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Abstract Ethical consumption is on the rise, however little is known about the degree and the implications of the sometime conflicting sets of values held by the broad category of consumers who report consuming ethically. This paper explores convergence and divergence of ethical consumption values through a study of organic, fair trade, and local food consumers in Colorado. Using survey and focus group results, we first examine demographic and attitudinal correlates of ethical consumption. We then report evidence that while many organic, fair trade, and local food consumers converge around similar values, some Colorado consumers support only local food, while opposing the consumption of organic and fair trade products. Next, we investigate how ethical consumers who converge and diverge frame their commitment to consuming ethically. The discussion and conclusion suggest that community development planners of projects that focus on ethical consumption will need to successfully traverse issues stemming from convergence and divergence to enjoy long-term sustained success.

Keywords Ethical consumption · Convergence · Organic · Fair trade · Local food

Introduction

Consumers are increasingly using their purchasing decisions as a way to demonstrate commitment to their ethical values (Berry and McEachern 2005;

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Nicholls 2002). Ethical consumption refers to several practices including, boycotts (Micheletti 2003; Micheletti and Stolle 2008), drastically reducing individual consumption, or “voluntary simplicity” (Elgin 2009; Shaw and Newholm 2002), and making purchasing decisions based on values embracing environmental and/or social sustainability (Cherrier 2007; Harrison et al. 2005; Newholm and Shaw 2007). In this paper, we focus on the latter. A host of different terms have been used to describe this phenomenon including ethical consumption, ethical shopping, political consumption, political consumerism, and conscious consumption. We use the term *ethical consumption* in this paper. Ethical consumption has been defined many ways, some scholars such as Harrison et al. (2005:2) define ethical consumption very broadly as consumption that “ha[s] political, religious, spiritual, environmental, social or other motivations for choosing one product over another,” or Szmigin and Carrigan (2005:609) who examine those who, “consume with sensitivity through selecting ethical alternatives.” Whereas Micheletti (2003:2) defines what she calls political consumerism as,

actions by people who make choices among producers and products with the goal of changing objectionable institutional or market practices. Their choices are based on attitudes and values regarding issues of justice, fairness, or noneconomic issues that concern personal and family well-being and ethical or political assessment of favorable and unfavorable business and government practice.

These definitions all refer to consumption practices that consider factors beyond the material use-values of the product (e.g., health, environmental, social concerns), regardless of whether those are personal, public, or a combination of both. Micheletti (2003:2) adds an additional requirement, “the goal of changing objectionable institutional or market practices.” Here the act of consumption of ethical products has social change motivations. We believe that this is an important component to the definition of ethical consumption. So, we define ethical consumption as the act of purchasing products that have additional attributes (e.g., social, environmental, political, health, etc.) in addition to their immediate use-value, to signify commitment to their values and/or to support changes to unjust market practices.

Existing data suggests that many individuals value ethical concerns when making purchasing decisions. The US market for sustainable products is quite large at \$118 billion (LOHAS 2009). Roughly 35 million US shoppers consider sustainability issues when making shopping decisions (French and Rogers 2007). Businesses that focus on ethical products have reported steady increases in overall sales (FTF 2008, 2009), and many report that commitments to ethics and sustainability, in addition to social and environmental benefits and positive public relations, actually help the economic bottom line (Kearney 2009; Boston Consulting Group 2009).

Ethical consumption has been studied in detail (see for example, Coff 2006; Harrison et al. 2005; Szmigin et al. 2009; Tallontire et al. 2001). However, an important, but understudied area in the ethical consumption literature is the degree of values compatibility of ethical consumers. Consumers of ethical products often report similar underlying values, however, sometimes values important to some

ethical consumers, and embodied in the products they purchase, conflict with values important to other consumers. Quantifying and investigating the implications of this phenomenon is important as both the number of ethical products and consumers desiring these products are increasing. In addition to adding to the literature, this issue has policy implications. Community development projects that want to capitalize on the increasing popularity of ethical consumption will have to negotiate the ethical values divide successfully. Research that helps identify potential issues resulting from different consumer values is important.

In this article, we extend research on ethical consumption generally, and the level of differing values of ethical consumers more specifically. First, similar to previous work (see for example: Botonaki et al. 2006; De Pelsmacker et al. 2005; Dettmann and Dimitri 2007; Doran 2009, 2010; Lockie et al. 2004; Loureiro and Hine 2002), we examine the demographic and attitudinal correlates of ethical consumption (operationalized in this study as organically grown, fair trade certified, and locally grown food). Although numerous studies have done this in the past, a lack of consensus exists regarding the importance of variables, so our study adds to this literature. We then address the degree to which the same consumers purchase organic, fair trade, and locally grown food, thereby indicating support for the different values involved in each product? We use the terms *convergence* and *divergence* of ethical values to unpack this question. Convergence refers to the process of consumers simultaneously purchasing a variety of ethically produced goods believing that purchasing these products supports similar values. Divergence, on the other hand, refers to the support of a few (or even only one) ethical products only in the belief that the values some products embody are at-odds with the values behind other products. Several previous studies that have reported divergent motivations for purchasing ethical products, most notably in the case of local food (see Hinrichs 2003; Winter 2003), have used qualitative methods to formulate conclusions. We extend this work in two ways: (1) we look at convergence/divergence of consumers of multiple ethical products (organic, fair trade, and local food), and (2) we employ quantitative methods to establish the strength of convergence and divergence. Following that, our third research question is what variables, both demographic and attitudinal, are associated with higher levels of engaging in convergence. Finally, we use qualitative focus group data to examine our fourth research question, understanding how ethical consumers who converge and diverge (as defined in this study) frame their commitments to consuming ethically.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we review the literature on organic, fair trade, and local food consumption and highlight tensions that consumers face when selecting ethical products. Next, we discuss the different ways consumers frame ethical consumption. We then describe our rationale for the study location and data collection—a survey and focus groups of Colorado residents, and present our empirical results. Next, we situate our findings in the existing literature and highlight the issues that a community development project focusing on ethical consumption faces. In the conclusion we discuss the potential implications that convergence and divergence have for community development initiatives.

Ethical Consumption in the Agro-Food Sector

Ethical consumption is most prevalent in food and agriculture. Much of the initial development of ethical consumption has occurred in this sector, with the organic movement leading the way over the past several decades (see Guthman 2004) and the fair trade (see Reynolds et al. 2007) and “buy local” (see Hinrichs and Allen 2008) movements following in recent years. This review is not intended to be exhaustive, rather it is meant to highlight the current state of the sector, variables that are associated with increased levels of consumption and finally debates within the sector.

The Organic Agriculture Sector

The organic movement remained a small and marginal part of the agro-food sector throughout the 1960s and 1970s. It then grew dramatically in the 1980s due to several food scares and related concerns for public health and the environment (Arvola et al. 2008; Guthman 2003; Huang 1996; Zepeda and Li 2007). Consumption of organically grown food is now commonplace. The United States has the world's largest organic food and beverage market, with retail sales valued at \$26.7 billion in 2010, which represented a 7.7% growth from 2009 (OTA 2011). Consumption of organics is widespread in the United States as 69% of US consumers buy organic products, with approximately 25% purchasing these items weekly (Hartman Group 2008). With the rapid growth of the organic sector, large producers and retailers have come to dominate the market.

Research on organic consumption has become pervasive. Dettmann and Dimitri (2007) found that income and organic consumption have a positive relationship. While two studies of Australian consumers found that women are more likely to purchase organic food (Lea and Worsley 2005; Lockie et al. 2004), a study of US consumers meanwhile found no significant gender differences in organic consumption (Thompson and Kidwell 1998). The relationship between ethnicity and organic consumption appears unclear as Van Loo et al. (2010) found that whites purchase more organics, however, (Stevens-Garmon et al. 2007) argued that minorities purchase more, while Oyango et al. (2007) reported no relationship between ethnicity and organic consumption.¹ Briz and Ward (2009) found a positive relationship between education and organic consumption, and numerous studies have found that younger consumers purchase organics more frequently than older people (Hartman Group 2009; Oyango et al. 2007, Stevens-Garmon et al. 2007). Finally, many studies have examined the relationship between attitudinal variables and organic consumption (Baker et al. 2004; Botonaki et al. 2006; Grankvist and Biel 2001; Grunert and Juhl 1995; Huang 1996; Lockie et al. 2004; Padel and Foster 2005; Zepeda and Li 2007). Attitudinal motivations for organic consumption fall primarily into three broad categories: health (Dimitri and Greene 2002; Honkanen

¹ The conflicting ethnicity findings may be due to different samples and data sources. Van Loo et al.'s (2010) sample came from a US consumer database, Stevens-Garmon et al. (2007) used U.S. Nielsen-Homescan data and Oyango et al. (2007) used a national U.S. survey.

et al. 2006; Klonsky and Greene 2005), environmental (Hughner et al. 2007; Kortbeck-Olenen 2002) and social (DuPuis 2000; Hughner et al. 2007).

The Fair Trade Sector

Fair trade began in the 1940s with religious organizations purchasing handicrafts from poor Southern producers and selling them directly to consumers. In the 1990s fair trade grew rapidly and agricultural products became the primary fair trade products. In 1997, Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) formed to oversee a third-party certification process. Currently, agriculture and food products account for the majority of sales of FLO certified fair trade products (Raynolds and Long 2007).

The fair trade system critiques trade inequalities between the Global North and South. Disadvantaged Southern agricultural producers are linked with consumers in the North creating an alternative commodity network stressing fairness in the marketplace (Raynolds et al. 2007). Fair trade certification helps producers and workers in the South in several ways. Producers receive a guaranteed price for their products, access to democratic representation is a requirement, a portion of the overall sale price is allocated to social development projects, and production and marketing training is provided (Murray and Raynolds 2007).

Sales of fair trade products are rapidly increasing and are currently valued at around \$4 billion annually (FLO 2009). Previous research has found generational differences in consumption (Littrell et al. 2005), that non-religious consumers purchase more fair trade items than religious consumers (Doran and Natale 2011), and that many ethical consumers place a higher importance on the fair trade mission compared to other ethical products (De Pelsmacker et al. 2005). Additionally, scholars have noted the importance of retail location (de Ferran and Grunert 2007) and have found a strong association between personal values and fair trade consumption (Doran 2009, 2010; Tanner and Kast 2003). This includes a very strong relationship between consuming fair trade products and valuing the following: broadmindedness, social justice, equality, world peace, unity with nature, and protecting the environment (Doran 2009).

The Local Food Sector

While some interest in consumption of locally grown food has existed for decades, in recent years the local food movement has grown dramatically. Direct market food sales in the United States were valued at \$1.2 billion in 2007 and continue to rise in popularity (USDA 2009). The USDA reported that in 2010 there were 6132 farmers' markets, which are primary venues for local food purchases, in the United States (USDA 2010). The reduction of fossil fuel inputs for food transportation is one contemporary argument for increasing local food consumption, emphasizing that local agriculture reduces "food miles," the distance food travels from production site to consumers' table (LaTrobe and Acott 2000). A second rationale for local food systems has been referred to variously as "food citizenship" (Baker 2004), "ecological citizenship" (Seyfang 2006) and "civic agriculture" (Lyson

2004). This approach suggests that local food systems can dramatically improve the social relations, economic well-being and food safety of local communities (Starr et al. 2003).

To our knowledge, not many studies have been conducted that attempt to predict local food consumption, however, Bougherara et al. (2008) found that in France, younger and wealthier households bought more local food. Smithers et al. (2008) discovered that females and middle-aged consumers were the most common farmers' market customers in Ontario, Canada. However, in a study of American consumers, Bellows et al. (2010) found no significant relationship between gender and local food consumption, and Zepeda and Li (2007) reported that income and demographic characteristics were not important predictors of local food purchases. Finally, numerous researchers have linked social, environmental, political values, and other attitudes to the purchase of local food (Loureiro and Hine 2002; Seyfang 2006; Smithers et al. 2008; Zepeda and Leviten-Reid 2004).

Diverging Views on Ethical Consumption

Consumers now have opportunities to choose products that they believe are healthier, safer, produced in an environmentally sustainable manner and/or where the producers of the products are paid a fair wage. It is not however, that simple. Debates rage regarding what is worth paying a price premium for, what types of ethical products actually promote social and environmental change, and which producers are worth supporting.

At issue first, is the level of commitment consumers of ethical products have for expressing their values through consumption. The introduction highlighted research that focused on ethical and political consumers whose consumption decisions are highly motivated by the commitment to their values (Micheletti 2003; Micheletti and Stolle 2008). These ethical consumers are dedicated to particular products because they believe that through purchasing these items they are supporting environmental, social, or political viewpoints that are important. All consumers of ethical products do not fall into this category however, some are more in line with DuPuis's (2000: 289) *reflexive consumers* who, "[are] not social activist[s], nor [are they] committed to a particular political point of view." Reflexive consumers are more knowledgeable about food claims than most consumers; however they have a, "tendency to be swayed by advertising, fads, status purchases, etc."² All ethical consumers, then, do not have the same level of commitment to purchasing ethical products.

Debates regarding the ethical nature of specific products have been discussed in the literature; we highlight a few here, focusing on organic, fair trade and local food. Organic agriculture was a small counter-culture movement in the 1960s and 1970s, supported by small farmers who were motivated to demonstrate that organically grown food was a superior, more politically, socially and environmentally conscious

² A reviewer pointed out that reflexive consumption is similar to Kneafsey et al.'s (2008: 42) conceptualization of "ethics of care," where many consumers report taking concern for others into account when making purchasing decisions, however many of them do not report being ethical or political consumers.

alternative to industrial food (Guthman 2003). However, recent scholarship (for example Buck et al. 1997; Guthman 2004; Tovey 1997) has problematized the alternative conceptualization of organic food. Specifically, Buck and colleagues argue that agribusiness could become too involved in the organic standard setting process making standards less stringent, and agribusiness firms are able to produce organic crops more cheaply than the more movement oriented small producers. This culminates in “conventionalization,” where organic production resembles conventional agriculture, weakening its alternative and ethical identity. The conventionalism argument is not without critics however. Coombes and Campbell (1998) posit that agribusiness and small scale organic agriculture can co-exist through separate spheres of production, markets and consumption. DuPuis (2000) argues that reflexive consumption of organics can be an effective vehicle for concerned consumers to protest the agro-industrial food process.

Many have noted the success that fair trade has had in its relatively short existence (see for example Reynolds 2000; Reynolds et al. 2007). However the market share of fair trade products remains very small compared to traditional commodity networks, leaving much room for market growth. As fair trade becomes more popular with consumers, large corporations, with questionable histories relating to social justice like Chiquita, Dole (Reynolds 2007), Nestle, Sara Lee, Kraft and Procter and Gamble (Fridell et al. 2008) have started offering fair trade versions of their products. As sales of fair trade products from large companies increase, so does the potential for watered-down social movement values leading some consumers to devalue the alternative nature of fair trade (Low and Davenport 2005a, b), and perhaps turn to other options.

A branch of recent agro-food scholarship has focused on the social and environmental benefits of eating local food (Nablan 2002; Starr et al. 2003). However numerous local food scholars have cautioned against universally hailing local food as a panacea for all food system ills (Allen 2004; Blue 2009; DeLind 2011; DuPuis and Goodman 2005; Hinrichs 2003). Blue (2009: 69) notes that some local food initiatives do not help mitigate or reduce “labor concerns, inequality, migration [or] systemic patterns of social injustice.” DuPuis and Goodman (2005) similarly caution that “unreflexive localism” that uncritically assumes that local food initiatives are always superior to the alternatives is problematic. When examining food systems, consumers must be careful not to automatically equate local with ethical and sustainable. Without being explicitly conscious of social justice issues, the local food movement risks falling victim to unreflexive localism.

Researchers have described divergent motivations for local food consumption. Many consumers of local foods also purchase other kinds of ethical products because they believe they are healthier than conventional products and provide an avenue for critiquing the highly industrialized corporate agribusiness model (Gilg and Battershill 1998; Hinrichs 2000, 2003). A second equally dedicated group of local consumers exists who engage in what Winter (2003) calls “defensive localism.” These consumers purchase local foods to support local producers and often are cautious of, or are even afraid of, outsiders. Hinrichs (2003) similarly reports finding two categories of local food consumers she refers to as “defensive localization” and “diversity-receptive localization.” Diversity-receptive consumers believe it is

possible to be both locally and globally ethical when consuming, while defensive localists often view the global–local divide as a zero-sum situation, where supporting global interests damages local farmers and communities.

In sum, this brief review of the literature on organic, fair trade, and local food has indicated that consumption of these items has become common in the United States. Furthermore, while some demographic variables are associated with higher levels of consumption, attitudinal variables have been found to be important predictors of organic, fair trade and local food consumption. It is also clear that ethical consumers are not a homogenous group; rather they have a variety of motivations and levels of dedication. We now turn to a discussion of frame theory to help categorize these motivations.

Ethical Consumption Frames

Ethical consumption is not a social movement in the traditional sense; rather it is a group of individual actors making similar decisions based on a perceived shared ideology, while simultaneously meeting their own personal needs. It was in this vein that Micheletti (2003: 25) developed the concept of *individualized collective action*, “the practice of responsibility-taking for common well-being through the creation of concrete, everyday arenas on the part of citizens alone or together to deal with problems that they believe are affecting what they identify as the good life.” Ethical consumption can be classified as individualized collective action. The framing perspective is often used to unpack how social movements develop group identity and solidarity (Benford 1997), and we utilize it here, in this study of individualized collective action, to help distinguish the major rationales for consuming ethically. Frames are used as “interpretive schemata that simplif[y] and condens[e] the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one’s present or past environment” (Snow and Benford 1992: 137). In short, frames can create meaning and shared ideology between individual and group members (Snow and Benford 2000).

Several previous studies (Hinrichs 2003; Winter 2003) suggest that the ideological framing of ethical consumption has centered around two prominent narratives: a progressive/global frame (hereafter referred to as *Global Localists*) where consumers believe that you can support global and local ethical issues, and a nationalist/local frame (hereafter referred to as *Food Patriots*) in which consumers argue that local problems are paramount. We conceptualize Global Localists and Food Patriots as *Master Frames* (Carroll and Ratner 1996), located on opposite ends of a continuum with actual consumer beliefs and preferences falling along that continuum, closer to one frame or the other. We recognize that each frame has its distinctions and internal logic, but these master frames establish the boundaries (Hunt et al. 1994) that anchor opposing tendencies. Within both of these frames, several themes, as the previous section has shown, determine how consumers judge ethical food claims and craft their personal ethical consumption narratives including health, environment, political, and social concerns, as well as having a geographical preference from where their food comes from. We leave discussion of health

themes³ out of this paper because health concerns are primarily private matters, while environmental, social, and political concerns and location preference are often framed in both public and private ways.

Methods

Location of Study

We chose to conduct this study in Colorado for two reasons. (1) Previous research has identified Colorado (and the Mountain-West region) as a leader in organic consumption and sales (Stevens-Garmon et al. 2007), fair trade recognition and consumption in the Rocky Mountain area is high compared with other areas of the United States (Alter-Eco 2008), and Rocky Mountain consumers buy more local food than most areas of the country (Thilmany et al. 2008). These previous findings indicated that ethical consumption has been well established in Colorado. (2) A community economic development initiative that hopes to use ethical consumption as a centerpiece is being planned in Fort Collins, Colorado. Fort Collins is a community of approximately 150,000, located on the Colorado Front Range, an hour north of Denver. In early 2008, the Fort Collins Downtown Development Authority (DDA) convened a planning committee for the Community Marketplace project. The DDA hoped it would create economic development for the greater Fort Collins community by providing a location for ethical food vendors and other ethical product retailers to sell their products.⁴ An initial vision was laid out for the Marketplace: “The Fort Collins Community Marketplace will serve as the intersection of environmentally sustainable and socially fair entrepreneurial practices and values, and the center for the transfer of this knowledge and these practices to the community and area businesses” (DDA 2008:2). A global focus was later added to the mission statement with the inclusion of the phrase “locally sustainable and globally fair” to indicate that more than local ethical food/products would be available (DDA 2010). The decision to focus on local and global ethical consumption was due in large part to the perceived receptivity of the Fort Collins community based on several studies conducted by external consultants.

Data

In the summer of 2007, we mailed a survey to a random sample of 903 Colorado residents, and we received a 52% response rate.⁵ We asked the primary grocery

³ We recognize that there are other additional themes/rationales for purchasing organic, fair trade and local food, however we chose to focus on environmental, social, political, and location because they seem to be the most common in the literature.

⁴ Author 2 has been an active member of the planning process since 2008. Author 1 participated for a period in 2009. The study described in this article was initiated prior to our involvement in the Community Marketplace project, and remained independent of the planning discussions throughout.

⁵ The sample was purchased from Survey Sampling International. We purchased a sample of 1,000 Colorado residents, 18 years old and over from a sampling frame of all Colorado residents 18 years old

shopper in the household to answer the questionnaire. The survey contained six sections. Sections one through three ask identical questions about consumer knowledge, popularity and motivations for purchasing, organic, fair trade, and locally grown food. Section four asks questions about respondents' general purchasing practices and philosophies. Section five asked respondents to rate their level of agreement with attitudinal statements, and the survey concluded with demographic questions.

Upon conclusion of preliminary survey analysis, we conducted focus groups in Fort Collins to provide information about how consumers framed ethical consumption. We organized four focus groups ranging in size from three to eight consumers in each group⁶; the focus group participants came from (1) survey respondents who asked to participate in the groups, and (2) people who responded to fliers posted in coffee shops, around a university, and in other places of business. When potential focus group participants contacted us, we asked them a few short questions over the phone to determine if they fit our desired sample. We asked them if they made an effort to regularly purchase organic, fair trade, or local foods, if they respondent "yes" to at least one of those questions we included them in the focus group sample. Then we asked consumers to give their main reason for purchasing that food product, and based on that answer we preliminarily classified them as either a Global Localist or a Food Patriot consumer. We hoped to include both types of consumers in all four groups to maximize the discussion on rationales for framing ethical consumption. Three of the groups had both Global Localists and Food Patriots; however the focus group with three participants only contained Global Localists. We audio taped and transcribed all of the focus groups to facilitate the analysis.

Analytic Strategy

We first analyzed the survey data.⁷ The first research question was addressed using bivariate associations between the demographic and attitudinal variables with the do you make an effort to buy organically grown/fair trade/locally grown food questions. This was followed by binary logistic regression equations (Long 1997) modeling making an effort to buy organic, fair trade, and local food separately. In the regression analyses, we needed to collapse the attitude variables into fewer more multifaceted indicators. We did this through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA),

Footnote 5 continued

and over. However, after the initial mailing, we discovered that 97 addresses were unusable (undeliverable or the respondent had changed residences), resulting in a usable sample of 903 respondents. We mailed a copy of the survey and a cover letter explaining the survey, after a week and a half, we mailed a reminder postcard, then after another week, we mailed a second copy of the survey and cover letter.

⁶ Some scholars advocate that focus groups have between 6 and 12 respondents (Morgan 1997; Stewart et al. 2007) in order to obtain the best results, however Peek and Fothergill (2009: 37) note that smaller groups, between 3 and 5 participants, often run smoother than larger groups, and can work better for reasons such as time constraints and covering all the desired material. We chose to follow this model and keep our focus groups under 10 people. We had groups of 3, 5, 7 and 8 participants.

⁷ All statistical analysis was performed with Stata 11.2.

thereby creating four factors: environmental, social, political and importance of origin to measure each of our themes of interest. Each factor has a Cronbach's α value ≥ 0.70 , indicating that the factors were reliable.

The second research question was examined with permutation tetrachoric correlation coefficients (r_t) of the "do you make an effort to buy" questions. r_t measures the direction and strength of association of binary categorical variables (Long et al. 2009). The r_t values enabled us to quantify convergence and divergence in Colorado ethical consumption. We first calculated r_t values based on the entire sample. Since previous research indicated the presence of two major ethical consumption food frames, Global Localist and Food Patriot, we separated the sample into two groups based on a global/local attitudinal scale of two survey questions. The global/local scale was constructed by adding the responses of (1) "I consider myself to be part of a larger global community" (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), and (2) "It is important to take care of poor people in the US before we give attention to conditions in the rest of the world" For scale construction purposes, question 2 was reverse coded from the original values in order to have correct scale directionality (new values: 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree).⁸ The global/local scale ranges from 2 to 10, where 2 represents extreme Food Patriotism and 10 represents extreme Global Localism. We then dichotomized the scale into two categories, High Global = 7–10 and Low Global 2–6.⁹ We then calculated r_t values for each subgroup.

We used survey data to address the third research question, what variables are associated with higher levels of convergence, with an ordinal logistic regression model used to predict a convergence scale. The dependent variable is an additive scale of all consumers who made an effort to buy at least one of the following products: organics, fair trade or locally grown food. The scale ranges from 1 to 3, where 1 = purchasing only one type of product (divergence) and 3 = purchasing all 3 products (convergence).

The fourth research question was examined with focus group discussions. The interview guide began with broad questions about the types of values that respondents used when making consumption choices. Once consumers identified themselves to other participants as sympathetic toward either the Global Localist or Food Patriot frame, the focus group moderator asked about motivations and rationales for choosing to consume in the way the participants reported. We coded the focus group transcripts for themes based on categories that have been established by prior research and are the primary focus of this study. The ethical consumption motivation themes that we coded for included: environmental (concerns regarding chemicals, sustainable production methods, and wildlife conservation), social (concerns for economic and social conditions of producers), political (using consumption as a mechanism to change objectionable market practices) issues, and concerns about where geographically a

⁸ We also created the scale by standardizing both variables through Z-score transformations and adding the Z-scores. The results were very similar so we use the additive scale for simplicity.

⁹ We place the value of "6" in the low category because when the correlations are done with the "6" category alone, the results are closer to the low category.

product came from. We also coded other ethical consumption narratives that were frequently reported as purchasing motivations by the participants.

Results

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the survey questions, which indicated that the majority of the sample was white, female, older, relatively affluent, college educated and politically moderate. Also listed in Table 1 are the means and standard deviations of the attitudinal¹⁰ variables. On average, people agreed most strongly about holding pro-environmental attitudes, followed by indicators of living in a global world, social factors and indicating that the origin of a product was important in their purchasing decisions. Political attitudes, however, were not common as the means for both political variables hovered around 2 (disagree). Lastly, Table 1 contains the percentages of consumers who have heard of and make an effort to buy organic, fair trade, and locally grown food in Colorado. Almost all respondents were familiar with organic and local food, while slightly less than half (43%) were familiar with fair trade. Of those consumers who had heard of these types of food products, many made an effort to buy local (69%), followed by organic (43.1%) and fair trade (34.9%). In later analyses we used multivariate methods to model organic, fair trade and local food purchasing in Colorado and used CFA indicators of the attitudinal concepts, the Cronbach's α values are reported in Table 1.

To address our first research question, we examine bivariate associations between making an effort to buy organic, fair trade, and local food with demographic and attitudinal variables. These results are presented in Table 2. Females were more likely to purchase local ($p < 0.01$) and fair trade food ($p < 0.05$) and younger consumers were more likely to purchase organics ($p < 0.05$). However, education and income did not have significant bivariate relationships with making an effort to buy organic, fair trade, or locally grown food.

It was clear that environmental attitudes are highly associated with purchasing organic food, and to a lesser extent with local and fair trade food. Social attitudes are most strongly associated with purchasing fair trade products, followed by organic and locally grown food. Similarly, political attitudes were most associated with purchasing fair trade food. Purchasing organically grown food was significantly related to being politically conservative or liberal, but not community activism or participation in politics. Interestingly, purchasing locally grown food is not significantly associated with political attitudes. Finally, as one would expect, purchasing local food was strongly associated with importance of origin attitudes, while purchasing organic and fair trade products was significantly related to looking at where a product was manufactured.

¹⁰ We use the terms "attitude/attitudinal" to refer to all of the socio-political scale variables, even if the question asks about a behavior, such as frequency of recycling. We recognize that the well documented attitude-behavior gap in consumption studies (Vermeir and Verbeke 2006) positively biases our results. The majority of the socio-political statements refer to attitudes, however even when they ask about a behavior, we have not truly measured whether they have engaged in that behavior, we have only asked them about it, so we choose to refer to them as attitudes.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of variables in the analysis

Variables	Mode	Median	<i>n</i>		
Gender	Female	–	421		
Age	48–57	48–57	438		
Ethnicity	White	White	417		
Education	College	College	424		
Income	Over \$80,000	\$60–\$80,000	398		
Political attitudes	Moderate	Moderate	402		
Variables ^a			Mean	SD	<i>n</i>
Environmental factor (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.72$)					
I prefer buying environmentally friendly products			3.66	1.24	411
I regularly recycle household products			3.76	1.40	420
I am concerned about conservation issues (water, energy, etc.)			4.09	1.11	426
I think about environmental issues before making purchasing decisions			2.90	1.29	407
Social factor (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.78$)					
I am concerned about sweatshop conditions			3.67	1.20	419
I feel responsible for helping to meet the needs of the poor			3.09	1.22	420
I think about social issues before making purchasing decisions			2.38	1.20	401
Political factor (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.73$)					
I am active in local or state politics			2.17	1.24	413
I am a community activist			1.91	1.09	400
Importance of origin factor (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.70$)					
I look at where a product has been manufactured before buying it.			2.96	1.38	412
I prefer to buy goods in the US, rather than products made in other countries			3.66	1.30	415
Global scale components					
I consider myself to be part of a larger global community			3.56	1.31	417
It is important to take care of poor people in the US before we give attention to conditions in the rest of the world			3.67	1.22	401
Variables			% Yes		<i>n</i>
Have you ever heard of organically grown food?			96.3		437
Do you make an effort to buy organically grown food?			43.1		415
Have you ever heard of fair trade labeled food?			43.0		412
Do you make an effort to buy fair trade labeled food?			34.9		209
Have you ever heard of locally grown food?			96.6		424
Do you make an effort to buy locally grown food?			69.0		406

^a All attitudinal statements are coded 1 = strongly disagree—5 = strongly agree

Bivariate analyses provide a glimpse of the variables that are associated with higher levels of purchasing organic, fair trade and local product, however multivariate analysis allows us to control for extraneous factors. Table 3 provides the results of binary logistic regression equations modeling organic, fair trade and local food purchasing attitudes. Younger consumers ($p < 0.01$) and those who scored higher on

Table 2 Bivariate Chi-Squared (χ^2) values of “Do you make an effort to buy organics/fair trade/local food?” with demographic and attitudinal variables

Variables	Organically grown	Fair trade	Locally grown
Demographic			
Gender	3.32	5.18*	13.30**
Age	8.34*	2.48	3.98
Education	3.54	2.60	1.82
Income	5.36	1.42	0.37
Environmental attitudes			
I prefer buying environmentally friendly products	68.56**	28.39**	14.07**
I regularly recycle household products	12.75*	2.94	2.53
I am concerned about conservation issues (water, energy, etc.)	14.74**	4.85	12.12*
I think about environmental issues before making purchasing decisions	37.60**	37.25**	24.80**
Social attitudes			
I am concerned about sweatshop conditions	10.23*	19.58**	8.80
I feel responsible for helping to meet the needs of the poor	4.96	17.47**	10.95*
I think about social issues before making purchasing decisions	31.94**	41.25**	11.36*
Political attitudes			
Political Attitudes (conservative, moderate or liberal)	17.19**	11.60**	5.15
I am active in local or state politics	9.21	12.89*	5.53
I am a community activist	8.40	16.88**	5.33
Importance of origin attitudes			
I look at where a product has been manufactured before buying it	22.42**	9.76*	20.35**
I prefer to buy goods made in the US, rather than products made in other countries	3.87	4.18	11.91*

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$ significance (two-tailed)

the environment ($p < 0.001$) and importance of origin ($p < 0.05$) factors were more likely to make an effort to purchase organic food. Consumers who scored significantly higher on the social factor ($p < 0.01$) were more likely to make an effort to purchase fair trade food. Lastly, females ($p < 0.001$), more educated ($p < 0.05$) and consumers who scored significantly higher on the importance of origin factor ($p < 0.001$) made an effort to purchase locally grown food the most often.

We examine our second research question, what are the levels of convergence and divergence among organic, fair trade, and local food consumers, with the r_t values provided in Table 4. In the full sample we found a very strong correlation between organic and fair trade consumers ($p < 0.01$), followed by a strong correlation between organic and local food consumers ($p < 0.01$). The correlation between local and fair trade is somewhat weaker, but still statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). We then separated the sample into two subsamples based on the global/

Table 3 Binary logistic regression coefficients (*b*), standard errors (SE) and odds ratios (OR) for determinants of “Do you make an effort to buy organic/fair trade/local food?”

Independent variables	Organically grown		Fair trade		Locally grown	
	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE
Gender (Male = 1)	-0.291 (0.747)	0.277	-0.362 (0.696)	0.415	-1.065*** (0.345)	0.309
Age	-0.285** (0.752)	0.109	-0.056 (0.945)	0.169	-0.018 (0.982)	0.116
Education	0.196 (1.216)	0.203	0.257 (1.293)	0.313	0.504* (1.656)	0.222
Income	0.088 (1.092)	0.120	0.178 (1.195)	0.180	-0.074 (0.929)	0.133
Political attitudes ^a	0.149 (1.161)	0.129	0.256 (1.292)	0.192	-0.046 (0.955)	0.141
Environment factor	0.666*** (1.946)	0.191	0.187 (1.206)	0.272	0.366 (1.442)	0.198
Social factor	-0.154 (0.857)	0.186	0.678** (1.970)	0.261	-0.115 (0.892)	0.197
Political factor	0.241 (1.272)	0.154	0.146 (1.157)	0.208	0.182 (1.199)	0.176
Importance of origin factor	0.324* (1.383)	0.155	0.133 (1.142)	0.241	0.664*** (1.943)	0.174
Constant	-0.074 (0.929)	0.988	-2.526 (0.080)	1.578	0.473 (1.605)	1.090
Chi-Square (df = 9)	47.375***		31.644***		44.650***	
Nagelkerke <i>R</i> ²	0.217		0.282		0.217	
<i>N</i>	267		135		269	

*** *p* < 0.001; ** *p* < 0.01; * *p* < 0.05 significance (two-tailed); ^a (1 = very conservative to 5 = very liberal)

local scale and recalculate the *r_t* values for each group. High Global consumers (Global Localists) all had highly significant *r_t* values (*p* < 0.01) indicating convergence among High Global consumers of organic, fair trade, and local food. However, those consumers who scored low on the global scale (Food Patriots) show evidence of divergence between organic and local food (*r_t* = 0.121), and fair trade and local food consumers (*r_t* = 0.164). These bivariate results provide evidence of both convergence and divergence in the case of local food consumption, depending on the attitudes of the consumers.

We next used survey results to address the third research question: what factors are associated with engaging in convergence. Table 5 provides results of an ordinal logistic regression model of the convergence scale. Females (*p* < 0.01), more educated (*p* < 0.05), those who scored higher on the environmental factor (*p* < 0.001) and the importance of origin factor (*p* < 0.01) were significantly more likely to converge. Interestingly, income, age, and political and social attitudes were not significantly related to convergence.

We used discussions with the focus group participants¹¹ to address our final research question, namely; how do ethical consumers who indicate engaging in

¹¹ The focus group respondents had a mean income of \$51,000, were approximately two-thirds female, had an age range of 20-58, and the majority indicated that they had attended at least some college.

Table 4 Permutation tetrachoric correlation coefficients (r_t) for “do you make an effort to buy?”

	Organic	Fair trade	Local
Full sample ($n = 445$)			
Organic	1.000	0.579**	0.313**
Fair trade	–	1.000	0.279*
Local	–	–	1.000
Low global scale ($n = 189$)			
Organic	1.000	0.521*	0.121
Fair trade	–	1.000	0.164
Local	–	–	1.000
High global scale ($n = 228$)			
Organic	1.000	0.612**	0.446**
Fair trade	–	1.000	0.428**
Local	–	–	1.000

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$ significance (two-tailed)

Table 5 Ordinal logistic regression coefficients (b), standard errors (SE) and odds ratios (OR) for determinants of the convergence scale

Independent variables	b (OR)	SE
Gender (Male = 1)	–0.674** (0.510)	0.230
Age	–0.132 (0.876)	0.088
Education	0.361* (1.435)	0.167
Income	0.075 (1.078)	0.098
Political attitudes ^a	0.063 (1.065)	0.106
Environment factor	0.533*** (1.704)	0.154
Social factor	0.056 (1.058)	0.149
Political factor	0.221 (1.247)	0.123
Importance of origin factor	0.320** (1.377)	0.127
Chi-Square (df = 9)	66.481***	
Nagelkerke R^2	0.225	
N	283	

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$ significance; (two-tailed); ^a (1 = Very conservative to 5 = Very liberal)

convergence or divergence (i.e., are Global Localists or Food Patriots, respectively) frame their commitments to ethical consumption. We conducted a content analysis (Hodson 1999) of the transcripts of the focus groups and coded which themes participants reported for consuming ethically. Table 6 contains these results, reported for all members of the focus groups together and separately for Global Localists and Food Patriots.

Engaging in ethical consumption for environmental reasons was a very popular theme for Global Localists (86%), but not for Food Patriots (22%). Both groups report similarly high frequencies for social motivations, while Global Localists were more likely to report political motivations (57%) for consuming ethically, than Food Patriots (33%). Where a product was produced (i.e. location) was important for many Global Localists (71%), while every Food Patriot indicated that location was part of their reason for purchasing ethical food products. These themes are more complex than they are presented in the table. While both Global Localists and Food

Table 6 Ethical consumption themes reported by focus group participants

	Total sample (<i>n</i> = 23)		Global localists (<i>n</i> = 14)		Food patriots (<i>n</i> = 9)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Environment	14	61	12	86	2	22
Social	18	78	10	71	8	89
Political	13	57	8	57	3	33
Location	19	83	10	71	9	100
Health ^a	11	48	9	64	2	22
Cost	9	39	4	29	5	56
Identity	17	74	10	71	6	67

A theme is recorded in the table if a participant reports consuming for this reason one time. We do not record multiple mentions of a theme, only the first mention

^a We recorded additional themes that were mentioned by 4 or more participants

Patriots often report social motivations for purchasing products, these social motivations are defined very differently for the two groups. For example an argument between two participants started when a Food Patriot focus group participant remarked:

Why would I help some foreigner in Mexico or Brazil or some other place like that, when there are Americans, Coloradoans, who need my money just as bad? That is completely ridiculous.

A Global Localist responded:

You can support local food and something like fair trade simultaneously. A lot of the fair trade stuff are things like coffee, tea and bananas that aren't grown in the US.

Agitated, the first participant replied:

I don't care about supporting these things at the same time. I buy cheap coffee. I'm not going to pay extra money for coffee just to help people in a foreign country. I will only pay more money for something that will help Americans, and whenever I can, Coloradoans.

Both of these participants discussed social and location motivations for ethical consumption, however, they have very different ideas regarding what social and location concerns entail. For example, in the previous discussion, the Global Localist defined social concerns as helping producers throughout the world, while the Food Patriot defined it as helping only local producers. In general, Food Patriots expressed social concerns regarding job losses overseas, illegal immigration, and the declining sense of US nationalism, while Global Localists spoke often of the small wage and hard life of Global South producers. Discussions like the one above demonstrate how while ethical consumption can sometimes tap into similar motivations of consumers; divergence often exists regarding interpretations of those motivations.

We also coded other themes that, while not the primary focus of this study, were mentioned often. Focus group participants reported other motivations for purchasing

(or in some cases, not purchasing) ethical food items, they included: health, cost, and identity. As the results reported in Table 6 indicate, health concerns were frequently raised by Global Localists (64%), while not many Food Patriots (22%) discussed health as an important motivation for engaging in ethical consumption. Food Patriots were attuned more to issues of cost than Global Localists, indicating that some people who wanted to consume ethically are prevented because of the disproportionately higher cost of products like organic, fair trade, and local food, compared with conventional items. Finally, the majority of Global Localists and Food Patriots who participated in the focus groups talked about how consuming ethically (however they defined that process) was part of their personal identity.¹²

Discussion

Our findings support earlier research. Similar to Hartman Group (2008), Oyango et al. (2007), and Stevens-Garmon et al. (2007) we found that younger consumers were more likely to purchase organically grown food. Our data also supported the work of Smithers et al. (2008) that females are more likely to purchase local food. It was clear from our analysis that attitudes played a large role in consumers' decisions to purchase ethical products, which supported previous research. Organic consumers hold strong pro-environmental attitudes and also paid close attention to where the products they purchased came from. Previous studies have found the importance of environmental (Hughner et al. 2007; Kortbeck-Olenen 2002) and other attitudinal motivations on organic consumption (see for example, Botonaki et al. 2006; Lockie et al. 2004; Zepeda and Li 2007). Fair trade consumers in our sample scored significantly higher on the social factor, which supports the work of Doran (2009, 2010). We also found a link between attitudinal motivations and purchasing local food. It should also be noted that the paucity of research on the prediction of local food consumption makes our findings in this area particularly useful, especially as the little research that has been conducted was done at farmers' markets (Bougherara et al. 2008; Smithers et al. 2008), while our findings are applicable to the general population.

We next examined the levels of convergence and divergence between consumers of organic, fair trade, and local food. The bivariate results identified both convergence and divergence in supporters of local food. Similar to Hinrichs (2003) and Winter (2003) we observed two types of local food consumers in Colorado. In our case we have those local food consumers who converge with organic and fair trade consumers, and a second group that diverges, consuming only local food, disregarding organic and fair trade food. We refer to these groups as Global Localists,¹³ consumers who (converge) support organically grown, fair trade

¹² By "identity" we are referring to the process of personal identity construction (Ceruleo 1997). Many consumers use ethical consumption as a form of distinction, meaning they separate themselves from others through their consumption practices (Bourdieu 1984).

¹³ We realize that the labels "Global Localists" and "Food Patriots" apply most directly to our specific case of organic, fair trade and local food. But we believe that similar dichotomies that exhibit divergence also exist and therefore the convergence/divergence debate and its implications are applicable in other similar situations, but where the conflicting ethical values and products may be different.

certified, and local food as a reflection of values embracing, among other things, cultural diversity and social and environmental sustainability on a global scale; and the Food Patriots, consumers who (diverge) exclusively supporting local food as a reflection of values that ignore cultural diversity and global environmental issues, instead focusing only on local concerns.

Understanding which ethical consumers converge and the implications of convergence is important as the number of environmental and social certification schemes continue to increase. Even now, one clearinghouse of environmental certifications lists 137 certifications in the United States and 377 worldwide (Ecolabel Index 2011). To be sure, many of the certifications in the Ecolabel Index are new, only certify a few products, and many of them overlap with one another. However, we used three of the most popular, well-established ethical products and we observed both convergence and divergence, so we believe that this is an area that deserves further study.

As with the prediction of ethical consumption, we observed the importance of attitudes, specifically pro-environmental and importance of origin, in predicting convergence. Females and more educated consumers were more likely to converge, but equally interesting was that income and age are not significantly related to convergence. We suggest that these results be interpreted with caution as statistical modeling of convergence, to our knowledge, has not been done elsewhere so these results should be considered exploratory.

Our final research question, how Global Localists and Food Patriots frame their rationales for engaging in ethical consumption, yielded interesting results. Many Global Localists report all four main motivations, environmental, social, political, and location for purchasing ethical products. This indicates that consumers who practiced convergence are highly invested in the framing process, meaning that in general their interest in ethical consumption was multifaceted. Conversely Food Patriots, on average, framed their commitment to ethical consumption much more frequently around social and location issues. Since Food Patriots' interest in ethical consumption is narrower than most Global Localists, this finding should not be surprising. While we do not have the space to go into the framing of ethical consumption in more detail, we believe that further examination of this process is vital for understanding convergence and divergence. Future research should focus on unpacking the different framing and interpretations that Global Localists and Food Patriots have of similar reasons (e.g., social concerns) for purchasing ethical products.

Values convergence and divergence have implications for development projects like the Fort Collins Community Marketplace. Planning committees will need to figure out whether to engage all ethical consumers in an attempt to attract the largest number of consumers, or to focus on select groups, like Global Localists, who appear to be more receptive to a wider variety of ethical products, and perhaps an overall ethical consumption *movement* where like-minded consumers view their actions as part of a larger critique of the current production, trade and consumption networks. There is no simple answer to this question; however we believe that community development project organizers should not shy away from confronting this issue head on. As our findings indicate, Global Localists and Food Patriots are

very different types of consumers, who value different things. Planning committees may risk alienating one group of consumers (thereby losing patrons), if they cater too much to the other one. On the other hand, the long-term viability and success of places like the Marketplace may struggle if decisions are made to water-down ethical commitments in order to remain appealing to all types of ethical consumers, because the Marketplace will begin to resemble other more traditional retail locations that do not have a commitment to ethics. Successful negotiation of convergence and divergence is a crucial preliminary step for community development initiatives focusing on ethical consumption.

We would like to discuss several limitations to our study. First, our study was located in Colorado, with the focus groups taking place in Fort Collins, we therefore cannot generalize our findings nationally. Second, our results are based on self-reported attitudes which often suffer from desirability bias especially in a case where ethical attitudes are the primary topic. Third, as with all survey research, the results may be impacted by the nonrandom completion of questionnaires since the response rate was 52%.

Conclusion

Consumers of ethical products are a significant and growing market segment of the United States and global economies. Capturing this market as a foundation for community development is an increasingly viable strategy for communities seeking to revitalize economically and culturally. But there is a need to recognize and address the tensions in this sector that arise from divergent ethical values if such a strategy is to be successful.

Through survey and focus group research on consumption of organically grown, fair trade and locally grown food in Colorado, we found that many consumers of different ethical products converge in their consumption practices, that is, they believe they can simultaneously support products with different underlying values. However, we also observed some consumers who diverge in their support of ethical products. In particular, some consumers of local foods hold a more “defensive” viewpoint (Winter 2003); arguing that supporting local farmers and communities should be the only goal of ethical consumption. Additionally, Global Localists and Food Patriots frame their commitments to ethical consumption differently, Global Localists do so broadly, and Food Patriots do so more narrowly.

Community development projects seeking to capitalize on ethical consumption can benefit from this information because convergence and divergence will continue to be a prominent issue as the number of ethical products and ethical consumers increase. We do not claim to have the answer here, however, in our own experience with the Fort Collins Community Marketplace, we have witnessed (and in some cases took part in) the debates regarding which vendors to allow into the Marketplace, which values to place a premium on and most importantly, who is the anticipated consumer base. The local business community is, not surprisingly, in favor of targeting all types of ethical consumers, from Global Localists to Food Patriots and everyone in between, thereby suggesting adopting a “bridging” frame

to achieve greater inclusivity. Others on the planning community (including the authors) have cautioned about uncritically accepting a bridging approach, noting the many possible pitfalls that could result. One thing that is clear is that all parties involved want the Community Marketplace to succeed, however figuring out how to successfully negotiate ethical consumer convergence and divergence is a crucial preliminary step. We believe that this process is not unique to the Fort Collins Community Marketplace; rather similar initiatives around the country will have to confront these problems as well. Therefore we recommend future planning committees identify the degree of convergence and divergence, along with what the issues driving the divergence are, and then attempt to figure out what the best way forward is to help facilitate the long-term success of the project.

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