not from the area, a $20 Visa gift card, in addition to a set of their photos. Visitors purchasing tickets online were also provided with an option to express interest in the research study, in which case they were contacted

by phone or email. The purpose of the study was explained as an attempt to better understand visitor experiences on the tour, and participants were asked simply to use a provided disposable camera to take photos of anything they found meaningful on the tour, encouraged to use all or most of the 27 exposures and to return the camera to a BRWIA volunteer when they left their last farm of the tour. They would be contacted to arrange a follow-up interview the following week.

Twenty individuals agreed to participate in the project, each provided with a disposable camera and simple instructions. Each camera was marked with a number associated with the corresponding participant's name and contact information. Of the 20 cameras that were distributed, 16 were returned after the tour, of which 14 PDPE interviews were successfully conducted. While participation in the project was offered to anyone purchasing a Farm Tour pass, 13 of the 14 participants were female, and all were white, reflecting visitor demographic data gathered in the follow-up visitor survey[6]. They ranged in age from 22 to 73 with a median age of 44.5. Half of the participants (7) lived in the High Country, one lived elsewhere in North Carolina, and six were Florida residents, of which all but one had vacation homes in the area[7]. Participants were at various stages of dedication to local food and sustainable agriculture – some were just becoming curious, some had home gardens, and most visited area farmers' markets with varying degrees of regularity. One had worked on a farm herself, and another participated in CSA.

Photos were developed locally both in print and digitally. Digital photos were uploaded onto a password-protected website, each set of photos associated with the participant's name. Participants were then contacted to arrange interviews, which could be conducted either in person or by phone, thus not limiting the study to local participants. If the interview was conducted in person, the participants were given a choice of using print or digital photos to guide the interview. If the interview was conducted by phone, the website was used to structure the interview, using assigned photo numbers to associate photos with the interview content. In-person interviews were conducted at a location of the participant's choosing, either their home or a local restaurant or coffee shop.

Interviews were conducted as casual conversations in which the research participant largely guided discussion by talking about their photos. Participants set the tone and the pace of the interviews, which lasted between 30 minutes and more than two hours. Before reviewing the photos, participants were asked to describe where they were from, their connection to the area, their prior relationship with local food and sustainable agriculture, their motivations for attending the Farm Tour, and their reasons for choosing the particular farms they chose to visit. After reviewing

Figure 1. Apple Hill Farm. *Photo by Katherine*.

and discussing the photos together, participants were asked to reflect on the overall impact of the tour. The data generated from these interviews were analyzed thematically according to broad-topic and emergent-fine codes. Data presented here focus on visitor experiences and revolve around emerging themes of care, love, trust, appreciation, relationships, eco- and agri-literacy.

Witnessing care and love

Some of the most prominent themes in the PDPE interviews were related to witnessing care and love. Katherine (60), for example, expressed enthusiasm and amazement at the love, care, and trust that she witnessed at Apple Hill Farm (Figure 1), a mountaintop alpaca farm in Banner Elk that welcomes year-found visitors in order to connect humans with animals.

> It was amazing how (the farmer) gave love to these animals, I just couldn't believe it … She has a big responsibility, that's a lot of animals to care for and love and feed and everything else … You can tell that the animals are happy too, and they're loved, that's for sure, and they're well-fed, there was no animal that I saw that looked despondent … it's wonderful that people can do this with a lot of love.

Similarly, Erica (23) photographed Tim, a farmer at Highland Meadows Cattle Co. in Lansing, offering his cows molasses (Figure 2). She remarked on elements of trust, care, and mindfulness that she felt would be impossible in the industrial food system:

> That's the trust that I was talking about earlier … seeing Tim call the cows and the cows come running up … and just seeing that they have this bond, it's something that … I just don't think outside of small family farms is really achievable … And

Figure 2. Highland Meadows Cattle Co. *Photo by Erica*.

> hearing about the fact that these cows really do enjoy a really nice life and are slaughtered but with the full, I don't know, mindfulness by (the farmers), of who these cows are and the lives that they lived. I think you know what I'm saying, it's not mechanical, it's not a machine doing it, and the cows just they have a really great life and I think are treated really humanely and live on these great pastures with their guard donkeys and obviously really like Tim and the family and get very excited when the gator comes around, so that was really cool to see.

Kristin (32) visited several farms with her partner and their four children, their favorite of which was Mollie's Branch, a no-kill animal farm in Todd. She described embodied experiences of compassion and kindness and emphasized hands-on interactions (Figures 3 and 4):

> This is a picture of all of them, they were digging for worms to feed the chickens. … And that's just a demonstration of what you can tell (the farmer) puts into it … you could just feel compassion and kindness, it was just sweet.

> That's just a picture of the girls digging for more worms to feed the chickens. They actually did find some and did feed the chickens … This is one of her chicks that she had gone in and brought out just so the kids could hold it and touch it, and it was just sweet, it was just hands-on and again just another picture of kindness.

Other visitors similarly expressed admiration for the love, passion, and efforts of the farmers they encountered on the tour. Katherine (60), for example, was inspired by the dedication and cooperation of the farmers at FIG (Farm Incubator and Grower) Farm in Valle Crucis, which offers beginning sustainable farmers access to land and shared equipment and resources (Figures 5 and 6).

> I liked the fact that you're out there and they were certainly very in love with what they're doing. I really enjoyed this one and the fact that they are really trying so hard to do the best that they can with what they have … that was really neat how they share everything there, you don't have that around here.

Figure 3. Mollie's Branch Farm. *Photo by Kristin*.

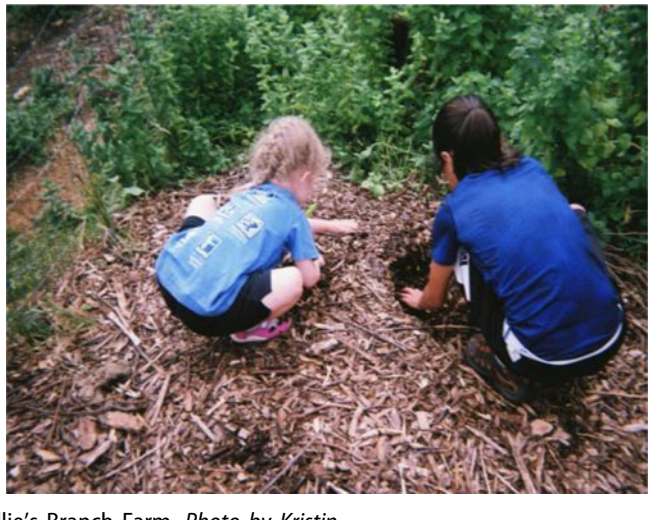

Figure 4. Mollie's Branch Farm. *Photo by Kristin*.

> This picture is more of their lettuces but it also showed that back behind where these trees are they're going to add on to the property … but for me it was just, you know it was enormous, I think it's an enormous job and what they're doing is just fantastic. It gives you some sort of inspiration that there is a way you could figure it out you know. Oh I loved this.

Understanding processes and cycles

Similarly, Erica (23) linked the passion, dedication, and care evident at Nelson Family Farm in Zionville to her deepened appreciation of the farm's products (Figure 7), which were endowed were meaning by witnessing and understanding process:

> We'd gone around seeing part of the farm, and this is where we were at the end deciding to buy some of their food, then it just seemed a lot more meaningful to purchase it having seen the whole process, so we got two things of sausage and eggs … We had met them and heard about the way everything was raised, and the folks there were just so passionate about what they did and their plans for the farm and … the land, and it was just a really good feeling knowing that we were supporting them actively and that the food was more humanely raised and would be better for us … But this picture to me is like, this is what knowing your farmer is really about, and this is what buying local really is, you know, buying direct from somebody that has produced this food.

Figure 5. FIG Farm. *Photo by Katherine*.

Figure 6. FIG Farm. Photo by Katherine.

Figure 7. Nelson Family Farm. *Photo by Erica*.

Like Erica, other visitors discussed the impact of witnessing and experiencing holistic processes and cycles, both farming and biological. At FIG Farm, Kyndy (49) was struck by the sight of sunflowers in the earlier stages of their life cycle (Figure 8) and made connections between the cycles of life and death, growth and decay on the farm (Figure 9):

> I think with these what I liked was the fact that they hadn't opened up yet … honestly I don't think I've ever looked at a sunflower in the bud stage or whatever you call it, not bloomed out yet … that's why I took it just because I thought it was kind of cool seeing it at that stage. … It's the growth, which is kind of cool, not just the end product.
>
> I'm not around pigs much so it was kind of exciting to be able to see the pigs and then it was feeding time. And it's just kind of showing the cycle of leftover stuff on the farm that they're not selling goes to them, and then of course they'll be slaughtered and they'll be part of the meat that's sold, part of the farm.

Other visitors recalled similar experiences of making connections between food 'products' and their origins. Karen (46), for example, photographed a pear tree, remarking on the rareness of seeing fruit beyond supermarket shelves (Figure 10).

> Oh yeah that's a pear. Just pretty … We went hiking just the other day and we came in this pasture and there was an apple tree and it's just covered in all these little tiny apples, and I'm like that's just super cool, probably people up here are like duh it's an apple but we never see that.

Growing 'Agri-Literacy'

Kristin (32) photographed what appeared to be an 'untended' part of FIG Farm (Figure 11) and related it to the farmer's discussion of the medicinal properties of plants, many of which are often removed and considered to be weeds:

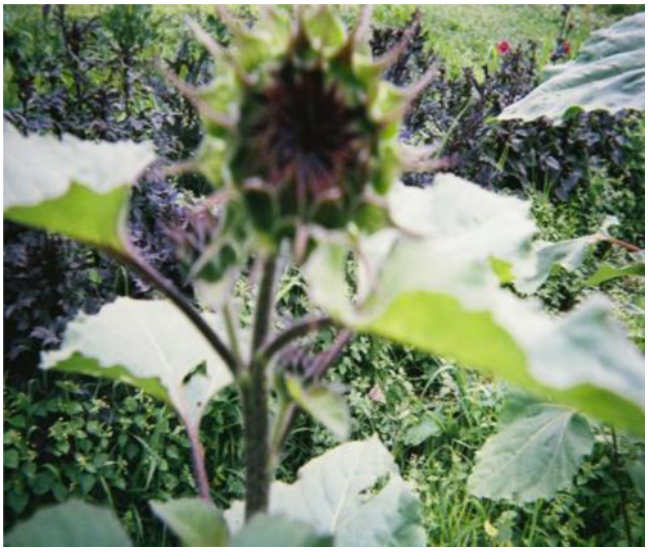

Figure 8. FIG Farm. *Photo by Kyndy*.

Figure 9. FIG Farm. *Photo by Kyndy*.

> This was the part of the farm that you kind of overlook, you might have thought it was untended … (The farmer) walked around what somebody might think of as a big pile of junk and explained each plant and what it's used for and what it will cure … So I thought it was really neat to watch her go through and talk about the different plants and the different uses that they have, and also pointing out that … we tend to rip the weeds out of our garden and really don't stop to think about the things that they do and how they're beneficial to us and to our plants.

'Agri-literacy' was a theme for other visitors as well. Both Catherine (61) and Kristin (32) learned agricultural practices that they planned to implement in their own lives:

> That was at the FIG Farm, I have the sweet peas and didn't realize they need to climb up something. So I need to do something like this, so I said oh we can do

Figure 10. Highland Meadows Cattle Co. *Photo by Karen*.

> this that's easy … as a matter of fact I need that picture. Because I remember the reason why I took that picture and I still haven't put them on anything.
>
> … this really showed that you could plant something anywhere because you just need a base and some good soil and you could really plop a couple of these in the yard and you could plant something, and so I wanted to bring this back to school so we could plant pumpkins for our kids … this was a good way to put up temporary garden plots where we could have pumpkins growing for the season.

Talking about photos: overarching impacts

The process of talking about their photos allowed for reflections to emerge on the overall impacts of visitors' experiences on the Farm Tour, which illuminated themes of awareness and education, appreciation and encouragement, support and involvement, connections and relationships, attitude and behavioral changes, hope and inspiration, trust and transparency, care and love. For example, when asked to reflect on the overall impacts of the tour, Erica (23) expressed a deepened appreciation for the realities of farming, citing her impressions of producer fulfillment and passion:

> Well it was just really inspiring … you know I don't want to romanticize farmers or farming, that's something I've realized a lot of people do, and it's really hard work, and what they do is something that I don't think a lot of people get, I myself don't think I understand the complexity or the full scope of what they're doing, but it seemed like … there is such a sense of fulfillment … it's just this sense of calling, there's this sense of taking care of other people, and there's this real sense of passion.

Catherine (46) similarly noted themes of inspiration and appreciation of the work the farmers do:

> … it's inspiring, seeing the dedication and the hard work, you saw the battles that they have to fight, the bugs, the weeds, you know, the animals, and the reward. It is rewarding.

Figure 11. FIG Farm. *Photo by Kristin.*

And Katherine (60) tied her appreciation of the farmers to issues of food security and resilience:

> I think it's fantastic because you know, what if we don't do this? We're not going to have food, we're not going to have anything because you know I don't think we're in for a really good time coming up. To watch people be so involved and love what they do, this was fantastic.

Karen (46) discussed the value of connection and relationships with farmers, which she related to gratitude, mindfulness, and a heightened desire to support them economically:

> The thing about the Farm Tour … is making that connection about buying from a person, putting a person's face with it and spending that extra money … I was always more, 'oh my god this stuff's so expensive,' not really participating a whole lot in it. But now I'm changing my attitude … You really are a lot more mindful and grateful and thankful for what you eat because you have that connection.

Ryan (31) similarly emphasized the value of producer-consumer relationships, adding that 'America needs to get back to that' and away from the prevalence of corporate agricultural systems:

Figure 12. FIG Farm. *Photo by Catherine*.

Figure 13. F.A.R.M. Cafe Garden Spot. *Photo by Kristin*.

> After meeting the farmers that's really the true story, it's just the people you know, I mean just all so down to earth, just good honest people … You form a personal relationship with people that are growing your food, and I think that a lot of things in America need to get back to that. (Ryan, 31)

Michelle (22) expressed similar sentiments, addressing the dangerous cultural assumption that food comes from the grocery store, and that economic cost is the only consideration in deciding what food products to purchase. She explained that for her, farm tours provide deeper possibilities for connections than those of farmers' markets, as they offer open spaces for experiential connections with animals, plants, soil, life cycles, and human relationships to them:

> (Farmers' markets) are still about the sale of it, which is great, the farmers' market is a really great transitional step in having people coming out there and to even make it more of a social atmosphere … but to actually go out and see what they're doing … then you understand the relationship that you have not only with the growing community but with the food itself and the biological relationship that you have with it. You see like OK, it actually works like a whole system.

Finally, Michelle offered her reflections on the value of the farm tour in its ability to shift perspectives and behavior through these affective experiences in agricultural spaces, by bearing witness to passion, dedication, care, and love:

> I would encourage everyone to … have this experience because I see how much it can impact and change people's way of relating to their food and to the community of people that produce that and lead to a more holistic sort of relationship as a community itself, making decisions about how to make this easier and more accessible for people to do … Having the experience or creating these relationships with the growers will impact I think a lot about how we choose to live, and we'll end up with happier, healthier societies.

Becoming 'enchanted'

The process of sharing participants' photos created space for meaningful and affective elements of experiences to emerge. The snippets and stories shared here illustrate that farm tour participants made or deepened connections with farmers, food, practices, non-human animals, plants, soil, and cycles. Here Herman's (2015) conceptualization of enchantment is illuminating, which she describes as embodied encounters that connect individuals to "places or things that trigger this emotional and experiential being-in-the-world" (103), establishing people-place relations and translating into mobilizations around care and responsibility. Understanding the farm as "a contingent, relational and collective entanglement of social relations" (Herman 2015, 102), it is evident that the farm tour experience created space for relational encounters that may contribute to an "ethical mindfulness" that is simultaneously "place-located and and bound into wider relational matrices" (Cloke and Jones 2003, 212). While notions of enchantment have been critiqued as dramatic or romantic (Ramsay 2009), Cloke and Jones (2003) found in their research on tree-places that enchantment, a "sense of captivating

delight" (211), served as an important "prompt to personal moral impulses" (211), and Herman (2015) argues that while "the feeling of being struck, shaken or spellbound may only be momentary … even a brief rupture can be enough to provoke a reconfigured sense or renewed appreciation of a long-familiar object, subject or landscape" (108).

Indeed, farm tour visitors articulated such feelings when describing their experiences, particularly when discussing the dedication and passion of the farmers and their care for non-human animals and the land (as described above, one visitor notably reflected on her ability to "*feel* compassion and kindness"). Several visitors juxtaposed their experiences of care with corporate industrial systems, which they connected to mindlessness and an absence of care. This resonates with Thompson and Coskuner-Balli's description of enchantment as "linked with experiences of magic, wonderment, spontaneity and transformative feelings of mystery and awe that are presumably lacking in commodified, 'Disneyfied' and 'McDonaldized' consumption experiences" (280). These authors thus suggest that the framework of enchantment can be used to "critique and perhaps resist the rationalization of everyday life that characterizes modernity" (280).

To this affect, several visitors explicitly framed their experiential reflections in opposition to mass corporate production; Ryan (31) remarked that "we need to get away from Wal-Mart and Costco," noting that they'd "rather be able to walk down and talk to Cory, talk to Holly, and get food from there." Karen (46) similarly described her experiences of enhanced mindfulness and gratitude when "you see (that) this is somebody's," advocating for consumptive shifts away from "huge corporations that mass produce things" and toward "someone and something." Indeed, a number of participants commented on inspiration derived from witnessing farmers 'so in love' with their work; while several visitors seemed to have experienced a de-romanticization of agricultural life, remarking on heightened understandings of the difficulty and complexity of the work, they nonetheless described a "sense of fulfilment," "sense of calling," "sense of taking care of other people," resonating with Herman's (2015) study of farmers' enchantment as well as Hintz's (2015) illustration of the centrality of love and connection in women farmers' motivations and philosophies.

These articulations collectively illustrate processes of reconnection central to which is the re-situation of abstract food 'products' into relational contexts of place, people, and process. Visitors repeatedly articulated heightened awareness of holistic process that resulted in a deepened meaning attached to food products; as noted above, when recalling her experience purchasing eggs and sausage after completing a farm tour Erica (23) noted that "it just seemed a lot more meaningful to purchase it having seen the whole process," while Michelle (22) expressed heightened appreciation for all that "goes

into that thing being there on the shelf." Still other participants remarked on life cycles of plants and animals, such as Kyndy (49) who snapped a photo of not-yet-blooming sunflowers in recognition that "it's the growth … not just the end product," or Karen (46) who was practically gleeful at she (re)embedded fruit into place and process, exclaiming that apples don't just "come in a bag at the supermarket, they come on a tree!" Such reconnections were linked by visitors to enhanced eco- and agri-literacy and to the potential for socio-cultural change rooted in rejection of fragmentation and 'rational' utility, what Griffin (1995) called disenchantment, in favor of an understanding of holistic connections.

The articulations and reflections gathered and analyzed here were made possible through the use of PDPE interviews, which indeed allowed for deeper and more particular elements of experience, emotion, and meaning to emerge than would have in traditional interviews. Study participants conveyed their overall enjoyment of the process of taking and talking about their photos; one visitor remarked that, for her, "taking photographs and sharing them afterward is a natural way to complete an activity and to relive and refresh memories." Reviewing the photos allowed participants to recall and reflect on their experiences in ways they might not have otherwise. Participants were able to hone in on details that had blurred in the entirety of the experience and think through them more carefully, relating and situating them. One visitor explained that the photos were "essential" in their ability to talk about their experiences, while another related that "having the camera did perhaps make or encourage you to look deeper than you might have otherwise," confirming PDPE's potential to spur reflexivity and lead subjects to make meaning that they had not before (Ortega-Alcazar and Dyck 2012; Loeffler 2004).

Other participants affirmed that taking photos was a natural component of the tour experience, as they would have taken them regardless of their participation in the PDPE project. However, one visitor explained that taking photos at times distracted her from listening to what farmers were saying, and taking photos on disposable cameras created issues for some visitors, as they juggled with multiple cameras, felt confined in the limited number of exposures, or were unable to know whether or how their photos had turned out. While most photos came out successfully, there were a few instances of undeveloped, unintentional, or cut-off photos. Additionally, while disposable cameras were useful in their affordability and ability to expand accessibility of the project to all potential participants, shifting technologies point to the need for further investigation in ways to implement PDPE with digital cameras, phone cameras, and/or social media sharing. Furthermore, the process of reducing lively, dynamic conversations to text, coding and fragmenting them, continues to limit full expression. Words on the page are unable to

convey meaning that was made through the participants' direct recounting of their photos, their expressions, tones of voices, points of emphasis, the holistic nature of their remembering and relating. Yet, while PDPE can never capture a complete picture, it nonetheless allows for deeper 'glimpses' or insights than more traditional methodologies.

Finally, the gendered nature of participation both in the PDPE study and in the farm tour supports the link between women and an ethic of care in alternative agro-food systems; but while female participants may have led the way into the tour, in many cases they were accompanied by male partners who experienced impacts as well. Catherine (61) said that her husband attended the tour because of her "coaxing," and Karen (46) explained that she was "kinda dragging (her husband) into all this." Yet both women noted their partners' positive experiences and noticed shifts in their perspective after the tour. As Karen recalled: "He's never been really much involved … I think he had a bigger change from the Farm Tour … I've done a lot more reading about it and have a little bit more interest, so I think he's now, he definitely sees the difference." Furthermore, Ryan (31), the one male participant in the PDPE study, held primarily economic motivations for attending the tour, as he was interested in discerning the economic viability of opening a local farm store. Yet when reflecting on the overall impacts of the tour, he emphasized relationships and the need for a re-evaluation of values in the conventional food system, suggesting that affective agro-food experiences such as those made possible by the farm tour hold potential to shift monologic masculinities to dialogic masculinities, characterized by less need for control over nature, different measures for success, and greater social openness (Peter et al. 2000).

Conclusion

Understanding the many social and ecological crises facing our world to be related, rooted within a shared cultural foundation that obscures consciousness of relations, ecofeminist scholars and others call for a deep reconceptualization of how to live and be in the world (Warren 1990). Substituting cultural assumptions of rationality, individuality, and domination, these scholars call for reconnections that move us toward a new ecological culture (Plumwood 2002) that "makes a central place for values of care, love, friendship, trust, and appropriate reciprocity" (Warren 1990, 143). While this approach can seem abstract, both disconnections and reconnections can be made more tangible within agro-food systems. Studies of spaces of agro-food reconnection such as farmers' markets and CSA have suggested that "producers and consumers are prepared to think carefully about their relationships with others, human and non-human, close and distant," and that while "participation in 'alternative' food schemes might not save the world,

at least not in the short term … it might help to build the knowledge and positive relationships that create the capacity for change" (Kneafsey et al. 2008, 177).

This article reiterates this argument and puts forth the importance of creative projects of agro-food reconnection such as the High Country Farm Tour that move consumers into spaces of agro-food production, deepening relationships through "embodied experiences that draw us closer, that create connection and pleasure, happiness and well-being (that) could move us to protect each other and the life systems we live in" (Martusewicz 2005, 334). While there are limitations to touring and it may be tempting, as Spurlock (2009) argued, to "simply dismiss these tours as little more than an opportunity for city folks to play farmer for a day or two … critics should not be dismissive of the transformative power of play to invite self-reflexivity and the creative, imaginative exploration of alternative futures" (17). This article similarly makes clear that we should not be so quick to critique the value of embodied witnessing, as tourism spaces can become progressive, post-capitalist political spaces that contribute to an ethic of care and alternative, regenerative futures.

Farm tours can provide a deepening of awareness, dedication, and participation in civic food systems and society through re-embedding experiences that hold "tremendous potential for arational … values that ultimately compel our actions" (Lockwood 1999, 365). Such 'enchanting' experiences of reconnection can remind us of our interconnections and interdependence, a reminder that is essential to the cultivation of a feminist ethic of care vital in this time of socio-ecological crises. As Puig de la Bellacasa (2012) explained, "to value care we have to recognize the inevitable interdependency essential to the reliant and vulnerable beings that we are … to care about something, or for somebody, is inevitably to create relations" (198).

As feminist scholars and activists, it is crucial that we learn much more about the potential of enchantment and its relation to care, which must be extended to all of nature, both human and more-than-human. As articulated by George Rabb and Kevin Ogorzalek in a recent article published in the Center for Humans and Nature (2018),

> "(e)xtending the moral scope of care in this way is important because it has the potential to change human behavior on a large scale. The moral and emotional power of care can give new vigor and broaden horizons for conservation. It can foster behaviors and policies to create a thriving, resilient planet for humans and other creatures to inhabit. In order to obtain widespread caring toward the whole community of life, certain evolutionary holdovers of human behavior related to short-term consumption must be curtailed, and current social norms rooted in these evolutionary holdovers must be replaced with new norms."

Such a task calls for new spaces and strategies of reconnection, such as community farm tours, as well as innovative tools to illuminate subjective

and intimate aspects of experience and process. It is in this vein that PDPE can serve as an immensely useful tool of great value to feminist researchers concerned with care "for others, the environment, and the world as a whole" (Cox 2010, 127). Further research might build upon this study and address its limitations, such as expanding the scope from just one farm tour to multiple farm tours in other regions and spaces (urban community farm tours are increasingly prevalent), examining other spaces and strategies of reconnection, and/or incorporating a longitudinal focus to assess whether and in what ways impacts of such enchanting experiences may result in long-term behavioral and policy changes.

Notes

1. The seven northernmost counties of Western North Carolina, including Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey, are known as the High Country.
2. In this case 'farm' included traditional as well as non-traditional agricultural spaces such as community gardens, animal rehabilitation centers, incubator farm programs, and off-the-grid homesteads.
3. Farmer-described practices included certified or non-certified organic, biodynamic, permaculture, mindful, ethical, natural, educational, no-kill or rehabilitative, and agro-ecological. See Johnson et al. (2016).
4. Despite BRWIA's overarching organizational focus on women farmers, any small-scale community-oriented farm employing sustainable practices is invited to participate. Most participating farmers were female-male couples, but single women and female-female couples were also represented. They ranged in age from early 20s to mid-70s.
5. Survey data was collected by the author in collaboration with BRWIA to meet both research and organizational goals. For more see Johnson et al. (2016).
6. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of survey respondents were female, reflecting a predominantly female-driven participation pool, and nearly all respondents were white (88%), reflecting regional demographics. According to the 2010 US Census, 92% of Boone's population is white.
7. Since the late 1980s retiree and second-home ownership in the North Carolina High Country has become increasingly prevalent.

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