Ruminating on Ruminants: Goats and the People Who Raise Them in South Carolina

Brianna Dyan Farber

University of South Carolina

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Ruminating on Ruminants: Goats and the People Who Raise Them in South Carolina

by

Brianna Farber

Bachelor of Science
College of Charleston, 2010

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Accepted by:
David E. Simmons, Co-Chair
Erica B. Gibson, Co-Chair
Gail E. Wagner, Reader
Lacy Ford, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies
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ABSTRACT

In South Carolina, many farmers and homesteaders have utilized goats as an adaptive and versatile resource and component of their diversified farming operations. This thesis addresses the experiences, motivations, difficulties, and successes of people raising goats in South Carolina, in the context of sustainable agricultural practice and landscapes. Goats cohabit insecure but promising ecological, political, economic, and sociocultural landscapes with humans and other nonhuman species. These relationships can undermine and support goats as belonging in South Carolina. My participants cannot simply raise goats as a purely economic choice because they create meaningful emotional relationships with their animals. Goats can become part of landscapes due to their unique dietary preferences at the same time that South Carolina’s ecology can kill goats. They also represent an economic animal that produces numerous, healthy products coming from local landscapes. However, these products are not valued in the market equally, becoming constrained to niche markets. These niche markets most often depend on people that are not considered as belonging in South Carolina. These imaginaries may limit the full participation of people in sustainable food projects but may also provide a foundation for connecting diverse groups of people, depending on how sustainable agriculture is framed and discussed. This thesis suggests that goats have the potential to connect diverse groups of people, combining cultural tradition with frameworks of sustainability, resourcefulness, and community-based ethics.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Goats and people have an ancient relationship, at once beneficial and contentious. For much of this history, people have raised goats in the pastoral mode of livelihood, where people move their animals throughout the local landscape, often taking their homes with them. However, the goat has a very different context in the United States as part of the sustainable agricultural and homesteading movements. Instead of ranging over large territories, goats live in close enough proximity to farmhouses to wake their caretakers with insistent demands to be fed and paid attention to. On farms and homesteads, goats occupy these spaces as a very economically useful livestock animal producing a wide range of products, a complementary species on multiple livestock farms, an educational tool for children, and sometimes as beloved pets. The relationships that farmers and homesteaders develop with their goats are complicated through goats’ positions as both commodities and as pets. In market settings, goats can be seen as an “unfinished commodity” (Paxson 2013) because their position as a valuable producer of good food is still being negotiated in the United States, where cattle, pigs, poultry, and sheep are the most common livestock animals. This thesis addresses the experiences and attitudes of people raising goats in South Carolina in the context of agricultural practice and landscapes and investigates the ways in which goats have become parts of people's lives within a political ecological and posthumanist framework.
My initial interest in goats began as I participated in the WWOOF-USA program for five months. WWOOF stands for Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms or Willing to Work on Organic Farms. (WWOOF-USA n.d.) It is an international network of farmers and volunteers: volunteers exchange their labor for free room and board from the farmers. During this time, I lived and worked on three different farms in northern California, New Mexico, and Alabama, all of which had goats. While I learned to milk goats, trim their hooves, assist in their births, and generally care for them, their versatility as livestock and inquisitive personalities captured my heart and intellectual interest. The stigma surrounding goats—as smelly, pushy animals eating everything and producing equally unsophisticated products—puzzled and intrigued me because, to me, they seemed like resourceful, lovely animals that could support food systems and communities sustainably. I wanted to know why people felt motivated to raise them and whether goats’ potential was being underutilized because of economic and regulatory obstacles.

When I first started graduate school, every time I mentioned my interest in goats, someone knew a friend with goats or had a story about goats to tell me. The increasing interest in South Carolina around sustainable, local food and agriculture—including goats—seemed a perfect opportunity for me to understand the motivations behind this fledgling movement. Inspired by Sidney Mintz’s (1985) single-commodity approach to sugar and new ways of thinking of humans, nonhumans, and ecologies, I wanted to trace growing trends in animal husbandry through the lens of goat and human interaction. By focusing on ways in which people relate to, commodify, and value goats, I have been able to investigate individual motivations, experiences, and relationships as well as examine broader historical contexts and changes in goat keeping.
In this study’s context, goats join chickens and bees as highly productive animals suitable for small spaces, such as backyards, small acreage farms, and urban areas (Hasler n.d.). For example, the city of Columbia, SC, revised the ordinance concerning chickens within city limits in 2009, allowing four hens per household to be lawfully kept. Throughout the country, families are beginning to keep goats for their own personal use. As honey and farm-fresh eggs have gained renown as healthy commodities, commercial operations may use goats in similar contexts, for production of artisanal cheeses, raw milk, and lean red meat.

In addition to goats as a commodity, this thesis uses the ideas from multispecies ethnography to situate goats as actors that co-create ecologies and agricultural operations (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010). The divide between nature and culture breaks down in multispecies ethnography, as cultural, political, and economic forces shape nonhuman as well as human lives and in turn nonhuman species shape these forces (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010:545). Food animals such as goats have contributed to ritual and mythology, to food security, to modes of production and ways of life, and to concerns about environmental degradation and disease. These approaches seem appropriate to the present research in the context that many of my participants discussed connection in a variety of ways, either to the land and their agricultural pursuits, or to consumers and other producers. What multispecies ethnography aims to do, in my view, is create a fertile ground for new worlds to be imagined, one in which humans and nonhumans create ecologies that cannot exist without their mutual interactions (Haraway 2008, Kirksey and Helmreich 2010). The discussion of interspecies relationships is grounded in a political ecological framework since these relationships mediated in political, technoeconomic,
and sociocultural systems (Hvalkof and Escobar 1998). In particular, I utilize Foucault’s (1997[1975-6]) biopolitics to understand how humans and institutions exert control over nonhuman species, specifically goats and microorganisms in this study (Paxson 2008, Paxson 2013).

Anthropology of landscapes and place-making also inform the construction of this thesis, especially in the analysis of my data. I consider how people create and re-create places based on tradition, history, daily practices, and the present (Basso 1996, Weiss 2011). These places and landscapes also are informed through the social imaginary (Appadurai 1996). Since I am interested in motivations, beliefs, and ideologies, I see that they influence my participants’ practices and inform their own experiences. Finally, I consider my participants from an intersectional lens (Weber 2010), thinking about how their social positions create systems of oppressions and privileges simultaneously that affect their work as farmers and homesteaders.

Throughout this thesis, I consider my participants raising goats in the context of sustainable food movements. This does not mean that all of my participants identify as belonging to the sustainable food movement or espouse all or even any components of “sustainable food ideology.” However, the sustainable food movement does have relevance for food producers in South Carolina because it affects their practices, livelihoods, and markets for their products and creates benefits as well as obstacles. Additionally, this thesis moves to change the conversation from one focusing on ideology-based sustainable food movements to one focusing on practice. Ideological underpinnings do not change that fact that farmers and homesteaders alike employ sustainable agricultural practices in the sense that they are resourceful and often
ingenuous in caring for their animals and land. My participants told me about asking their local milkmen for surplus milk, repurposing old pallets for hay mangers, and fertilizing their gardens with manure. Focusing on practice allows for recognition of the diverse motivations for creating sustainable food operations and systems that extend beyond liberal-mindedness (Guthman 2008, Slocum 2006).

People interested in the origin and quality of their food have mobilized sustainability and ideologies of localism into practices that create alternatives to industrial modes of production, distribution, and consumption. Broadly, this thesis defines sustainable food systems as (Feenstra 2002, Ikerd 2007, Zieminski 2012):

1) Food producers (farmers and farm laborers) make living wages in good labor conditions.
2) Communities and their economies remain viable.
3) Food production benefits the environment rather than degrades it.
4) All people have access to nutritious, safe foods.

Farmers markets, CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), urban farms, community gardens, and many other creative food projects provide meaningful alternatives to the globalized agro-industrial food system (Katz 2006). People have organized around the issues in sustainable food movements to protest the industrial food system and its harmful effects on the ecosystems, human health, and local food sufficiency, which in turn has resulted in the formation of organizations like Slow Food WWOOF, and farm-to-school programs modeled after Alice Waters’ Edible Schoolyard.¹ These organizations have

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¹Slow Food, begun as an Italian protest against fast food under the leadership of Carlo Petrini, promotes support of artisanal food crafts, local food producers, and heritage breeds of plants and animals as well as a taste for these local products (Slow Food International n.d.) Alice Waters, chef and restauranteur of Chez Panisse in Berklely, CA, began a school garden and teaching kitchen with Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School (The Edible Schoolyard Project 2013). The Edible Schoolyard catalyzed many other states to adopt a farm to school program, whether partnering with local food producers or creating school gardens as teaching tools.
influenced policy in national and international arenas to address how to create more sustainable food systems.

Food is an expression of culture, and often cultures become associated with iconic foods, such as apple pie as a cultural symbol of the United States. These food cultures are not static; they can be reinterpreted and manipulated to take up foods as representative or authentic articulations of cultures. Food producers exhibit multiple strategies for incorporating their products into regional and local foodsheds, particularly in the ways they discuss the nature of the animals they raise or plants they grow (Weiss 2011). Food producers and the plants or animals are not the only vehicles for food culture. People create and carry their food cultures with them, and place also becomes a site for food traditions, both historic and emerging, that find ways to become authentic. People associate foods with places in that certain foods will remind them of the context in which they had that food and can then summon place-based cultural memories (Mankekar 2005). Food traditions can also absorb new dishes or ingredients as part of place-based cuisine based on the work of local food producers. For example, Weiss (2011) describes the ways in which markets ground pork raised in North Carolina as part of the local food tradition, although this tradition is not necessarily historical.

As with any social movement, sustainable and local food movements have unequal power dynamics that result in obstacles to participation. Issues like lack of economic resources, discriminatory aid programs, exploited labor, and competitive markets all create enormous obstacles for these food producers (Katz 2006). Although sustainability has a number of objectives that define it, such as ecological, economic, and social justice,

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2 Foodsheds are similar to watersheds in that they refer to all the local resources for food (Feagan 2007). A foodshed refers to where food is grown, how it is transported, the markets it ends up and who consumes it.
certain issues appear less in public forums than the positive aspects of sustainability. While people support chemical-free agricultural practices and humane animal treatment, they may not consider the livelihoods and health of farmers and farm workers. The issue of livelihood is related to social sustainability, which has become problematic within food projects. Food producers rely on volunteer and other types of unpaid labor as well as outside income to support their food projects (Pilgeram 2011). These labor issues seriously call into question the true sustainability of sustainable food.

Additionally, sustainable food practices raise questions of access by diverse groups of people since, generally, sustainable food has been characterized as a middle-class and white space, in consumption as well as production (Pilgeram 2011, Slocum 2006). When People of Color engage in sustainable food practices, it may go unrecognized because their race and ethnicity are not conceptualized as part of these sustainable food spaces. Additionally, the ubiquity of whiteness in these spaces may limit the access that People of Color have to them because these spaces do not resonate with their ideologies (Guthman 2008). Finally, sustainably produced foods are often expensive, which makes them difficult to purchase for people with fewer economic resources. A farmers market director told me that while the market did accept EBT and WIC\(^3\), people used them for conventional produce since they could get more conventional apples for the price of organic apples.

Nevertheless, while social imaginaries in sustainable food movements can create exclusivity, they also include a desire for connection (Slocum 2006). Sustainable food movements proclaim to work toward connecting to the planet, people, plants, animals,

\(^3\) Women Infant Children, a governmental food assistance program
and the land. Additionally, there is excitement about ethnic diversity, in terms of products sold or for producers who are People of Color. Slocum (2006) describes multiple instances when white bodies are in close proximity to the bodies of People of Color, such as ethnic food festivals, world music festivals, and other instances where space is being created for more inclusion and interaction.

South Carolinians have begun to respond and engage in local and sustainable food systems and movements. In this way, South Carolinians’ local practices map onto national and global discourses about sustainable food systems. One particular response to global calls for sustainable food has been small-scale farms undertaken by experienced and novice agriculturists. In South Carolina, many farmers and homesteaders have utilized goats as an adaptive and versatile resource and component of their diversified farming operations since goats provide meat, milk, land management, fuel, and even textiles. Goat farmers and homesteaders situate their animals as belonging within South Carolina; however, their discourse implicitly reveals that there are disjunctures in how goats map onto the local landscape (Appadurai 1996). Issues of social class, ethnicity and citizenship as well as social sustainability all complicate local discourses situating goats in the landscape. This thesis explores the tension in particular between people discussing goats as a sustainable resource and the realities of goats as a recently introduced species. This research utilizes field notes as well as interview and survey data collected from people with goats to investigate what motivates people to raise goats and pursue agricultural projects, what their relationships with their animals are like and the consequences of human/goat interaction, how people secure their agricultural projects, and what complicates these relationships and agricultural projects.
CHAPTER II

HISTORY, CONTEXT, AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF ANTHROPOLOGY, ANIMALS, AND AGRICULTURE

This chapter covers five main topics related to the study of goats as part of sustainable agriculture in South Carolina. I elaborate on the position of goats within anthropology and throughout cultures. Then I briefly discuss the history of agriculture in the United States and in South Carolina, paying particular attention to the role of goats, as well as give background information on the current demographics and nature of goats and their products. Then I discuss the literature on sustainable agriculture, focusing on the people in sustainable agricultural production and on their practices. Finally, I outline my theoretical framework. All of these sections provide the necessary context within which to discuss the findings from my research.

GOATS’ PLACE IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY AND ACROSS CULTURES

“Why would a cultural anthropologist study goats?” is a valid question since humans are the central focus of anthropological study. Most research generally about goats is based on practical knowledge concerning goat raising strategies and obstacles, with discussion of sustainability and food security limited to practical applications (De Vries 2008, Morand-Fehr et al. 2004, Peacock and Sherman 2010). Due to the ancient relationship between goats and humans, goats regularly, if often superficially, appear in discussions of pastoralism. Goats contribute to the livelihoods, social and economic interactions, and identities of the people who raise them, making them an important
component of ethnography featuring contemporary and past pastoral groups (Blok 1981; Jacobs 1965; Kazato 2005; Parkes 1987). For example, Alan Jacobs (1965) argued that goats as well as sheep were undervalued in discussions of African pastoralism and their economic importance because these animals were always raised. Other livestock such as cattle, horses, or camels were not raised, yet these large animals defined pastoralists in many ethnographic accounts. Additionally, different groups have used goats as dowry, brideprice, or other types of currency as well as in ritual sacrifice (Samanta 1994; Shanklin 1983). Susan Rasmussen (1999) discussed goats and their multiple aromas—in cheese and milk, droppings, tanned leather—as part of the aromascape and symbolic experiences of the Tuareg people of Niger. Goats-human relationships represent one of the longest relationships between humans and livestock; this ancient relationship means that people throughout time and space have ritual, symbolic, and practical associations with goats.

Within anthropology, goats have generated interest since they have been domesticated for at least 10,000 years, making them one of the oldest species with which humans have intentionally coevolved (Zeder and Hesse 2000). The nature of initial animal domestication and animal husbandry has been an intriguing question, including whether domestication arose from uncertainty of wild game and humans’ exerting control over their meat supply (Markarewicz and Tuross 2012), whether pastoralism with goats and other species arose in conjunction with agricultural production or for participation in market economies (Ingold 1980), what the benefits of domestication were and how they happened (Shipman 2011), and whether domestication can be conceived as a contract (Ingold 1980, Wilkie 2010).
Goats have been considered to be of divine and social importance cross-culturally (Boyazoglu et al. 2005). Several historical examples give insight into the various roles goats have played in human history and in the human mind. In Sumerian, Babylonian, and Chinese traditions, deities appeared as goats, even representing lightning and a celestial connection between the earth the heavens (Boyazoglu et al. 2005). In Greek tradition, Amalthea fed Zeus goat milk, and goats led the people of Delphi to the center of the earth from which the first oracle came. Two bucks pulled Thor’s chariot, and when people today complain about kids’ onions (hail), kids’ onions reference the Teutonic notion of goat pellets falling from the heavens (Jaudas 1989). In India, the word for goat also means “not born,” thus representing the symbol for the unknown but basic substance composing the living world. Goats are therefore the mother of the world, named Pzaijriti (Jaudas 1989). Pharaoh Tutankhamen requested 22 tubes of his favorite goat cheese to be in his tomb for his own nourishment and as a gift he could give to the gods (Boyazoglu et al. 2005). Goats also represent fertility and lust for many cultures, which often has divine and ritual significance (Jaudas 1989; Samanta 1994). Perhaps this association with lust explains one of the ritual uses of goats as the “scapegoat,” stemming from the practice of sending a goat out in the environment to carry the sins of the community during biblical times (Blok 1981; Boyazoglu et al. 2005; Jaudas 1989). These examples demonstrate that goats play an ambiguous role within mythology and ritual: they are seen as givers of life through their milk as well as mediators to the divine realm while in other cultures, they may depict lust and be most useful in separating humans from their sins.

Despite the long and intricate history of humans and goats, small-ruminant researchers and goat enthusiasts note a lack of information about and interest in goats in
sectors such as medicine and health or commercial marketing. Since 1990, goats have increased their total number by 146%, or 1% to 4% annually. In terms of populations, 93.5% of goats live in Asia and Africa. Goats supply about 2% of milk globally, with 83% in developing nations; and goats supply 2% of meat, 97% of which are in developing countries (Aziz 2010). India has the most dairy goats, while France has the highest yield of milk per doe. China leads the world in goats for meat production, at 38%. Goats constitute an important part of the global food system, particularly in so-called developing countries.

Beyond goats as an economic or ritual resource, goats have been mostly absent from anthropological research, even with the rise in interest in posthumanism, multispecies ethnography, and animal studies. Other farm animals have received attention from these scholars (Haraway 2008, Stull and Broadway 2004; Weiss 2011; Wilkie 2010), while goats seem relegated, as small-ruminant researchers have noted, to their position as the poor man’s cow (Aziz 2010, Boyazoglu et al. 2005, De Vries 2008). Perhaps goats’ association with economic hardship, marginal environments, and impoverished people in the Global South has influenced this relative dearth of information on goats and their place in creating complex ecologies with humans, microbes, landscapes, and other nonhuman species. In this thesis I maintain that goats are a worthy and fascinating subject for study on numerous topics, such as their relationship with humans and other species in past and contemporary times and their role in societies, economies, and ecosystems.

Goats exist in the gray area between beloved pet and purely economic livestock (Wilkie 2010). How people relate to and interact with animals that provide goods,
particularly if those goods require the deaths of animals, cannot be simplistically reduced to emotional disengagement. The lives and deaths of livestock animals hold much to be learned about human nature, emotional attachment, and care work. Although goats can provide a wide range of useful products, they also have reputations as capricious, destructive creatures, making them a contentious feature in many agricultural environments (Boyazoglu et al. 2005). Goats challenge the nature-culture divide, as do many livestock species, but particularly because they are animals whose genetic material has been irrevocably changed by humans (Shipman 2011) but that can go feral (Belanger 1990[1975], USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service 2011).

From a commodity perspective, goats have a long history in many parts of the world, but many breeds and their products—dairy, meat, fiber, and even lawncare—have been imported to the United States only recently. However, people who have raised goats traditionally have developed highly sustainable herd management practices that maintain and even improve the ecosystem as well as utilize products such as meat, dairy, fuel, and cloth for individuals and communities, especially in marginal environments (Hunn 2011:90). These attributes of goats have made them increasingly appealing to NGOs such as Heifer International (Pelant et al. 1999) as well as to small-scale farms and homesteading families.

**Brief History of Agriculture and Goats in the U.S.**

In United States history, a series of developments in agriculture and food led to an industrialized, global, mass-produced food system, which achieved its climax in the post-World War II era (Root and de Rochement 1981). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Industrial Revolution led to a shift from manual labor to machination
(Grigg 1982). Machines were applied to the processing of raw materials, which eventually led to factories in urban areas. Factory jobs encouraged people to move to cities and leave rural farmland. Despite the decline in rural populations, the industrial demand for agricultural products did not decrease. These factors aided in the groundwork for the age of agricultural scientific research on crops and livestock; machinery-based farm work; intensive use of land and of animal production; high crop yields; and chemical, synthetic fertilizer and pesticides based upon weapons of war (Stull and Broadway 2003). These advancements spread outside of the West during the Green Revolution, which introduced industrial agriculture to developing countries in an attempt to solve problems of world hunger, through the 1940s to the 1970s (Poleman and Freebairn 1973). These changes discussed above have led to the global industrial agriculture system of modern times.

On the industrial scale, CAFOs (Confined Animal Feeding Operations) represent the epitome of what sustainable food advocates protest. CAFOs have become the main mode of industrial animal production: they are characterized by the large number of animals produced, the high-density confinement of the animals, and grain-based diets laced with antibiotics (Wilkie 2010). A large CAFO for sheep\(^4\) has over 10,000 animals, while mature dairy cow operations become considered CAFOs at 700 animals (EPA 2012b). During the eighteenth century, reformers argued for public slaughterhouses, which transitioned animal slaughter from local “backyard” contexts to regulated facilities, bolstered by concerns over public health and safety (Fitzgerald 2010). The

\(^4\) I am using sheep as similar to goats since goats are not included in the EPA definition.
railroad system and mechanical refrigeration facilitated the demand for meat, and this demand required more centralized locations, leading to CAFOs (Fitzgerald 2010).

The sustainable food movements, beginning mostly during and influenced by the period of social movements\(^5\) of the 1960s and 1970s, arose as people recognized the realities of the industrial food system. Food scares and environmental degradation all generated feelings of alienation from the basic necessity of eating, which has provided the context for connection that imbues sustainable food ideologies and practices (Ikerd 2011). Goats fit prominently into the back-to-the-land movement, which women spearheaded, empowered by the feminist movement and reforms in divorce laws and birth control (Paxson 2013). Women like Mary Keehn, Laura Chenel, Judy Schad, Letty Kilmoyer, and Jennifer Bice brought goat cheese into the public domain and eventually into retail outlets (Paxson 2013:69).

Animal husbandry has become an important and controversial aspect of sustainable agriculture. Animals have been considered problematic in sustainable agricultural models because of the diversion of grain from human populations (Stull and Broadway 2004), the inhumane treatment of animals for food production, and the negative environmental impacts of animals. Nevertheless, pasture-raised animal products, such as meat, eggs, and dairy, have increased in popularity. Sustainable animal husbandry has emerged in commercial operations and homesteads.

Goats occupy an interesting place in the history of the United States. Goats first arrived during the colonial expansionist efforts of the sixteenth century, when goats were

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\(^5\) These movements include the organic food movement (Peters 1979), the vegetarian movement (Belasco 1989, Iacobbo and Iacobbo 2004, 1995), the conservation and later environmental movement, the Popular Health movement (Dubisch 2004), the back-to-the-land movement, and the local (food) movement (Schumacher 1973), and the Slow Food movement (Andrews 2011).
kept on ships for fresh milk (Belanger 1990[1975]; Boyazoglu et al. 2005). These colonially introduced goats often became feral and constitute what people now consider to be the Spanish goat breed, indicating the mixed or unknown ancestry of these animals (USDA 2009). Beyond this early introduction, the real story of goats in the United States begins with Angora goats and mohair production.

After 1840, with the fall of cotton as a viable crop, Angora goat raising became an experiment in the Southeast (Bonner 1947). In 1849, James B. Davis of South Carolina, an American consul in Turkey, received nine Angora goats as gifts from the sultan of Turkey and shipped them to his home (Shelton 1993). Although other importations of Angora goats from both Turkey and South Africa occurred until 1925, one of the most significant owners was William Landrum, who brought the progeny of Davis’ Angoras and others to Texas. Throughout the twentieth century, mohair production concentrated on ranches from the Edwards Plateau in Texas, with 95 percent of mohair coming from this region.

Beyond the mohair industry, specific histories of dairy and meat goats are more recent. The USDA (2009) notes that the dual use of goats has decreased in favor of specialization for dairy or meat production. Dairy goat breeds began to be imported in the early twentieth century, such as Toggenburgs in 1893, Nubians in 1909, Saanens in 1904, and purebred Oberhasli in 1936, and Eugena Frey developed the La Mancha in Oregon in the 1930s (Belanger 1990[1975]). Since 1993, when the United States allowed Boer goats to be important from South Africa, goat meat production has soared, following a similar pattern to commercial goat fiber operations in Texas (USDA 2009). Some of the most important breeds in the United States are Angora goats since they have the longest
commercial history of any other breed; Boer goats due to their recent popularity as the meat goat breed to raise; Nubians for their renowned butterfat content in their milk, making them important components of goat dairies; and La Manchas, one of the few goat breeds developed in the United States (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Popular goats breeds and their primary purpose: Angora (fiber); Boer (meat); Nubian and La Mancha (dairy)

In the United States, there are an estimated 2.5 to 3 million goats, representing only about 0.35% of the world’s population of goats (861.9 million) (Aziz 2010, USDA 2011). Some of the main reasons identified for raising goats in the U.S. as income generation, for fun/hobby, land management, personal consumption, family tradition, and clubs
As of 2010, there were 152,000 goat operations in the United States. 42% of goats are raised for meat, 10% for dairy, 1.5% for fiber, and 46.15 for other, which includes for breeding stock and shows, 4-H, land management and grazing control, pack animals, and biotechnology\(^6\) (USDA 2009, 2011). Most goat farms, except those for fiber, have been operating for less than 10 years, which suggests an increase in goat production in the late 1990s. In 2002, the age of 43% of goat farm operators was 55 years and older, and of the 96,000 goat operations in the U.S., 10,000 were owned by women, a 34% increase from 1997 to 2002 (USDA 2009). As of 2002, South Carolina had 41,192 goats total: 37,895 meat and other goats; 2,849 dairy goats; and 358 Angora goats.

Despite the large operations for goat meat and goat fiber, it may be that no CAFO exists for goats (CUESA n.d.). The reasons for the lack of industrial goat CAFOS can be only conjectured. Perhaps the Texas style of ranching, where goat fiber and meat production developed and prospered, kept goats in larger spaces, or the back-to-the-land movement’s adoption of the goat as a milk producer encouraged small-scale operations. Maybe the lack of demand for goat products (until recently) has not encouraged goat CAFOs. Regardless, 99.7% of all goat farms in 2007 were considered small-scale, which means having a sole proprietor or single-family ownership, an income less than $250,000, and fewer than 500 goats (USDA 2009, 2011).

Reports from the USDA (2009, 2011) and West Virginia University (Singh-Knight and Knight 2005) state that the primary consumers of goat meat in the U.S. are ethnic communities from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Africa, Mexico, western Europe and the Caribbean, with Muslim populations constituting the primary consumers. All three

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\(^6\) A current biotechnology project with goats uses lactating transgenic does to produce spider silk (USDA 2009).
reports consider these communities as the most significant customer base, with one including information about religious holidays, proscriptions, and generalized cultural preferences about age, cuts of meat, and slaughter methods (Singh-Knight and Knight 2005).

In terms of consumption, people have diverse beliefs about goat products, particularly in the context of health. People value goat meat—also called chevon⁷—as a red meat with as much protein as other red meats but with low levels of fat and calories (Singh-Knight and Knight 2005). However, goat milk and dairy products are the major focus of debate and concern in the U.S.

In discourse centered on improved health and food consumption, goat milk has been touted as suitable for people who are lactose intolerant and for health issues ranging from dyspepsia, ulcer, liver dysfunction, jaundice, and improved health for infants and elderly people (Belanger 1990[1975]). Although such claims are contentious, goat milk has been reported to have slightly less lactose, smaller and more digestible proteins, and higher levels of important minerals and vitamins than cows’ milk (USDA 2009).

Although over half of the goat cheese products consumed in the U.S. are imported, the USDA (2009) cites the goat cheese market as the fastest growing market for goat milk. Goat cheese is more often than not produced by artisanal, gourmet, or farmstead cheese-makers instead of at an industrial level. Although any traditional cheeses have been made with goats’ milk—for example, chabichou, feta, gjetost, and pyramide cheese—goat milk can be used to make any kind of cheese (USDA 2009).

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⁷ In 1922, the Sheep and Goat Raisers’ Association held a contest for naming goat meat, and Mrs. E.W. Hardgrave’s submission of chevon won, coming from the French word for goat, chèvre. The USDA adopted this term in 1928, although goat and mutton are still used to describe adult goat meat, and cabrito and kid for young goat meat (Belanger 1990[1975]; Popik 2009).
Discourse on raw dairy products has produced discussion at both federal and local levels, and goat milk can often be found raw. In goat operations that milk their does, 53.8% report family members or employees consuming raw goat milk products, but such products become a source of concern at the federal level (USDA 2011). All goat milk sold must be from a Grade A dairy, with standards based on cow milk (which has a different composition) (USDA 2009). South Carolina is one of the few states allowing the legal sale of raw dairy products without restrictions under DHEC Regulation 61-34, although permits, certified dairy parlors, and specific milking procedures are required (SC DHEC n.d.).

**Brief History of Agriculture in South Carolina**

The history of agriculture in South Carolina truly begins with rice, specifically Carolina Gold rice, in 1685 (SC Department of Agriculture 2012a). Indigo, tobacco, and finally cotton were also important crops in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Today, animal husbandry, or animal agriculture, produces the top two agricultural commodities in South Carolina: broiler chickens and turkeys (SC Department of Agriculture 2012b). The South Carolina Department of Agriculture includes goats in their list of animal agricultural commodities, although goats are not a top commodity in terms of annual cash receipts.

South Carolina’s agriculture has followed a tradition of plantation-style growing with high yield crops. However, with the decline in demand of tobacco at the turn of the twentieth century, farmers in the Southeast and South Carolina have sought alternative markets and crops, such as ornamental plants, herbal plants, value-added products (SC Department of Agriculture 2012a), as well as goat operations (Aziz 2010). This more
recent trend has implications for agricultural ventures today, such as farmers seeking out niche markets or value-added products that generate high levels of income on small scales since more traditional crops have failed (SC Department of Agriculture 2012a).

The success and increase in farmers markets throughout South Carolina shows the interest in local food systems. Additionally, several farmers—including two goat farmers—helped establish the National Heritage Corridor in 1996, a project meant to celebrate and honor the cultural and historical landscapes of South Carolina as well as other states (SC National Heritage Corridor 2012). In the section highlighting agriculture, two goats farms, Split Creek Farm and Emerald Farm, are featured. The Corridor is particularly important in creating a way to preserve these agricultural landscapes, particularly agricultural land, which has otherwise been developed at a staggering rate (Katz 2006).

A long tradition of agriculture, the shift to seeking markets for value-added products, and increased investment in local food systems all provide the historical and geographical context for my research participants raising goats in South Carolina.

Specific histories on goats in South Carolina are somewhat hazy. While several participants told me that their grandparents had grown up raising goats or they knew of neighbors keeping briar goats (South Carolinians’ term for Spanish goats or “mutt” goats), official records are not easily discerned. The two main goat associations specific to South Carolina are the South Carolina Meat Goat Association, begun in 1997, and South Carolina Dairy Goat Association. Southern Goat Producers—officially a non-profit in 2008, a year after forming—is another important association based in South Carolina but with the intention to create connections through the Southeast. Currently, fifteen licensed Grade A goat dairies are spread across South Carolina (DHEC, email to Bri
Farber, March 22, 2013). The South Carolina Department of Agriculture lists almost thirty registered livestock auctions, although my participants said only a few of those brought in good prices for goats or attracted goat sellers and buyers.

Goats harbor multiple meanings for people who raise them, as traditional food encapsulating memory, spiritual fulfillments, livelihood security, and sources of sustainability and potentially as a mode of resistance. Within the context of this thesis, goats as a sustainable resource (in my participants’ practices and discourse) emerged as an important theme, and my research questions specifically addressed sustainable agriculture. Due to its salience in my methodology and coding, I utilized the literature on sustainable agriculture in both formulating my questions as well as analyzing my data.

A SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE CONTEXT

Sustainable agriculture and its participants have become major foci in rural sociology, human and feminist geography, and food studies. This increase of interest can be attributed to the growing awareness of the problems that arise as a result of industrial scale agricultural operations. Particular attention has been paid to who does sustainable agriculture work, how they are able to do it based on their social positions, and the practices that accompany and signify sustainability. Who does sustainable agriculture has to do with who is imagined to be capable and willing to do this kind of work, which relates to gender, sexuality, bodies, ethnicity, race, class, and citizenship status. Sustainable agriculture spaces then become associated to certain bodies. *Gender, sexuality, and able bodies in sustainable agriculture.* The rise in the number of women farmers is particularly noticeable in industrialized countries where women operate organic and sustainable farms. In the United States in 2002, women operated
22% of the organic farms, and in Canada in 2001, women operated 33% (Jarosz 2011:307). In the United Kingdom in 2005, while only 10% of farmers overall were small-scale and organic, half of this 10% were women. Women’s work in sustainable farming is not new; rather, their work is valued now as it has not been in the past (Trauger 2004). Sustainable agricultural work fits into gendered stereotypes about the work that women are expected to do: labor intensive, low uses of mechanical and chemical technology, and “unskilled.” Additionally, women are choosing to farm because of caretaker ethics—for themselves, for others, and for the environment (Jarosz 2011). Women sustainable farmers in industrialized countries often describe farming as a lifestyle choice grounded in love of food, cooking, and nourishing. The social nature of farming and nourishing is particularly significant in the women’s discourse, and in how they describe living how they want and the importance and reward of sharing the products of their good living with others.

Food products such as pasture-raised eggs, meat, organic vegetables, and value-added products like soap and jams were often produced historically as part of women’s reproductive work for their families through subsistence farming and domestic food processing (Squier 2010; Trauger 2004). Markets for sustainable food have placed new value on these types of product and, by association, the traditional aspect of women’s reproductive work. However, the success of small-scale sustainable agricultural ventures, particularly CSAs, is often dependent on educated, middle class, white women’s occupational fluidity. These women can easily supplement their income with other work.

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8 CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture. Customers buy a share in the farm at the beginning of a growing season, which provides farmers with money for upfront costs, and throughout the season the customers receive a box of seasonal, local produce, usually on a weekly basis.
or abandon farming to seek other opportunities, opportunities which are facilitated by their class status, race, and educational background (Jarosz 2011). Despite the limited economic benefits, Jarosz (2011) argues for the transformative nature of care ethics ideology to create a community economy and to embody ethical practices, and women have mediated this process by and large.

The literature on sustainable agriculture most often contextualizes ability in gendered ways, focusing on the effects of agricultural labor on women, both physically and mentally. While women’s attraction to sustainable agriculture may be framed as an extension of their caretaker role, women in Trauger’s study (2004) also stated that they could manage the required physical labor in sustainable agricultural practice. The work that women farmers do significantly affects their health. Although researchers, economists, and social scientists only rarely explicitly recognize it, tending to animals and crops all requires physical strength and endurance that puts strain on the body in a myriad of ways. Industrial commercial agriculture likewise creates implications for health because of its reliance on chemicals and technology. Feminist scholars working with women agricultural workers also discuss how conceptualizing women’s work as easier than men’s may increase risk of injury since their tasks do not get categorized as straining or difficult (Barndt 2002). Finally, the health effects of chemical exposure on agricultural workers can be severe and could have similar outcomes for farmers\(^9\) (Bain 2010; Márquez et al. 2005).

Agricultural work also affects mental and emotional health, and emotions are often seen as hindering successful agricultural work. The emotional work done by farmers

\(^9\) The distinction between farmers and farm workers here is that farmers are in charge of their operations whereas farm workers are not.
indicates high levels of stress. For example, farmwomen describe the stress of their various roles, such as doing care work for multiple generations, dealing with continual financial strain and worries, lacking support from partners, and negotiating with the dominant discourses of care and health for their families (Herron and Skinner 2011; Jarosz 2011; McIntyre et al. 2009). Farmwomen also describe the stress created by loss of population in their communities, and worry about their farms’ roles in their communities (Herron and Skinner 2011). Although women were valued due to their naturalized skills as caretakers, emotions often played a contradictory role in women’s agricultural and food work. Emotions in agricultural labor had no value or place because they were seen as counterproductive (Herron and Skinner 2011). In additions to stress surrounding farm-centered labor, farmers may also be activists, healers, business owners beyond the sale of food, key links in social networks, global actors, and embodied representatives of the past. These multiple roles, all of which are vital to the success of farmers, can conflict as well as cause stress and tension for food producers (Brandt and Haugen 2011).

Queerness has become a useful analytic for understanding alternative food practice and projects since they represent a resistance to hegemonic structures (Sbicca 2011). The heterosexual family farm is the presumed norm for agricultural practices in the United States (Katz 2006). Rural spaces are often conceptualized as beacons of traditionalism from which queer people leave for urban places (Bell and Valentine 1995). In this way, rural agricultural practice supports a heteronormative culture.

However, rural spaces have long been a part of queer social imaginaries and utopias (Bell and Valentine 1995). Additionally, rural spaces have been argued to be sites of homosexual practices. In the 1970s, intentional community projects and communes
attracted queer people, especially lesbian women, and some of the communes still survive today (Bell and Valentine 1995; Sbicca 2011). Queerness exists outside of the dominant heteronormative structure in a similar way that urban food projects and sustainable food production exist outside the industrial food system. Queerness reconfigures relationships between people and allows for the exploration of gender and sexuality as sustainable agriculture redefines people’s relationship to land and food.

Social class, race, and ethnicity in sustainable food. Social class issues often manifests subtly within sustainable agriculture. Customers of sustainable farmers are often of higher social class than farmers themselves, at least in terms of economic resources. For example, at the time of the 2009 USDA survey, of the 96,000 small-scale goat operations, only 1,000 (1.0%) have returned more than $50,000 per year in profit. While not necessarily economically lucrative, agriculture as an occupation has accumulated a high level of social capital, as celebrity farmers and farming endeavors have started to appear, in social imaginaries and popular culture. Sustainable food producers’ popularity may mask economic hardships that they face. That many sustainable food producers rely on customer bases with more economic resources than them also limits the class diversity in sustainable food consumption (Pilgeram 2011).

Similarly to class issues, sustainable food participants and spaces often do not engage with issues of race and ethnicity. Sustainable food practice and spaces become associated with Whiteness (Guthman 2008; Slocum 2006). While the expense of sustainable food products can be seen as limiting for lower social classes to access, logically it does not follow that sustainable food is seen as a white practice and space. The predominance of Whiteness in sustainable food generates shame (Slocum 2006) as
well as considerable resistance and denial, particularly through colorblind politics and universalism (Guthman 2008). Sustainable food participants may deny race as an identifier altogether or they may assume that values held by whites are ubiquitous.

The predominance of Whiteness in sustainable food space often means the People of Color’s contributions to sustainable agriculture do not receive recognition and that the dominance of Whiteness in sustainable food is not interrogated. In one study, People of Color described feeling isolated from alternative food discourses and spaces due to the language used and the fear of challenging this alienating discourse (Guthman 2008). The romanticization of an agrarian past may not resonate with people for whom agriculture has been part of a harsh reality and history. The demand that people give more money to food products also overlooks that many people, particularly people of color and working-class people, have given their labor to food industries that exploit their bodies for profit. Issues like these contribute to exclusionary sustainable food spaces and practices.

Exclusionary spaces and practices can be seen as “Othering.” Edward Said (1978) popularized the idea of the Other when he discussed the process of Orientalism. Europeans created a hierarchal divide between the East and the West, whereas the people in the East were designated as the Other, seen as inferior due to cultural practices and ideas. Categorizing people as the Other leads to reification and stereotypes. Whether such stereotypes are positive or negative in nature, they limit what an individual can be, or the full range of human potential. So, for example, if sustainable food spaces are seen as white and middle-class, when People of Color or working class people grow their own food, create neighborhood gardens, or participate in farmers markets, these sustainable
food practices may be seen as exceptional or done “out of necessity” rather than desire to participate.

Whiteness must be analyzed and discussed, not simply critiqued or ignored, within sustainable food projects. Whiteness does not simply refer to people’s appearance and bodies; it also includes space and practices. The privileges given to white bodies, practices, and spaces are often invisible, particularly for the people receiving those privileges. Race is defined as “difference and deviance from social norms that have been seamlessly equated with…white people” (Hartigan 1999:185). If being white or middle-class is linked to the ability to participate in sustainable food production and consumption, this association could cause sustainable food to be viewed as a social norm rather than a privilege. From this perspective, people who do not participate are simply unwilling rather than limited in or blocked from participation. Slocum (2006) cautions that desire for quality food and good economies is not white; rather, sustainable food projects and practices become white through the bodies of people who do that work and whom they are conceptualized to be.

Viewing sustainable food projects as a predominantly white movement means that food projects enacted by People of Color may be ignored or marginalized. Contributions by People of Color within agriculture are made invisible further due to limited or completely obstructed access to land (Gilbert et al. 2002; Guthman 2008). “Land was virtually given away to whites at the same time that reconstruction failed in the South, Native American lands were appropriated, Chinese and Japanese were precluded from land ownership, and the Spanish speaking…[Californians] were disenfranchised of their ranches” (Guthman 2008:294). For example, the dramatic loss of land among African
American farmers—nearly 1 million acres in 1920 to less than 20,000 in 1997—can be attributed in part to forced sales of property, lack of access to and knowledge of aid programs, as well as continuing racial discrimination by lenders and government agencies (Gilbert et al. 2002). Lack of resources coupled with lack of profitability has seriously limited the viability of agricultural pursuits by African American farmers. By not looking critically at what Whiteness is and how it affects sustainable food production, food projects may be undermined as sites of resistance and limit who participates in these methods of resistance.

Practices that recognize and encourage diversity also can serve as points of resistance against alienation. While Whiteness in sustainable food movements can create exclusion, it also includes a desire for connection (Slocum 2006). Sustainable food movements do proclaim to work toward creating better lives for all people, the planet, and other living beings, so Whiteness should not be seen as a singularly destructive force.

**Practices in sustainable agriculture.** Sustainable agriculture is often framed in terms of place, locality, and a site of activism. Although sustainable food producers operate in a market economy, many seek to reject capitalism as the sole or dominant mode of exchange, instead striving to create alternatives through the use of direct marketing strategies like CSAs and farmers markets (Baker 2004; Gagné 2011; Ikerd 2011). Many sustainable food projects emphasize connecting to the land. The emphasis on connecting to the land and food production allows food producers to overcome the alienation from their labor and from the commodities they produce that Marx and Engels (2010[1844]) associate with industrial capitalism. In addition, local knowledge and localized
constructions of place become sources of power, an important aspect in overcoming alienation (Escobar 2001:162).

However, the difficulties that small-scale, local, sustainable food producers face in providing for their livelihoods are generally obscured in the service of a fetishized ideology (Gagné 2011; Janssen 2010; Pilgeram 2011). Lack of economic resources, discriminatory aid programs, exploited labor, and competitive markets all create enormous obstacles for food producers. They often must supplement their farms with off-farm income and with obscured labor (Pilgeram 2011). Obscured labor refers to the work of unpaid volunteers and the work of the farmers themselves, which they do not compensate with a living wage for the amount of their labor-time. This obscured labor is particularly problematic given that farmers exploit their own labor to achieve ideological goals, which seriously calls into question the social sustainability aspect of alternative food projects. Other farmers must supplement their income with off-farm sources through other jobs or inheritances. In one study, the farmers describe farming as a privilege rather than the base of their livelihood (Pilgeram 2011).

Sustainable food raises questions of access by diverse demographics of people since generally sustainable food has been characterized as a middle-class and white space (Pilgeram 2011). Privileging certain voices in sustainable food projects erases people in marginalized positions from expressing and circulating their own visions of sustainability and food security. People of many different ethnicities as well as immigrant communities bring their traditional food and ecological knowledge with them, which often includes sustainable practices (Baker 2011). Despite their traditional knowledge and practices,
these groups are often fetishized or obscured and trivialized in regard to their participation in sustainability and food security practices.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this thesis I utilize political ecology as the main theoretical framework. Commodity studies, biopolitics and discussions surrounding animal studies, particularly multispecies ethnography, and discussions of place and place-making inform and enrich the political ecological framework.

Political ecology provides an important framework for the study of industrial and sustainable modes of agriculture. Political ecology—arising from ecological anthropology, political economy, and history—examines how changes in the environment influence and are affected by political, cultural, and technoeconomic systems and how people conceptualize their relationship to the environment (Hvalkof and Escobar 1998). Political ecology has become an important theoretical framework as sustainability has entered the political rhetoric of social movements, particularly of indigenous peoples, and the struggles for their lands and natural resources as well as NGOs and international groups. Additionally, postmodern and poststructural scholars have critiqued the nature-culture divide, no matter how interdependent ecological and societal systems were conceived to be previously. Hvalkof and Escobar (1998) emphasize the need for recognizing multiple, localized conceptualizations of nature. Sustainable agricultural practices and ideologies inform critiques of industrial agriculture and have become standardized through programs such as GAP (Good Agricultural Practice) as well as more bounded, “localized” organic standards such as through the USDA. The politicization of agricultural practice and products creates differentiated levels of access, for both food producers and consumers,
to sustainable food products and spaces. Political ecology has implications for issues like live animal imports and the microbiopolitics of food (Paxson 2008, 2013), which will be expanded upon further later.

An interesting way to examine the changes that ecological, political, and economic systems affect is by tracing a commodity through its production, exchange, and consumption. The commodity approach I utilize follows Sidney Mintz’s examination of sugar (1985) throughout time and space, beginning with sugar cane’s origins in the Caribbean and its global expansion with colonialism. Another excellent example of the commodity approach is Deborah Barndt’s work (2002) on the sociocultural and political life of the commodity tomato. She focuses on the lives of the people—grocery and fast food restaurants workers, Mexican pickers and packers—interacting with this food through its journey from production to distribution to consumption. Barndt frames their stories in broad themes such as biocultural diversity, production and consumption, work and technology, and health and environment as well as historical contexts. She furthermore focuses on the points of resistance, what she calls the “other globalization.” Barndt’s work in particular has influenced my work with people raising goats, leading me to try to understand how goats came to the United States, the levels of intensive production, and the resistances exhibited by some of my research participants.

Biopolitics (Foucault 1997[1975-6]) has implications for how changes in ecologies are facilitated. Biopolitics states that human reproduction, morbidity, and mortality come under the state’s control concurrent with the emergence of specialized knowledges and their practitioners, and spaces affecting these aspects of human life become regulated. As environments become resources to control, foods and agricultural practice also become
standardized and controlled. Biopolitical-type controls have particular implications for domesticated animals, which represent extremes of a species’ control over another species. However, controlled animals also exhibit moments in which their biologies are beyond control, such as dying unexpectedly or birthing triplets rather than twins.

A specific example of biopolitics’ role in human-nonhuman relationships is microbiopolitics (Paxson 2008, 2013), a term Paxson uses to describe human efforts, both grassroots and institutional, in understanding and mediating relationships with microbes. Post-Pasteurian and Pasteurian cultures represent the two factions, the former holding that microbes are neutral agents that can be potential co-creators of a kind of terroir\textsuperscript{10} that is specifically found in raw dairy products, and the latter viewing microbes as dangerous. Post-Pasteurians conceive of raw dairy products as living organisms. Raw dairy is the breeding ground for microbes doing work on the substrate (milk or cheese in this case). The microbes’ work contributes to the “aging of cheese” where these products, as living foods, literally change and “grow” over time. Pasteurians wish to nullify the livingness of raw dairy since it is seen as unruly, unpredictable, and potentially harmful. As researchers begin to recognize the mutual participation of human and nonhuman species in creating the ecologies we cohabit, we must consider the roles of other species in these relationships of power and inequality.

Posthumanist animal studies have created a method and mode of inquiry that frames the relationships between humans and nonhumans as collaborative, co-creating, and equal. While researchers cannot speak for nonhuman species, approaching them as co-producers of ecosystems and livelihoods breaks down the nature-culture divide. The

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Terroir} refers to the French concept of a taste coming from a specific region, literally manifesting from the local environment.
nature-culture divide separates humans from the natural world, often putting humans and human activities outside of nature, or in culture. However, the nature-culture divide does not exist in all cultures (Pierotti 2011), and as researchers challenge the nature-culture divide, this challenge complicates and broadens how humans and their interactions in the world can be perceived. This breakdown of the nature-culture divide encourages a more fluid and realistic understanding of interactions between species that is not reliant on false dichotomies.

In anthropology, utilizing a multispecies ethnographic approach allows for the recognition of biographical and political lives of nonhuman species (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010:545). In many ways, researchers show that humans create more human-like nonhuman species. Similarly, nonhuman species have influence on people’s sense of their own humanity. Animals are not only “good to think” as symbolic resources or good to eat or use (Lévi-Strauss 1962), they are good to live with (Haraway 2008). However, when thinking about interconnections between multiple species, humans do not value all relationships equally, and some animals become relegated to a position of “unloved other” (Rose and van Dooren 2011). Regardless of the value associated with nonhuman species, Haraway (2008) conceptualizes nonhuman animals as equals and co-creators of the spaces all living species share, a position of power that has not traditionally been assigned to nonhumans.

This thesis also uses concepts of place-making (Basso 1996; Escobar 2001; Weiss 2011), social imaginaries (Appadurai 1996), and hemispheric localism (Mendoza-Denton 2008) to how explore goat raisers’ discourse reflects place-making for their agricultural practices. People who are place-makers relate information about the history of a place
and the people who live and have lived there, perhaps with more insight into a culture than a written document could give (Basso 1996). When people utilize their imagination and memory in talking about the history and stories of places, they are engaging in the act of place-making (Basso 1996). Only certain portions of the past in place-making will come through as the telling of the past is mediated by history, memory, and imagination, which give place-making a subjective quality. However, place-makers do not simply create places through the past, history, and tradition; people make places in the present through daily practices.

While tradition and the past may strengthen senses of and ties to place, place-makers utilize other methods to create places that happen in the present. For example, many food producers engage in place-based politics, fulfilling the role of placelings as outlined by Escobar (2001). As placelings, food producers defend their places through their local projects of sustainable agriculture and against industrial agribusiness as these corporate forces attempt to control their places.

Another way people make places is through the social imaginary (Appadurai 1996). People construct the social imaginary through how they perceive and interact with the movements of people and their cultures, technology, global capital, media, and ideas and ideologies, which Appadurai defines as different “scapes” that interact in supportive and contradictory ways. As Appadurai (1996) states “…the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility…” People’s imaginations and images play active, constructive roles in shaping realities. Sustainable agriculture,
particularly at the local and small scale, can be seen as a return to appreciating place, and knowing the origins of food gives people a sense of well-being. However, what constitutes as local and place-based can be negotiated through practices and ingenuity, such as those exhibited by the pig farmers in Weiss’s (2011) study.

In Weiss’ (2011) study of pig farmers in North Carolina, he discusses how pig farmers construct social networks, use marketing skills, educate people’s senses to appreciate local pork, and use their animal husbandry skills to make valuable hybrids. The hybrids become in tune with places because they were developed locally and were raised on place-based diets that infuse the pork with the taste of North Carolina. Chefs utilize local pork to explore different cuisines like pan-Asian or pan-Italian; although not traditional cuisines to North Carolina, using local pork legitimizes these experimentations because local pork comes from the region. In this case, locality does not have to link to the past or tradition in order to be legitimately considered place-based. The present has very significant implications for construction of place; even though place-making often draws on the power of the past, the imaginations of place-makers can add a creative element to this process.

Also in terms of place and place-making, Norma Mendoza-Denton’s hemispheric localism (2008) helps articulate how people situate local practices in global fields of meaning and significance. Her concept specifically refers to localized, spatialized discourses about place and belonging projected on issues about race, immigration, modernity, and globalization (Mendoza-Denton 2008:104). I propose that goat raisers’ participation in national and international discourses about sustainability, agriculture, and
animal husbandry are reflected in their local practices, and these local practices fit into the global discourse on sustainability.

One final analytical tool for considering and interrogating sustainable food ideology and participants is intersectionality. Black feminists, particularly of the Combahee River Collective, first described systems of interlocking oppression such as racism, sexism, and classism (Cole 2009). Kimberly Crenshaw first used the term intersectionality to name these interlocking oppressions and to critique the tendency in social science research to focus on one aspect of social belonging and identity, such as race or gender, but not both. Intersectionality connects social categories as differential relationships of power, specifically oppression and privilege, in historical contexts and operating at different scales (Weber 2010). An intersectional analysis of sustainable food producers unveils the privileges and oppressions they experience on multiple scales of time and space. Intersectional analysis highlights hidden aspects of privilege within sustainable food projects, which this thesis grounds in the broader political ecological framework.

In summary, this thesis will interrogate goats and the people who raise them from these multiple theoretical lenses grounded in political-ecological and socioeconomic domains. Place-making becomes an act with political implications in that ecologies and the beings living in a place become sources of power, domination, and resistance. Social imaginaries construct places, particularly based on the social positions of the people in these places (since these positions will influence what they see, experience, and understand.) These places become sites of complicated relationships, where commodification of life-for-profit collides with the emotional bond between humans and goats.
ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

I have organized this thesis into five chapters. Chapter II, “History, Context, and Theoretical Perspectives of Anthropology, Animals, and Agriculture” covers the relevant literature for my topic as well as my theoretical framework. In the first three sections of Chapter II, I give background information on goats and agriculture in anthropology and other disciplines. I outline the role of goats in anthropological study temporally, spatially, and cross-culturally. Here, I pay particular attention to the sociocultural and ritual importance of goats and goat products, specifically milk and meat, particularly in pastoral cultures and in the Global South. Next, I briefly discuss goats in an agricultural context and history, in the United States and within South Carolina. The limited attention paid to goats as a research subject helps to demonstrate the lack of value associated with goats, in both scholarly and applied work.

In the next two sections of Chapter II, I focus on providing frameworks that influenced how I collected and thought about my data. I give particular attention to the literature on sustainable agriculture, specifically who does sustainable agricultural work and how this affects the practice of sustainable agriculture. Sustainable agriculture became relevant since I approached my fieldwork with these questions in mind. Additionally, the sustainable food movement is relevant to my participants since they participate and have often benefited from engagement in sustainable food spaces. Finally, I lay out my theoretical framework. I utilize political ecology to talk about ecological resources entering and influencing the political, economic, and social domains of human life. I further enrich my discussion of political ecology with a close look at commodity studies, to understand the role of goats in the marketplace; biopolitics to delve into the
relationships of power between goats, humans, other nonhuman species, and institutions; posthumanism and multispecies ethnography to utilize the perspective of collaboration between different species and what this perspective yields in analysis; studies on place and place-making to discuss how South Carolinians make their places suitable for goats; and intersectionality to examine the social positions of my participants and their influence on their experiences, practices, and ideas.

In Chapter III, Research Methodology, I outline the methods that I utilized during my fieldwork. Using an ethnographic approach, such as open-ended interviewing and participant observation, gave me insight into my participants’ experiences with and knowledge about goats. Here I describe how I was perceived in the field, as more of a goat enthusiast and student rather than an anthropological researcher, and how this affected my data collection. I cover my sampling techniques as well as the demographics from my samples, from my interviews and my online survey. I describe important events, such as farm tours, goat-related conferences, livestock shows, and farmers markets, as well as explain my involvement in these events during periods of participant observation. I explain how I analyzed my data through open coding and generating themes. Finally, I detail some ethical considerations and quandaries the occurred during my fieldwork.

In Chapter IV, I discuss my findings through organizing my analysis through a landscape perspective. Inspired by Appadurai’s (1996) scapes, I generated four interlocking landscapes that affect and are affected by goat-human relationships: ecological, political, economic, and sociocultural. Goats uniquely fit into all four of these landscapes; however, this fit gets undermined through tensions and complications. People raising goats value their animals as an economic resource as well as beloved creatures.
However, goats and their products face misunderstanding, distrust, and dislike at the institutional level and in the marketplace. Goat products are constrained to niche markets due to social perceptions as well as regulatory policy. Although my participants care for their animals, this care can complicate their decision-making process so that it is not purely economic choice or simply pursuit of lifestyle. My participants try to balance valuing the bonds with their animals as well as sustain their livelihoods from these bonds.

In Chapter V Conclusion, I summarize the experiences and ideas of my participants and my analysis of their experiences. I consider how their relationships with their goats and their agricultural practices are extremely complicated. These relationships cannot be divided into economic versus emotional or livelihood versus lifestyle. My participants expressed diverse and multiple reasons for raising goats as well as strategies for how to do so. However, while goats are versatile livestock animals, they have issues and face oppositions within ecological, political, economic, and sociocultural landscapes. I discuss what these experiences mean for the sustainable food movement. I complicate the idea of sustainable food movements as mainly based on certain ideologies, like liberality. Instead I discuss the ideas of practice-based sustainable food production as well as motivations like spirituality, tradition, self-sufficiency, and resourcefulness as equally valid motivations. The lens of the goat is a useful analytical tool for understanding human-nonhuman relationships in ecosystems, the marketplace, political institutions, and the social imaginary. Finally, I consider the place of goats in sustainable food movements in South Carolina and globally and argue for goats’ importance in the lives of people working for more just food systems.
CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, first I cover the rationale behind the ethnographic approach to my research questions, and then I discuss my role as a researcher in my fieldwork. Next, I discuss my methodology, including interviews, surveying, and participant observation. Within that section, I describe my strategies for sampling as well as the demographics of my sample. I also describe the types of participant observation in which I engaged, including taking farm tours, attending goat shows and seminars, helping with farm chores, and participating in selling at a market. Then I describe how I processed and organized my data for analysis. Finally, I discuss ethical issues that I encountered during my fieldwork.

RESEARCH DESIGN

During the summer months of 2012, I conducted an ethnographic study with people who raise goats for personal and commercial ventures in South Carolina. My methodology included participation observation, formal and informal semi-structured interviews, an online survey, and background research. I utilized government agency websites, universities with animal science programs, SC DHEC websites and literature, and goat association websites and literature to ground my understanding in goats’ place and history–social, cultural, and legal–in the United States and South Carolina.

An ethnographic approach allowed me to engage in talk about goats with the people raising them as well as observe practices related to these animals. While homesteaders
may not participate in the sale of their goat products, they play an important role in the sustainable and food security aspects of my research since they often barter products, offer their goats for breeding services, and participate in other local food projects, which is why they are included in my sample population. I primarily relied on qualitative data collection because I am interested in people’s ideology, decision-making processes, experiences, and opinions. The ethnographic and background research occurred simultaneously rather than in phases as I had initially proposed. As I learned more and received resources from my participants, I added questions to my interviews based on accumulated knowledge and insight.

**Positionality as a Researcher**

I tried to situate myself as an anthropological researcher interested in goat raising and not simply an enthusiastic volunteer. However, I often received false role assignments as a student of animal or agricultural sciences. My participants did not necessarily understand my interest or reasons for interviewing them, which sometimes created suspicion. My consent form included a clause disclosing my responsibility to the public should I witness unhygienic practices or animal abuse. Although I did not witness such practices, several participants did not have licenses to sell their products, which require the additional expense of specific equipment and regulatory fees. The lack of licenses did not concern me so much since my participants were open and honest with the people they sold to and bartered with and described their practices to me in ways that fell into my understandings of sanitary treatments of milk and meat products. This public responsibility clause did occasionally create an aura of mistrust during my interviews,
including an interview that I recorded without audio, most likely due to the selling of raw milk without a license.

I also tried to remain aware of my bias throughout my research. My WWOOFing experience exposed me to several different models of small-scale, sustainable agriculture and piqued my interest in these types of efforts. Since my initial experiences with agriculture have been in a sustainable context, I recognized that my interest in sustainability would become apparent to my participants and potentially create the social desirability effect, which means participants may have told me what they believed I wanted to hear rather than their true opinions or experiences (Bernard 2011). I tried to recognize that sustainability and localism ideologies did not motivate all of my participants, and I asked questions that allowed participants to express the multiple reasons they raise goats in addition to asking about their thoughts on local and sustainable food systems. I believe that the results of my research show the range of motivations behind goat raising displayed by even a small sample such as mine.

**Methodology and Sample Characteristics**

I utilized a multi-sited approach, visiting farms and attending goat-related events across the state. To find my participants, I used purposive snowball sampling. I started by emailing and calling people referred to me as well as using resources such as goat association databases and literature from goat-related events, and then asking people who agreed to interviews about other people they knew who were also raising goats. Since people raising goats often have strong informal support networks, their referrals gave me access to friends, neighbors, mentors, experts, and novices raising goats. Purposive snowball sampling allowed me to tap into networks of people knowledgeable about goats.
and local food and utilize the networks of food producers and food enthusiasts I know (Bernard 2011; Ulin et al. 2005). Snowball sampling also meant I generally spoke to people who knew (or at least knew of) each other, which limited my access to people outside my initial networks. South Carolina can be divided into three regions: the Upstate, the Midlands, and the Lowcountry. I concentrated my efforts in the Upstate, where most of the events about goats were held, but I also did work around the Midlands. Although my interview participants’ current locations were nearly even split between the Upstate and the Midlands (Table 3.1), most of the events I attended, such as the seminar, farm tours, and livestock shows were in the Upstate, making that the main site of my fieldwork.

As I drove through the Upstate of South Carolina, houses spread apart and large yards became fields that held horses, cattle, and goats. In addition to the rural landscape, the Upstate has Clemson University, which is part of a national network for land grant universities around agricultural and forestry issues called Public Service Activities (PSA) (Clemson University 2013). Clemson’s PSA includes an experimental station to conduct relevant agricultural and natural resource research; an extension service that disseminates information to people involved in agriculture; Regulatory Services that performs quality checks on chemical inputs and seeds; and Livestock-Poultry Health that is South Carolina’s health authority, USDA meat inspection program, and a veterinary diagnostics center. Nevertheless, I traveled throughout the state to gather information on goats to get a more balanced sample and perspective.

I conducted fourteen formal interviews with farmers and homesteaders across South Carolina (one of which was a couple), as well as informal interviews with a veterinarian,
a DHEC official, and other farmers (see Appendix A for a list of the interview questions). Interview topics ranged from my participants’ path and motivations for raising their goats, their successes and obstacles, their relationship with their animals, and goats’ place in South Carolina. Most of my interview participants were women, white, married with children and originally from the South (Table 3.1). The youngest participant was 32 at the time, and my oldest participant was 74, with a fairly even distribution throughout age categories (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1 Demographics of Interview Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N 15</th>
<th>Percent 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-47</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48-66</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married with children</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region of origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South Carolina location</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upstate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowcountry</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Over two thirds of my participants had had goats for six or more years (Table 3.2). Some of my participants had farmed for longer than they had had goats or they had switched on and off when they raised goats and only counted how many years they had their current herd of goats. The percentages therefore are a conservative estimate of the years of agricultural practice and knowledge. One third had less than ten goats, about a third had between eleven and twenty, and a third had between twenty-one and fifty goats (Table 3.2). The number of goats also fluctuated, depending on seasons. Since I interviewed most of my participants in the summer, they were still in the midst of breeding season, so their herds had doubled or tripled in size.

Most of my participants identified milk and dairy products as the main use for their goats (Table 3.2); however, they discussed other benefits or uses they received from their goats besides using them for meat or dairy production. The other main benefit is labeled as “Other”, which refers mainly to brush control and pasture management (Table 3.2). Even if the primary purpose of their goat operations was for meat or dairy production, goats could be used and sold for breeding stock, pasture management, or fiber production. Some of them had switched between raising goats for meat or for dairy or actually engaged in both dairy and meat production with an emphasis on one aspect.

Because of the sensitivity surrounding questions about income in the United States, social class was difficult to determine and will be discussed in depth in the results section since interpretation was required.

The main purpose of goat operations as well as the type (personal or commercial) was important for understanding motivations as well as practices. Due to this importance, when using quotes from my interviews, I identify the participant; the main purpose of
their goat operations, such as dairy, meat, brush, and fiber\textsuperscript{11}; and whether they were mainly homesteaders (personal use) or farmers (commercial sale).

Table 3.2 Statistics of Goat Operations of Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years with goats</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of goats</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main use of goat by gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Female</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Male</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to interviewing my participants, I engaged in participant observation whenever possible. While the interviews ranged from twenty minutes to over two hours, I spent time with each goat raiser outside of the interview. I visited twelve farms and homesteads, and before or after our interview, many of them gave me a tour of their operations and property. Five of the interviews were held outside with the goats surrounding us or in the background. Two were conducted in places of work, a cheese

\textsuperscript{11} Brush refers to land management by goats. Fiber refers to mohair from Angora goats or cashmere from Cashmere goats.
room and at a market. Even people’s homes often exuded the feeling of country living, with rooster decorations and antique knick-knacks, houseplants in blue patterned china, and warm wood and floral accents. On two interview trips, I conducted participant observation by assisting with farm chores, including feeding, milking, and cheese-making. During the cheese-making in particular I experienced firsthand long hours and strain in the arms as I scooped and hung cloths full of fragrant cheese, all happening before noon (Figure 3.1). Being involved in the daily work that goes with goat raising allowed me to experience more fully the nature of the relationships between people and goats.

![Figure 3.1 Scooping, hanging, and draining cheese took several hours with four people doing work in the cheese room.](image)

In the spring, I participated in an event that acted as a gateway to learning about human-goat interaction and finding participants. The Southeastern Goat and Sheep Seminar, sponsored by the Southeastern Goat Producers Association, ran from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for an entire day in Piedmont, a town in the Upstate. Out of fourteen workshops, I listened to five lectures and discussions; they were a genetics behind herd improvement lecture, direct marketing strategies, a dairy goat roundtable (attended by about 19 women and 11 men), a general farm and herd management talk (27 women and
14 men), and a roundtable discussion with several experts in marketing and goat health (9
women and 20 men). Around two hundred ninety-five people attended the seminar,
coming from as far away as Georgia, Louisiana, Florida, and Virginia. The bulk of
attendees were people who raised goats or who wished to start, but several veterinarians
came to learn as well and obtain certifications. Relative ages of the seminar attendees
varied, with young couples and families in attendance as well as older couples, but
middle-aged couples, often with their children, made up the majority of people. I only
noticed several Black attendees and one woman in hijab; the majority of people appeared
racially white.

Throughout the day, I listened, observed, and wrote furiously in my notebook. I
was one of the youngest attendees not obviously attached to parents or a partner, so I
attracted some attention. I spoke to one of the organizers, several of the presenters after
their presentations, and several attendees who were well known in the local associations
for goats. Between conversations here and there and the literature I received at the
seminar, this event connected me to most of my participants. Using this event to find my
research participants funneled me into a tightly-knit network of people who know each
other and are prominent in the local goat scene, perhaps contributing to the homogeneity
of my sample.

I experienced two very different farm tours. A mother and son guided us through
their diverse operations–meat goats, gardening, vermicomposting, beekeeping–and
concluded with serving up goat burgers. The other farm was open to the public on a daily
basis, and I took in the enormous expanse of arguably the most successful goat farm in
South Carolina. Here I sampled their cheeses in their on-farm store, pet goat kids, watched some of the milking, and talked to other visitors.

Other public events I attended included the 23rd Annual SCDGA Classic Dairy Goat Show sponsored by the South Carolina Dairy Goat Association (SCDGA) as well as the (Open) Meat Goat Show sponsored by South Carolina Meat Goat Association (SCMGA), 4-H and the Future Farmers of America (FFA). By attending these shows, I was able to observe the similarities and differences between a dairy goat and meat goat show. The dairy goat show had a more serious tone, with more adults showing their animals and constant adjustments of their animals’ postures. Everyone I spoke to seemed to agree it was based on conformation rather than milk production, the truest test of a dairy goat’s value. The meat goat show was held at a state fair, with many more young children showing animals they themselves had raised. While still serious in nature, it felt more relaxed, perhaps because there seemed to be less stringent restrictions on what animals could be shown.12

One morning I worked with farmers at a local farmers market selling their cheeses for several hours. Here I learned the rhetoric and style of describing the cheeses’ flavors and their uses as well as witnessed and experienced the intricacies of the customer-producer relationship. Finally, to get a sense of the time allocated to goats on a diversified farm, I went out regularly to a friend’s farm to help with chores. I documented my visits to all research sites with a combination of field notes, photography, and videography. I tried to record my initial impressions in some way as soon as possible, either with an audio recorder, frequent pictures with a camera, or written notes. Another

12 They had a division for unregistered animals.
method used were my taste buds since I sampled a wide range of products. During my research, I tried a variety of cheeses, such as chevre, queso blanco, mozzarella, and feta; milks; yogurts; desserts; and meat dishes. This helped attune me to the flavors my participants discussed in their goats’ products and the sources they attributed to these different flavors.

Finally, I conducted a 17 question qualitative and quantitative online survey using the WWOOF database as my sample (see Appendix B). WWOOF has a membership based website, so the numbers of farms and volunteers shifts depending on who has joined, who has renewed, and who has left the website. After I received permission from the WWOOF-USA staff to use the database for research purposes, I typed “goat” into the search engine, which generated 377 hits\(^\text{13}\) on April 13, 2012. Of those 377 hits, my final list included 274 farms representing 41 states. Before sending out the survey, I did a test run of the survey, contacting only 40 individuals using simple random sampling. This test survey allowed me to receive feedback and see what kind of data my survey would generate. I received seven completed responses, resulting in a 17.5% response rate. After the test survey, I sent the survey to each of the 274 farms personally with an explanation of my project and an attached survey. I received 28 surveys back, representing 19 different states, for a response rate of 9.8%.

In my survey, I received responses from mostly people identifying as female, between the ages of 48 and 66, Caucasian or white, and primarily located in the West of

\(^{13}\) I did not include all 377 farms for three main reasons: goats in the description referred to products or neighbors, not personal raising of goats; I did not find an email address; or goats were mentioned as a future project but not a current one. This last factor proved especially difficult since I could find no indication of when farms posted these descriptions, so in some cases, people may have been raising goats but not updated their WWOOF description.
the United States (Table 3.3). Almost three quarters had had goats for less than ten years, and over half had fewer than twenty goats (Table 3.4).

Since these surveys came from a website that promotes sustainability, the survey responses allow me to make some comparisons between goat raisers nationally to those in South Carolina. Using a sustainability-oriented database also limited the diversity of motivations and ideologies expressed in the survey. However, I evaluated my research participants’ knowledge of and ability to participate in sustainable food discourse based on survey answers.

Table 3.3 Demographics of Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-47</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48-66</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity/Race</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/white</td>
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<td>Multiracial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>7.10</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>South</td>
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<td>17.9</td>
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<td>Northeast</td>
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<td>14.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
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<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.4 Statistics of Goat Operations of Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years with goats</th>
<th>N 28</th>
<th>% 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
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<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-29</td>
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<td>7.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;30</td>
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<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of goats</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-10</td>
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<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
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<td>17.8</td>
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<td>21-50</td>
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<td>7.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis**

I transcribed all of my interviews verbatim, and I focused on data content rather than linguistic context. To analyze my transcripts and field notes, I utilized a deductive approach as well as grounded theory to the extent possible. The deductive approach is based on a hypothesis or guiding research questions and objectives. Grounded theory uses an inductive approach, allowing important themes and patterns to emerge from the fieldsite and data set. Using grounded theory allowed me to be open to what research participants indicate as important in their lives, generate themes directly from texts themselves, and check their validity by comparing and re-reading texts (Bernard 2000). A deductive approach allowed me to delve into topics and questions that interested me. I paid attention to the types of answers I got to facilitate the continued refinement of current questions and generation of questions. I also remained aware that there would be a bias in my coding toward sustainability and locality since those are my specific
interests. During data analysis, I read my interviews, taking note of important or repeated words and phrases by hand. I used a master list of themes and codes to organize my data. I used open coding, and *in vivo* coding whenever possible to allow my research participants to speak through their own words. I also utilized codes and themes that emerged from my literature review and theoretical background to help me make sense of my data.

**ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

I received IRB approval prior to beginning my study, and I obtained informed consent for all of my formal interviews (see Appendix C for informed consent form). In my interviews and field notes, I used pseudonyms for all of my participants as well as people they named in our conversations who I felt could be easily identified. The only exception has been Split Creek Dairy and Farms, which is so well known I doubted whether I could truly obscure the identity of the farm or its owners. Since I could not offer monetary compensation for interviews, I offered my labor in exchange for my participants’ time. As I stated previously, I helped with chores on several occasions. Additionally, two participants accepted my offer at a later date, and several others expressed interest but have yet to follow up on the offer. More often than not, I received gifts from my participants. Several let me to sample their milk or cheeses and sent me away with goat products and garden vegetables. One participant even gifted a beautiful llama yarn purse to me, and another invited me to stay with them at their home while I traveled throughout the Upstate for a weekend. The generosity of spirit I experienced overwhelmed me, not only in my participants’ gift of their time and experiences but also of their labors and homes.
CHAPTER IV

GROUNDS OF CONTENTION AND FIELDS OF THOUGHT: GOATS
BEING/BECOMING SOUTH CAROLINIAN

As I began analysis, it made sense to organize and think about my data through considering different landscapes, using ideas from Arjun Appadurai’s (1996) scapes and discussions of place (Basso 1996). Political ecology, posthumanist considerations of species relationships, commodity studies, and intersectionality all inform the context and nature of these landscapes. The landscapes I pulled from these theoretical frameworks—ecological, economic, political, and sociocultural—helped me think about how people use goats as a resource for sustainability and self-sufficiency. Additionally a landscape framework help me consider how my participants talk about goats as belonging in South Carolina and what in the landscapes supports and disrupts this belonging.

Goats have a place in South Carolina—that much was clear from my discussions and interactions with homesteaders and farmers raising goats. What this place for goats looks like is a more complicated matter. Goats have been grounded in the ecological, political, economic, and sociocultural landscapes in South Carolina, and these different landscapes complement, support, complicate, and undermine each other. Although the designations of this chapter are arbitrary since all of these landscapes are interconnected and affect each other, separating them allows me to cover each aspect with appropriate thoroughness and make explicit the connections as needed.
BELLY OF THE BEAST: GOATS CONSUMING SOUTH CAROLINA

“Here’s a little taste of my farm.”
-Reagan, dairy goat homesteader

The ecological landscape deals with the relationships between biotic species and their abiotic environment. In the context of this research, farms and homesteads are the setting on which multiple species–humans, nonhuman animals, plants, and microorganisms–interact and create an ecological landscape where, on some level, food grows. Rather than a nature-culture divide, farms and agricultural homesteads embody, very clearly, the product of the interaction and interdependence between nature and culture.14

As places, farms and homesteads often had pastures, woods, gardens, and human and nonhuman shelters. In South Carolina, farms generally have small acreages, and because of these small acreages, my participants felt goats fit well into the landscape because goats can live on less space than cattle. When people wanted to pursue agricultural projects but they had limited space, goats were the preferred option over cattle, which required more space and inputs. However, some of my participants also selected goats because they actively did not want to move to large-scale agriculture.

I know the quirks of every single one of ‘em has, I mean, including the babies that were born this year, you know, they’re all different. So [...] I hoped to never get big enough that that’s not the case [...] I would like to stay to where I do know everyone by name. I don’t want ‘em to just have numbers (Gabrielle, dairy goat farmer).

The desire to stay small-scale is not limited to emotional sentiment. While goats do have a reputation as destructive creatures, they are also seen as less destructive on the

14 Although the nature-culture divide has been convincingly problematized and challenged in recent research (e.g. Haraway 2008; Hvalkof and Escobar 1998; Kirksey and Helmreich 2010), it is still a meaningful dichotomy in much of Westernized ideology.
local landscape in some ways. In this excerpt, Gabrielle discusses the regulations DHEC requires for a commercial goat dairy operation.

 [...] when I was talkin’ to DHEC, we were talking about waste management, cuz on the big, he said, if you’ve got ten cows, you have to have a waste management system and you have to have a way to dispose of it. I’d have to have two hundred and fifty goats before I’d have to have a waste management system [...] And he’s like, how many goats are you planning on having? And I was like, maybe thirty. You know. And he’s like, no, I don’t even have to talk to you then [...] 

Nonhuman animals are also tools to manage the land and help make it productive for humans. Several participants spoke of goats as improving their pastures and woods. As browsers, goats select plants classified as “brush” rather than grasses. In this way, they help rid places of exotic invasive plants such as kudzu, blackberry, privet, honeysuckle, and poison ivy. When goats are placed with cattle, sheep, and horses, all of which are grazers, these multiple species maintain and create a healthy pasture that will not become overrun with any one successful plant species. Six of my participants explicitly discussed using this strategy to support a healthy multispecies ecosystem.

 [...] when they’ve finished grazing in one paddock, there’s not hardly maybe three species of plants left out there, and all I did was go out and chop those two little plants down. They all graze at different levels, different likes and dislikes. The sheep love ragweed, the cows don’t like it [...] And the horses like short grass and the cows like long grass. They all work together [...] using them [goats] as a tool to get rid of unwanted plants. Honeysuckle, greenbriars, privet [...] Invasive species goats will love (Kenneth, meat and brush control goat farmer).

I went to a class at Clemson, and they said that if you run cattle with your goats, it cuts your parasitic levels in half and so I did [...] I deworm once a year, once a year. To other people that are breeding, once a month. Sometimes twice a month (Peggy, meat goat farmer and soap maker).

A multispecies ecosystem keeps the balance on farms and homesteads. States including California, Colorado, Idaho, Maryland, and New York, have utilized goats along highways and through landscapes for brush control (CNN 2009; Davis 2012; Pool
Brush control can help restore landscapes to support native plant life, reduce wildfire damage, and get rid of invasive exotic plant species. For South Carolina and the Southeast in general, where kudzu suffocates entire woods, brush control goats could be extremely beneficial.

![Figure 4.1 Three Saanen goats enjoying South Carolina brush](image)

What and how goats eat has additional implications for their belonging in South Carolina. Through their consumption, goats literally come to embody the local landscape (Paxson 2008, 2013; Weiss 2011). While most of my participants gave their goats grain\textsuperscript{15} of some sort, all of the goats were allowed to browse. The pasturing of goats contrasts with industrially raised cattle which, although they are grass eating ruminants, are fed grains with antibiotics and hormones. My participants all had their goats out and eating in the ecological landscape. This eating of landscape had effects on the goats’ products.

Although my participants did not refer to terroir, they talked about the effects of certain foods and practices on goat products. Goat milk products, in particular, ranged

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\textsuperscript{15} Too much commercial feed will kill goats, as several participants told me. This is also why cattle must be given antibiotics because they are not made to eat grains.
between mild, sweet, and indistinguishable from store-bought cows’ milk to a grassy, occasionally “funky” flavor. Several factors could contribute to this range of flavors. Each goat breed has different fat contents in their milk, which can create creamy, rich flavors or thinner, more watery tastes. Nubians, La Manchas, and Nigerian dwarf goats all have high butterfat content in their milk, about 4-5% for the first two, and up to 10% for Nigerian dwarfs (Menne 2012). Saanens, which can have one of the highest daily yields (between 2 and 3 gallons a day), have only 2-3% butterfat content. (Menne 2012). To reach a doe’s full butterfat potential, a doe must have enough “roughage” (cellulose from dry fibrous plants such as hay) in their diet, which produces fatty acids for the milk (Jaudas 1989).

Certain weeds, like wild onion, notoriously change the flavor of goat milk products and meat. Specific agricultural practices, such as keeping does close to bucks during mating season, could cause milk to taste like a buck.\(^{16}\) Other participants said funky flavors came from unsanitary practices, such as not cleaning the teats off well before milking. Interestingly, some participants stated their preference for the grassy, goaty flavors, which they link to the goats’ diet rather than sanitary milking practices.

Goat products, specifically the dairy products, represent the work that the ecological landscape does on goats. This work includes the ways in which microorganisms help goats process their own food and make food out of goat products. Through their work, microorganisms create food that is good to eat. Microorganisms are specific to their local environments and represent the places they come from as much as

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\(^{16}\) Bucks emit an odor to attract does, and they mark their territory from scent glands, but most people find the odor to be an offensively strong scent.
any other visible species. This excerpt demonstrates the work that microorganisms do on goat milk products:

And my favorite example is, if you take a gallon of pasteurized milk and a gallon of raw milk and you leave ‘em sittin’ out in the sun[…] in the pasteurized milk, you have rancid milk. In raw milk, you’ve got sour cream[…] It doesn’t go bad like that[…] You can still use, even after it sours or after the little bacteria do whatever they do, lactic acid bacteria, you can still use the product that’s left (Gabrielle, dairy goat farmer).

Reagan attributes these “good bugs” found in raw milk to whatever her goats are eating.

In this way, microorganisms, humans, nonhuman animals, and plants—in a phrase, multispecies ecologies—all collaborate to make a place for goats in South Carolina. This multispecies ecology makes each farm unique. Frequently I was told that “what works for you and your goats at your farm might not work for other people[…] every single farm is different, just like every goat is an individual” (Reagan, dairy goat homesteader).

Farming and homesteading became less about how to do things properly and more about learning the rhythms of the specific place and landscape, which means treating all of these parts of the farm—the land; the animals; the plants; and the abilities, desires, and objectives of the people working in that space—as an organism and a whole. Without each part, the farm or homestead would not work.

In my study, goats and microorganisms were often described as key players in an ecological landscape since goat fit into a unique niche due to their eating preferences and because microorganisms created good milk products. While many of my participants spoke of their mentors, even more they discussed the trial-and-error methods they employed to raise their goats and manage their farms because experience in their specific place was more valuable than books or neighborly advice.
For farmers and homesteaders promoting local products, legitimizing goats as belonging in South Carolina becomes important for validity in the local food movement. Although local food depends on the definition of “local,” generally it is a matter of miles that food travels. In the Southeast, this local designation often includes several states since several hundred miles encompasses regional rather than state boundaries. Food has value through being close to where consumers live since proximity makes it easier for people to “know where their food is coming from.” If people can visit the farms that produced their food or talk directly with the food producers about issues of local importance, knowing origins of food gives the food a “goodness,” not only in terms of quality but in terms of ethical and moral considerations. While local is often labeled as fresher than industrial processed and transported foods, local food also is seen as relying less on expensive chemical inputs and as revitalizing local economies more directly than national or international imports.

However, despite the framing of goats as suited for small scales and embodying the landscape well, almost all of participants have experienced hardships in maintaining and restoring the health of their goats from a variety of diseases and particular parasites. The heat and humidity of South Carolina provides an excellent breeding ground for parasites, particularly on small acreages. These health issues may have roots in the fact that the most popular goat breeds were developed in the hot but often dry climates of Africa, Europe, and New Zealand, often in a free-ranging ranch environment rather than on small-scale farms.

[...]out there they have two thousand acres of a range and they do not feed their goats commercial food[...]So we’re bringing them here to the United States[...]the first thing we do is we clear out pastures, like it’s a cow. They’re not grazers, they’re browsers[...]So then we take them to a wet climate, which they’re used to
We put them on such small pastures, ten acres to two thousand. We overcrowd. Then the first thing you know, you hear them say, a Boer goat lives to die. When they don’t. We are killing them (Peggy, meat goat farmer and soap maker).

This excerpt demonstrates that goats may not be well adapted to the climate and landscape here, and to ensure their health requires considerable time, energy, investment, and knowledge.

None of my participants talked about having organic certification, in part because raising livestock organically is extremely difficult. Feed, which is often necessary to supplement forage, is very expensive even without being organic, and most goats need to be wormed fairly regularly. Some of my participants managed to deworm only once a year or whenever they noticed the symptoms; rotating pastures also helped control parasites. However, most of them also discussed the necessity for chemical wormers over organic wormers or natural dewormers like pine needles. These kinds of issues complicate goats’ place in the landscape: it is tenuous and contentious.

Another way in that goats’ place is challenged is the need for livestock guardians. Sometimes people bought goats for their livestock guardian dogs, especially Great Pyrenees, because the dogs needed jobs that fulfilled their caretaker role. Equally as often, my participants suffered deaths in their herds from wild dogs or coyotes, or even goats stolen, so they would invest in a Great Pyrenees or a llama to protect their animals\textsuperscript{17}. Understanding the important role of livestock guardians added a different

\textsuperscript{17} Donkeys are another common livestock guardian, but several participants told me their donkeys would stomp the goat kids, so llamas and guardian dogs were far more common during my research. Even the dogs could be too vigilant and mistakenly hurt their goat charges from “muggin’” them, or loving them too much. People often got caught in the middle as well, with llamas spitting at them and dogs getting between goats and their human caretakers.
dimension to the multispecies ecology since humans were not the only caretakers and protectors of goats.

Duke, a brush control and meat goat farmer, said he and his wife kept their current herd of goats for their Great Pyrenees, which loves his goats. He describes the relationship between the dog and goats: “They pay ‘em no attention. But if they hear[...][a strange dog], they’ll run to that Great Pyrenees, and they’ll surround him[...]the young ones will get under him[...]they know he’s protection.” Several other goat farmers spoke admiringly of their guardians protection of and even saving the lives of young goat kids. These touching stories of interspecies relationships often revealed the ecological landscape as somewhat insecure for the safety of goats.

Two important ideas should be taken away from the ecological landscape of goats. Goats can literally remake the places in which they live as well as become grounded and part of these places. Since brush control is a skill associated with goats, goats can make landscapes more productive as well as uncover the native landscape of South Carolina. Goats have a place in South Carolina’s ecologies because they can work in harmony with other species to create good places to live and work, as well as process these landscapes into products that are good for people’s bodies, inside and out. Through their consumption, goats embody their places, and through working with and consuming goats, people also embody farms, homesteads, and landscapes. However, South Carolina is not completely suitable or safe for goats, and people must manage their farms and homesteads diligently to maintain the balance of these multispecies ecologies.
POWER IN HANDS AND HOOVES: THE POLITICS OF GOAT RAISING

The political landscape deals with power and authority, the people and institutions that wield power and the methods used to exert power, and the resistances against these methods. Michael Pollan (2007) described eating as a political and ecological act, echoing Wendell Berry’s (1990) famous statement, “Eating is an agricultural act.” In this section, I aim to demonstrate that agricultural practice is also a political act. Here “political” does not refer to merely subversive or alternative practices. Rather, the politics of goat raising and food production arise from how people and institutions exert control over goats and their products and how goats in turn exert their own types of control over the people raising and regulating them.

By definition, domesticated animal and plant species have been changed irreversibly by humans, and likewise these nonhuman species have changed the ways of life of humans. The shifts from foraging to pastoralism and horticulture then to agriculture were facilitated by the coevolving, intensified ecologies between human and nonhuman species. This section will focus less on the historical context of the relationship between people and goats and more on the current ways in which people exert control over goats’ bodies, reproduction, behaviors, and products.

Because of the long relationship between dairy goats and humans, dairy goat breeds often have different personalities and constitutions than meat goat breeds, which have only recently become the subject of genetic improvement. Dairy goats are generally milked twice a day, which keeps them in close contact with people, whereas meat goat breeds traditionally come from free-ranging ranch or pastoral-type environments. Dairy goats always have milk during their lactations, whereas many meat breeds release their
milk only on demand, prompted by their kids’ vigorous bumping of the udder. While some meat goat breeds may have very good milk, the effort in obtaining it is more than most farmers thought it was worth. Dairy goats’ closer relationship with people has created more fragile breeds that require more care and attention, especially in regard to health, than meat goat breeds, which are seen as hardier animals. Therefore, humans have exerted more biopolitical control over dairy goats’ bodies than over meat goats.

People have exerted biopolitical control over goats through how their bodies function and how they interact with humans. I witnessed one of the most obvious moments of control over goats’ bodies at a livestock show I attended.

It was interesting watching how the show goats were handled. Usually goats are very stubborn about being moved but these goats were constantly positioned, especially the[ir] handler spreading out their legs and pressing down on the “small” of their spine.

–Excerpt from field notes, 23rd Annual SCDGA Classic Dairy Goat Show, 5/6/12

While all of my participant may not show their animals, certain qualities were valued in goats over others and selected through breeding. One way to do control for certain behavioral traits was through the selection of the buck. When discussing the good attributes of a dairy goat, Helen stated,

All the new babies[...]there’s nine of ‘em that were bred from a certain buck. Every single one of ‘em, even if the mother was a little jumpy, they’re perfect. They don’t move, they stand real still. And we’ve heard before[...]that the buck is half the herd, and I thought, how does that work? But see, now we’re seeing it[...]

These qualities in a dairy goat are extremely important because kicking or fidgety goats can mean a ruined batch of milk, should feet pop into buckets or machine milkers’ equipment be disturbed. This kind of genetic selection also works for attributes like milk yield: Nancy told me that a buck whose mother had a good udder would pass those genetics on to his progeny.
The emphasis on herd genetics extends beyond reproduction and birth. Creating good goats also requires facing death. Culling, which means getting rid of animals with unvalued genetics, is something not all goat raisers are willing to do.

[...]some people are very open-minded[...]to knowing that if you have an animal that stays sick constantly, you need to cull that animal. That’s a tightly, tightly genetic animal that’s immune system is shot[...]I culled down to our very best. That means the goats I did not have to chase and the goats that stayed the healthiest, not the ones that cost the money[...]I ended up culling down to the very healthiest goats I had. I didn’t look at the genetics, and I didn’t look at a piece of paper, how much we paid for them, and the bloodlines[...]I looked at what was standing before me (Peggy, meat goat farmer and soap maker).

Bottlefeeding versus dam raising is another way in which people can exert control over goats’ bodies. Four dairy goat raisers and two meat goat raisers discussed bottlefeeding their goat kids to make them friendlier and more accustomed to people. Bottlefeeding meant separating does from their kids, sometimes immediately after birth and sometimes a couple of weeks later, which noticeably influenced the types of personalities among their goats. If goat raisers had bottlefed babies, they often cited their animals being sweet.

And so we just decided to[...]let them be, dam raised[...]and that just, Cooper was okay. He was the buck, and I didn’t wether 18 him[...]But Ginger just was[...]she wanted nothing to do with human beings[...] So that wasn’t very much fun, but this [bottlefed goat kids] is a lot of fun” (Reagan, dairy goat homesteader).

“[T]hey make a really good pet. Because they’re bottlefed[...]they’re just so sweet and[...] I have people who come out and they say they have goats, but they’re not friendly[...]So they want one that’s bottlefed so they can [be]” (Helen, dairy goat farmer).

Two other dairy goat homesteaders specifically discussed their goat kids being dam raised and their preference for this.

__________________________
18 Castrate
Wanda: I want them to just have their babies and I want them to nurse their babies cuz that’s just. [laughs] That’s it. That’s the way things should be. [laughs]
Kevin: If I can do it, my goats can do it.
Wanda: That’s right.

Olivia: Rosie[… had four kids, and they all survived[…]And she nursed all of them.
Bri: Wow.
Olivia: Yes.
Bri: She was able to nurse all of them?
Olivia: She was able to nurse all of them without me intervenin’.

Interestingly, both of these goat raisers had very friendly, affectionate goats as well as more aloof or skittish goats. Dam raising was valued because it was seen as more natural and even self-sufficient, a quality that mirrored many of my goat raisers’ own personal objectives for their homesteads and farms. On the other hand, some of my participants preferred bottlefeeding goat kids since for them, bottlefeeding established a good working and emotional relationship with their herd.

The selection for specific qualities in goats changes the natures of goats. Goats become more docile around people when, before as a prey animal, they would have been wary and wily. Friendlier goats are valued not only as enjoyable animals with which to interact, but animals that are easier for farmers and homesteaders to work with. Thus, humans have actively intervened in goats’ reproductive patterns to create specific characteristics, such as friendliness or quietness, not frequently found in goats before. Human biopolitical control over goats has literally created animals that are not completely “natural” or “cultural” creatures.

It would seem that people have the most control over goats in terms of their bodies; their reproduction, lives, and deaths; and their very behavior and natures. How, then, do goats have any power within their own lives against complete human biopolitical control? For one, many people respond to the cuteness of goats and form emotional attachments.
All but one participant described an emotional relationship with their animals. Gamal said that “the babies were just full of frolicksome joy. You know, they’re like little children. They’re innocent[...] I guess to me, that was the part of goatkeeping that really was the big payoff. Cuz those little baby goats were so happy...” When I asked why participants picked certain breeds, some people said they were what was available or they were good producers of milk or meat. But many others described loving the look of their goats: Nubians’ long floppy ears and spots; all white Saanens with perky ears; the striking red heads and white bodies of Boers; the quirky no-eared La Manchas; and the adorable miniature Nigerian dwarfs and pygmy goats.

A person’s emotional attachment had implications beyond just enjoying the look of goats.

...that’s probably why we get bigger[...] I can’t see me never wanting to keep the babies[...] And we always say we’re not gonna do color[...] we’re gonna pick out the goat ahead time, and then a different one is born and we’re like, we gotta keep, you saw the one that’s black[...] We were not gonna keep her[...] her mom is one of the moms we’re gonna sell[...] cuz she kicks her feet a little bit[...] we’re just hoping maybe her baby will be good (Helen, dairy goat farmer).

Helen said later that genetics are never an exact science: if genetics were utterly predictable, people would have the best racehorse every time based on the dam and sire, but genetics didn’t work that way. In this way, goats are able to surprise their owners, with their personalities and their appearance. Many people joked with me that most goat owners will experience something akin to “Multiple Goat Syndrome,” as a woman’s t-shirt at the seminar eloquently put it. Even if the goats do not meet their original purpose—such as the (human) children who cared for goats leaving home, or does no longer having kids and giving milk—people still grew attached. In this context, some goats
had such an emotional impact on the people raising them to the point that culling was not an option.

Now Maisy will kiss you on the cheek, she’s the only one that does it, but she does it all the time since I’ve had to take her baby, y’know, pull her babies... she has changed... she will not get off the milking stand until I kiss her and she kisses me. Every day. So I say, that goat will die here... She will live and die her life... in old age... She’s the special one (Victoria, dairy goat homesteader).

After Reagan found out her dairy herd had CAE, several people advised her to simply put them down. She told me that she could never put down these healthy animals and that “...you’ll meet farmers that they can do that... they see the animal differently than I do, you know what I mean? I see them as pets first. And that’s not how livestock is for a lot of people.”

On the other hand, people were also reticent to attribute too much emotional attachment from their goats toward them. Many people attributed their goats’ affection toward them as based on food and treats. “I have my own personal following. It’s good for my ego... They follow me wherever I go. I’m sure it’s not because I feed them,” Katherine, a commercial meat and brush control goat raiser told me somewhat sarcastically. Many of my participants had trouble not anthropomorphizing their animals, and they would attribute a mutual understanding between them and their animals.

...it’s like she understands when I talk to her... I know it seems weird. But I told her, all right, Rosie, I’m going to go up to the house, I don’t remember what I was going to do, laundry or something like that. I said, I’ll be back down here in about twenty more minutes, Rosie. And she laid down and her water broke... she was like, well, don’t go anywhere (Olivia, dairy goat homesteader).

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19 Caprine Arthritis Encephalitis (CAE) is a poorly understood but much feared disease among dairy goats, mostly in industrial countries. The transmission is most likely through colostrum, but some believe it can caught through feeding and water troughs. It is similar to feline leukemia in that the goat may exhibit no symptoms, but the goats’ joints can be affected, making milking difficult to impossible because the udders may become blocked.
Some words that my participants used to describe their relationships were parental, loving, enamored, and immeasurable pleasure and aggravation, which shows that these relationships went beyond simply economic or useful. These examples demonstrate the power that goats have over people, that the nature of their affection leaves people feeling insecure about the relationship, or at least in describing the relationship to relative strangers.

The control over goats’ bodies requires the time and energy of the people raising them. People become tied to the land and to their animals. Vacationing, beyond day trips, becomes close to impossible unless good farm-sitters with the necessary skills can be found. Bottlefeeding represents an extra burden and responsibility, since it means milking twice daily and feeding goat kids several times throughout the day as well as maintaining the health of the does and the kids based on this regimen. Almost unanimously, my participants talked about the trials of fencing and providing shelter for goats. Many discussed discovering their goats had bafflingly escaped to be found wandering along roads or in parking lots as well as goat shelters laying in pieces across pastures. Escapes and destruction can be particularly frustrating because fencing and shelters require such considerable labor and skill: to have goats exploit these expensive and labor-laden projects create tension in relationships between couples and frustration in general. While breeding may create more docile and sweeter animals, goats’ capricious natures cannot be erased completely. As Wanda put it, “You have to work together with a goat, you can’t really boss a goat around.”

Goats also inexplicably die, and quickly. They may have a parasite or disease, eat poisonous plants, or suffer some physical injury, and even when an owner finds them and
treats the condition quickly, the goat did not always survive. The tendency for goats to die meant several participants recommended starting with “cheap” goats because they inevitably die as people figure out how to care for them. The dying of goats caused emotional turmoil for many of my participants, above and beyond the loss of breeding stock and future kiddings, of the accumulated feed and hay that animal ate, and the loss of commodities or food from that animal.

All of these examples clearly articulate how owners struggle to designate their relationship with their goats. The nature of human-nonhuman animal relationships has been the subject of much recent study (Haraway 2008; Kirksey and Helmreich 2010). Domesticated animals, such as goats, have the curious position of natures that are the product of what people designate as natural and what people would consider cultural. Many of my participants described goats as occupying an ambiguous position as domesticated animals, not simply pets or livestock and with some characteristics that are often recognized as humanlike (Figure 4.2).

Wilkie (2010) describes the ambiguous nature of people’s relationship with livestock animals by pointing out that people still create bonds with animals that will be slaughtered. Several participants asked me what the relationships between meat goat raisers and their animals were like. They doubted that people raising animals for meat could love them. However, I found it was not so simple as dairy goat raisers loving their animals while meat goat raisers did not. Peggy, a meat goat farmer, said her relationship with her goats was almost like, “a mother, child[...]The goats at our house are all named. They don’t have numbers, so therefore it’s a very personable relationship[...]They’re more like children to me.”
Penny: “She’s the one, like, standing at the edge of the fence, going, where are you going? where are you going? when are you coming back? [...] At least that’s what I imagine she’s saying. [laughing] She’s probably saying, food, bring me back food [...] So you know, I guess, we imagine all kinds of things about ‘em. Who knows what the truth is”

Gabrielle: “they’re my pets as much as they are livestock”

Wanda: “it’s one of those in-between relationships”

Kenneth: “...they’re not pets in that aspect but they’re not afraid of us [...] they’re livestock.”

Gamal: “It’s not pets and it’s not livestock. It’s something in-between [...] Cuz you wouldn’t want to shoot your livestock because they’re too valuable and you wouldn’t shoot your pets because you love ‘em [...] But somehow this goat was not valuable enough and not beloved enough.”

Victoria: “They’re more than just a goat [...] I guess that’s what I was trying to explain. People just think you throw ‘em in a field and they’re just a goat [...] They have personalities [...] they can be a pet just like a dog. You know, Maya used to come and sit in my lap, just like a puppy. You know. They can look at you, and show love [...] they are a creature with emotions.”

**Figure 4.2 Nature of Relationship Between Goats and Their Owners**

Most of my participants raising goats for meat expressed affection for their animals. In fact, none of my mainly meat goat raisers ate their goat meat, either because they did not want to “eat anyone they knew,” they didn’t like goat meat themselves, or they didn’t eat meat at all. On the other hand, several of my mainly dairy goat raisers talked about consuming or selling goat meat from kids that they did not plan to keep for breeding or milking. The question of slaughtering beloved animals raises a moral ambiguity because people feel affection for their animals, regardless of the purpose that people are raising them, but this affection is at tension with economic viability. Still, even if my participants raised their goats for meat, they did not do so dispassionately. In my mind, emotional attachment demonstrates the kind of power that goats can have, in that many of the people who raise goats cannot view them without genuine compassion and concern.
In addition to goats as beloved pets or even family, many of my participants described goats as a resource that produced a wide range of products and services with economic value. In this way, goats are commodities because they are bought and sold as live animals or in processed states. Economic and emotional values create a curious ambiguity where people raising goats appreciate the products they give as well as the companionship.

Since goats are commodities in the capitalist marketplace, they are subject to institutional regulation. The most interesting instance of state control over goats is goat milk in the raw. Two perspectives dominate the controversy over raw milk: Pasteurian and post-Pasteurian culture (Paxson 2008, 2013). Paxson (2013:160) uses the term “microbiopolitics” to discuss state and grassroots efforts “to recognize and manage human encounters with the organic agencies of bacteria, yeasts, fungi, and viruses.” Pasteurian culture considers raw “unsafe” and pasteurization kills bacteria that can be harmful to humans while post-Pasteurians see the bacteria and microorganisms naturally found in raw dairy products as protectors against harmful bacteria and the co-creators of extremely healthy, flavorful foods. Post-Pasteurians hold that pasteurization arose when milk production reached industrial scales due to increased demand and, at these large scales, farmers could no longer keep track of all of the processing of milk and sanitation processes devolved. To post-Pasteurians, pasteurization also provides a way to extend the shelf life of dairy products so that milk and cheese could be shipped along the refrigerated rail system and therefore pasteurization cannot necessarily be related to improved sanitation. Due to the dominance of Pasteurian culture, microorganisms of raw
dairy products are subject to fierce scrutiny and fear, which facilitates very stringent regulations and protocol.

Various states impose different regulations on the sale of raw milk and dairy products (Figure 4.3). Although FDA officially recognizes raw milk as a biohazard that causes severe illnesses and even deaths in the human population (Paxson 2013), the ultimate decision about the sale of raw dairy depends on the state. A DHEC official I informally interviewed said that perhaps when a proposed ban or limitation on raw dairy was proposed in the legislature, some local farmers fought to keep selling raw milk. Although I have not been able to confirm this interpretation, the story of unknown but valiant farmers producing a healthy but demonized product resonates with what other participants discussed with me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal Position on Raw Dairy</th>
<th>States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail sale legal</td>
<td>Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Washington, Idaho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm sales legal</td>
<td>Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, Minnesota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Utah, Oregon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herd shares legal</td>
<td>Tennessee, Ohio, Alaska, Colorado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No law on herd shares</td>
<td>Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Indiana, Michigan, Wyoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal as pet food</td>
<td>Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, North Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal</td>
<td>Hawaii, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Iowa, Montana, Nevada, West Virginia, Maryland, Washington D.C., Rhode Island, Delaware, New Jersey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.3 Legislation on Raw Milk Sales by State

One participant told me that all goat milk sold in retail markets in South Carolina is raw. Several of my participants attributed South Carolina’s allowance for selling raw milk to the state’s recognition that people have the right to choose. South Carolina also

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20 Information from Figure 4.2 comes from the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund (2010).
may be more ambiguous on the issue of raw dairy than some of my participants thought. The DHEC official I interviewed also talked about the allowance of raw dairy in South Carolina as a way to monitor what would otherwise have been a black market. He also stated that it was good that people had a choice, linking ability to choose to the American identity and ideology. When I asked his own opinion on the issue, he said whereas he grew up drinking raw milk on his family farm, he would drink it only if it came from his own animals. Several participants who expressed a wariness of raw milk had close ties to institutions, such as the DHEC official and one farmer who is a veterinary technician and therefore has biomedical training.

![Figure 4.4 Room of licensed Grade A goat dairy](image)

**Figure 4.4 Room of licensed Grade A goat dairy**

My participants expressed a range of opinions related to raw milk legislation in South Carolina. Out of nine participants asked about raw milk, only one person reflected a Pasteurian perspective. The others supported raw milk consumption and sale. While some people seemed satisfied with raw milk legislation since South Carolina allows it, others expressed frustration. Regulations have been unclear and require persistence. In order to sell raw milk and cheese, specific equipment, building requirements, and
procedures are required by the state and federal governments in order to ensure proper sanitation. However, these regulations have not been clearly defined, which means interested parties have to seek out other commercial dairy operators who have managed to sell milk and cheese and work diligently with the regulatory institutions to comply with their sometimes unclear guidelines. In this exchange, Kevin and Wanda attribute not going into the cheesemaking business to the confusion about regulations and licensing.

Kevin (dairy goat homesteader): I think if the regs were more established and clear, I think you’d see more of sustainable/local food production][...]we’ve talked about possibly getting into the cheese business but[...]there’s so many obstacles...

Wanda (dairy goat homesteader): Well, it’s because nobody knows what the regs are[...]and we were trying to do a cheese business, we had a place, and we had a source of milk, and we had a process and I don’t think anyone had approved a cheesemaker since[...]Split Creek. And everybody who approved them has since retired, I mean, they’ve been going for a while. And, you know, nobody, literally no one knew what we would have to do...

This discussion shows a state’s notion of biopolitics in flux. In the past, it had not been necessary to regulate the bodies and products of goats because they mostly existed on small, familial scales. Now that goat products have entered the market, the regulation of raw dairy products has become a priority. Another participant had successfully navigated the licensing and regulatory process but also expressed the difficulties in the system.

Now DHEC has not been that much of a problem[...]there is a booklet, everything that you have to do for DHEC and to meet the regulations is spelled out word for word[...]USDA is a little more obscure because they don’t have a handbook like that just yet[...]They have one in production[...]they’re trying to do it because there are so many people trying to get into what we’re doing[...]DHEC just seems to be a little more personable, or the people I’ve met through DHEC than the ones from the USDA cuz they’re not federal...(Gabrielle, dairy goat farmer).

Interestingly, Gabrielle demonstrates a localist ideology, where state regulators are better, perhaps in part because they are closer to those they are trying to regulate. From this
perspective, the federal level has not kept up with these trends in sustainable food production as well as the individual states have.

I spoke with a number of participants who felt frustrated with the fact that there were any regulations around sale of raw dairy or other food products at all. Producing food for sale to the public on a small scale would make the economic viability of these enterprises completely impossible if some of my participants followed through with all levels of licensing and regulatory policy.

[...]I think we should all be allowed to consume what we want if we know the risks or lack of risks, whatever[...]if somebody were to come to my farm and they said, well, I’ll tell you what, if you’ll drink a glass of your milk, I’ll buy your milk. And I drink that milk, and they say, okay, I would like to buy it, I think I should have the right to sell it[...]as long as they know it’s not pasteurized, they’re taking risks[...]I don’t see why that needs to be regulated. I can understand regulating it if they’re trying to do it on a mass scale (Victoria, dairy goat homesteader).

Several participants bartered their products since technically it is not legal to sell goat milk or meat without a license, certain procedures and equipment, and specific labeling. These participants’ views represented an ideology that reflects an individual’s personal responsibility and rights to make choices about their lives. To them, the close nature of relationships between consumer and food producer creates enough accountability of food producers to consumers. The ability of certain producers to comply with regulatory policy also can be related to the economic landscape, and who is able to participate in agricultural pursuits based on access to resources. Regulatory policy favors operations that will become big enough (not necessarily industrial but larger than someone producing a couple gallons of milk daily) to turn a profit that can offset the substantial initial investment for milk- and cheese-making facilities. The issues that small-scale food producers face in terms of legal barriers directly affect their economic successes.
THIS LITTLE GOAT GOES TO MARKET: ECONOMIC POTENTIAL AND INSECURITY

Given the barriers and complications in the ecological and political landscapes to keeping goats in South Carolina, what do goats provide for people that they continue to pursue raising them? Already I have mentioned briefly the expense of maintaining goats’ health, of turning a profit, and of selling goat products. To return to a previous statistic, only 1% of 96,000 goat operations in the U.S. made a return greater than $50,000 annually in 2009 (USDA 2009). Despite these expenses and complications, many of my participants thought the economic landscape for goats had enormous potential. The economic landscape pertains to the production of commodities, their distribution, and their consumption as well as the social class and access to economic resources of people in market economies. In particular, thinking about social class, in terms of the financial difficulties and resources my participants had, helped illuminate what role goats had in South Carolina’s economy. Despite these difficulties, my participants still see value in raising goats. My participants offset their difficulties through using innovative strategies to help improve their economic returns.

My participants characterized goats as economic animals since they can give their milk (creating a diversity of dairy products) along with meat, leather and fiber; manure for fertilizer; and pasture management. Even in the absence of economic value, the goats often become very dear to my participants, seen as part of the family or friends—more than just livestock. This ambiguous view on goats and their value can be related to my participants’ pursuit for lifestyle and/or livelihood. However, this argument on lifestyle versus livelihood is much more nuanced than I initially anticipated.
Paxson (2013) discusses the negotiations of lifestyle and livelihood among her artisanal cheese-makers, categories that she maintains cannot simply be divided simply. She makes an important distinction between farmers who come from multigenerational agricultural backgrounds, in which artisanal cheese-making was a value-added product that could help preserve the family farm, and farmers who come from educated, non-rural and non-agricultural backgrounds to “return to the land.” Even with this distinction, economic activity is essentially social activity, and people make “livings” as well as “lives” for themselves (Paxson 2013:65). She suggests that “rational” market choices and affective lifestyle choices have important implications and influence each other.

My participants identify multiple reasons for farming, homesteading, and raising goats, and these reasons cannot be separated as supporting solely lifestyle or livelihood. Some of these reasons that my participants gave me include providing milk and meat for their family, achieving self-sufficiency, knowing where their food comes from, generating income, experiencing love for farming life and their animals. While many of my participants state that people shouldn’t farm to make money, they still believe that people should be able to make a viable living from agricultural projects, and many of them employ innovative strategies to achieve this goal. In most cases, I would characterize my participants as deeply appreciative of their lifestyle, with all of its benefits and drawbacks, as well as pursuing economic return for their livelihoods.

Although I did not specifically ask my participants about their social class, some aspects of our conversations illuminated their social positions. Out of my fifteen participants, none relied solely on their goats for income. Only two individuals could potentially be considered full-time commercial farmers, and I did not ask about the
occupational status of their spouses. My other participants either had a second job, often in education, or a spouse with an outside job, or they diversified their skill set as an agricultural expert or producer. These multiple strategies helped improve their livelihood and allowed them to continue living a lifestyle they enjoyed.

Having full-time and part-time off farm jobs may have provided income, but these jobs may also hinder agricultural endeavors. Olivia said that, “I have a job, a full-time job off the farm, and sometimes having time in the evenings or if I feel like it [is hard]. So I have to take a whole week to do toenail trimmins [sic].” The double burden of agricultural work and full-time jobs become more difficult when participants have reluctant spouses or families. “...Well, I mean...I think his love for me, he loves the goats. I think that...he sees...that it...is a lot of work though.” (Reagan, dairy goat homesteader) “Oh ho, I’d say it’s contentious...he’s not necessarily a farm person...” (Penny, brush goat homesteader). Out of my fifteen participants, eight designated themselves as the main caretakers of their goats.

When I asked participants about difficulties they experienced, their answers helped indicate their social class. Some of them discussed economic hardships, and in particular the expense of feed and hay, of fencing, of certifications to sell products or for specific label requirements, and of health maintenance. For the amount of hours that goes into goat care, especially for dairy goats, the economic return is quite low. This excerpt demonstrates issues in social sustainability:

Someone had asked if they worked a 40-hour work week, and she [the farmer] had initially said no. The kids replied, Mom, are you kidding? They added it up and it was at least 120 hours of work all of them combined, and she said this was before the herd was up to its present size. For all of that work and time of the whole family, she said it didn’t seem like the profit margin was very large. They were trying to find a way to make it more successful because Samuel would
prefer to do the farm and be a religious educator over the landscape work he does. But Helen said being a religious educator and landscaper was probably more profitable because the farm required so many inputs that the yards don’t[...]

–Field notes from 3 July 2012

Issues with social sustainability also factor into the marketing strategies food producers must employ. Paxson (2013) recounts some of her participants saying an important marketing strategy is “selling the story.” But the story must be carefully crafted, and it does not often include the long hours, anxieties over animals, financial hardships, or strain on the producers’ bodies unless it is touchingly told, with a good moral lesson and humor at the end. The obscured labor that goat raisers put into their agricultural practices do not get told in stories and must often remain silent for the sake of marketing success.

Diversifying and specializing agricultural skill sets was a common response to improving livelihood. Some of my participants began agricultural enterprises with several components but felt they had to specialize in goats or another aspect to really secure their livelihoods.

[The goats are] the one thing that’s ended up making some money for us[...it’s kinda like, you can only have time to do one thing really well, and like I told you about the dogs[...]if you’re gonna do dogs, then you’ve gotta get a kennel. If you’re gonna do chickens, then you need more chicken coops[...]So it’s hard really to do, all of it...(Helen, dairy goat farmer).

Others went the opposite route and engaged in multiple aspects of agricultural practice and expertise to secure their livelihoods. For example, one farmer was also a veterinary technician, farm manager, and certified livestock judge and planned to open an agritourism farm (Figure 4.5).
This last option, agritourism, related to an issue many of my participants faced. Farms become public places, where private family life is on display, to a certain extent. Katherine recounted discovering a birthday party being held on her farm without her knowledge, with children chasing her goats, as well as people walking their dogs through the farm, both of which infuriated her for the safety of her animals and the safety of the people, since farms are required to purchase insurance to become public. While volunteering at a farm, people would lean out of their cars, yelling to me from the road, “Do you have any eggs for sale?” Several farms had tours for the public or invited school groups to come. These tours became moments to educate and give insight into farming life, occasionally with hilarious or shocking results.

When we have farm days or have people out[...] The ignorance that’s out there, and I don’t mean stupidity. I mean just[...] just complete ignorance[...] we had a goat out there that was in milk, and she had these five and six year old kids. And
she [Gabrielle’s daughter], her first question was where does milk come from? And ninety-nine percent of ‘em would say the grocery store. They had no idea[...] they didn’t even know you could drink milk from a goat[...] But I’m milkin’ the goat and I was milkin’ by hand, and he asked me if the goat peed[...]out of the same thing[...]He was dead serious. He was not joking[...]he was a nice kid[...]I was like, how many women do you know that pee out of their boobs, you know?[...]It’s just the sheer ignorance, that, that nobody has been raised knowing anything about where any of this stuff comes from (Gabrielle, dairy goat farmer).

Farmers today no longer just do their agricultural work on the farm. Often, whether they enjoy it or not, they must become marketers and educators to the public, on and off their farms, two skills that often require the other. Nancy told me that while she loved working with her goats and making cosmetic products, she had not enjoyed the marketing aspect. To her, with something like blueberries, people either liked them or they didn’t, but with goat milk soap and lotion, it became her job to educate people about their bodies, their health, and the benefits of her product. Similarly, other goat raisers also had to advocate for the quality and healthiness of goat meat and goat dairy products. This advocacy work required different marketing strategies, such as samples, recommended recipes, and extensive knowledge about the products.

These strategies to improve livelihoods through specialization and diversification all aim to help create value in the marketplace. However, concerns of consumers do not usually align with the concerns of food producers. Even the concerns of the most appreciative and interested customer revolve around what a farmer can do for them. They are not reflexive about the positions of the farmers, their livelihoods, and their daily struggles. In my interviews, when discussing their own concerns, goat raisers talk about health maintenance; prohibitively expensive licensing and regulatory policies; expenses of animal husbandry (fencing, feed, general construction); and issues of social sustainability whereas goat product consumers focused on health benefits.
During a brief follow-up interview, I witnessed Kenneth being interrogated by a customer about organic certifications and GMOs. Kenneth explained that organic certification was expensive and limiting, and that he did what he could to ensure the health of his animals and the land. Although the customer did display knowledge about the subject of organic versus GM crops, he did not understand the realities of engaging in certified organic practice. This exchange I witnessed demonstrated that even despite consumers’ efforts to understand farm life and the origins of their food, a very real disconnect still exists. The value of certifications was rather ambiguous for some of my participants.

I don’t feel it’s right to have to pay, with most of those certifications you have to pay to get ‘em [...]I know I treat my animals humanely [...] I know I take good care of the land [...] and the people that do business with us realize that [...] if I paid for all of those certifications, it would, you know, you’re just asking to have more things [...] certified (Kenneth, brush and meat goat farmer).

[Organic certification] is not worth the time to be honest with you [...] it’s so broad, too [...] it’s just like cage free eggs and free range eggs [...] it’s ridiculous and it’s very misleading to the public, the general public doesn’t know the difference [...] Because [in terms of South Carolina Grown labels] I want to be able to put it into the local farmers market and things like that [...] you know, whether it means anything or not, I don’t know. But it looks good to the public and the laypeople that you’ve taken the time to, to do something like that (Gabrielle, dairy goat farmer).

Value can be created through these highly regulated processes that consumers learn to accept as important, whether they understand the meanings of labels or certification such as organic, fair trade, and free range. My participants selling goat products commercially must balance creating value that consumers desire as well as participating or resisting state control of food production. Some regulations are valued, however: for instance, some of my participants state that they appreciate the laws for raw milk consumption and that the testing creates a clean but healthy product. Value of a food product is created
through the perceived opinions of multiple people, such as food producers, consumers, regulators, and specialists.

Another more subtle aspect of finding value for goats and goat products is the ubiquitous discussion of goat health, which is very much embedded in the ecological landscape. In relationship to goat health, many of my participants mention the lack of veterinary services that specifically addresses needs for goats. Victoria, a personal dairy and fiber goat raiser, told me that she offered to pay for books for her dogs’ veterinarian to learn about goats, and he refused. I conjecture that the lack of goat knowledge among veterinarians might have to do with the lack of prestige and value associated with these animals.

Not many popular breeds have been developed in the United States besides the Spanish goat, the LaMancha, and the Myotonic or Tennessee Fainting goat. Interestingly, the Spanish goat is the most established breed of goat, stretching back to the 1500s, in the United States. Yet South Carolinians call this breed “briar goats,” which is synonymous with cheap goats or what some farmers described as trial-and-error-type goats. The devaluing of a breed that has a historical connection to the land becomes more interesting in light of the desire for foreign breeds and for marketing these breeds to ethnic markets.

Some of my participants asserted that even in Texas, where the main industrial size goat operations exist, veterinarians still do not learn about goats. The lack of veterinary services may be in part because goats are connected to populations with lower social statuses, such as Latino, Caribbean, and Muslim immigrant communities, and therefore animal health experts do not value goats as worthy of study because of a perceived lack
of economic promise. Renee explained to me that perceived profit and medical services and products are closely linked.

Renee: There are very few medicines that are made specifically for goats.
Bri: Okay.
Renee: Just about everything we use for a goat is off labeled for a goat. Which basically makes it against the law to use it, not really, not really like a misdemeanor or something. But you really should not use it unless it’s labeled for goat. Well, there was never enough interest in goats before for the drug people to, make any money off of it. So they would go to sheep or cows or goats or dogs or cats[...]But now that goats are getting bigger and better known for this country[...]and maybe as time goes by they’ll have more goat meds. But it’s the drug people that say well we’re not making any money off of that to issue it for goats.
Bri: Interesting. And that will influence vet schools.
Renee: Absolutely, absolutely.

Several of my participants talked about goats in the context of the “poor man’s cow.”

Duke, a brush and meat goat raiser, told me, “I was always around[...]some goats where, where I’d raised very few, but it was the poorest people in our community had a go two.” Similarly, Gamal, a goat homesteader, stated that

[...]I think that migrant workers are gonna have a lot of goats[...]an African American neighbor, who is well off[...]he worked with a lot of families that were not as well off[...]And he was always talking about, well, if you’re ever gonna get rid of those goats, you know, let me know, cuz I got, I got a family that’ll eat ‘em[...]So yeah, I think goats are sorta relegated [to] the poor man’s cow.

Being associated with people from poor backgrounds has additional implications, which I will discuss in the sociocultural section. The main point is that these kinds of perceptions of goats limit their economic viability.

Constraints and difficulties are not the only stories in the economic landscape, however. One of the farmers was beginning a Grade A dairy, which takes a minimum $300,000 to start. While farmers did discuss their difficulties in maintaining pastures and healthy animals as well as the expense of their operations, they all had the ability to
participate in their agricultural projects to some extent. As Duke said, land is a key aspect of owning goats or any livestock animal. All of my participants except one (who lived in the suburbs) owned at least several acres of land and often more. Unless the land is inherited, the price of obtaining and maintaining land is an important factor of being able to raise goats.

The ability to farm often indicate pursuit of lifestyle, whereas economic viability is secondary to goals such as preserving traditional farmland, participating in communities’ local and sustainable food movements, producing quality food, or enjoying satisfying work with few material desires and a connection to nature. These goals certainly have ideological purposes, but several of my participants describe them in economic terms, as well. Preserving farmland against suburban and urban sprawl and development retains land that can and has produced food in the past. Converting farmland into suburban and urban development places stress on the reduced number of agricultural operations, which increases food system insecurity and vulnerability, as well as converts some of the best land for growing crops into neighborhoods and shopping centers (Katz 2006). Other participants feel they played a vital role in their local communities, participating in revitalizing the local food system and economies.

What counts as economic value also becomes an issue. While I labeled my participants as using their goats for personal or commercial purposes, these two categories are not mutually exclusive. One commercial farmer drank the milk from her goats regularly; a homesteader bartered and accepted donations for her products. Many of my homesteaders talked about not having to go to the grocery store except for exotics
such as coffee. Producing nutritious, safe, fresh, and tasty foods was one of the major
benefits and initial motivations for raising goats my homesteading participants cited,
particularly since they found raising the food themselves proved more cost effective than
buying comparable products at the grocery store, which was often prohibitively
expensive. Several participants told me that individuals and parents with young children
often made choices to raise their own food so that they could acquire high quality organic
food for their families and themselves.

I had a lotta health issues[...]was on a lotta medications including stuff for my
heart, and I started doing some research and realized that it was medication that
was making me sick[...]I decided I was going to convert to an organic diet[...]at
that point I could no longer afford to buy it in the stores, and so, that’s when I
looked at my husband and said, you know if we can’t afford to buy it, then the
only option I’ve got is to grow my own[...]y’know, I just started doing that and by
doing it, I’ve been able to get off of all the medications.
- Victoria, dairy goat homesteader

Additionally, my participants believe consumers are beginning to realize the value of
“good food,” which goat products can fall into. During this past fall, a phone call to a
local specialized grocery store priced raw goats’ milk at $10.79 per half gallon. Prices for
goat meat are rising, and Gabrielle said it had even surpassed beef at some auctions
recently. In this way, goats are an “unfinished commodity” (Paxson 2013). What it means
to raise and eat goat products has yet to be determined by the value that goats can
acquire. Currently, the economic landscape for goats is insecure. People raising them
mostly see them as an important resource for food and other products, but because of the
general public’s unfamiliarity with goats products, goats may require more labor to
market than other local and sustainably produced foods. The labor associated with goats
relies on a network of people: those knowledgeable about goats and those willing and
able to pay for goat products. Goats connect people through production and consumption, but they also can imbue tension within these relationships.

**IT TAKES A VILLAGE: THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE GOAT RAISING POSSIBLE**

The sociocultural landscape is similar to Appadurai’s (1996) ethnoscapes (the movement and position of people through a landscape) as well as his ideoscapes (the flow of ideas within a space). While conducting this research, several social positions emerged as particularly important subjects from my interviews, both explicitly and implicitly. Social class, which has already been discussed, and race, closely tied to citizenship status, became foundational for my understandings of my research participants’ understandings of themselves and their communities. Here I will also discuss age, ability, gender, and sexuality. In addition to the social positions of individuals, this section will discuss the relationships between people, particularly how these multiple social positions influence the nature of these relationships.

During my interviews, my participants used different social positions to describe goat consumers and goat raisers (Figure 4.6). I asked one question that bore intersectionality in mind: “Who do you think typically raises goats in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, class?” Another question I asked people raising goats for commercial purposes was how they would describe their customers (although I did not provide any probes), which also created a visual representation. I rarely probed after asking the intersectional question in order to allow my participants to give their first impression of goat raisers. By not probed, I saw which aspects of identity each person discussed as most salient for goat raisers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Who Raises Goats?</th>
<th>Who Consumes Goats?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helen (dairy)</td>
<td>Anybody</td>
<td>Anybody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine (meat, pasture)</td>
<td>Men (larger farms); women increasing</td>
<td>Middle Eastern and Indian populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenneth (pasture, meat)</td>
<td>White females</td>
<td>Hispanic and Caribbean populations, Middle Eastern and Indian, other ethnic groups, curious people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reagan (dairy)</td>
<td>Older white people, white females</td>
<td>Anybody (who tries it)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny (pasture)</td>
<td>Women, cross-cultural</td>
<td>Hispanic population, people raised with goat products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke (pasture, meat)</td>
<td>Older people (relates to land)</td>
<td>Hispanic and Muslim populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia (dairy, pasture)</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Hispanic populations, health conscious people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy (dairy)</td>
<td>People who love goats or for commercial purposes (some exceptions)</td>
<td>ethnic populations: Russian, German, Jamaican (for her specifically)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabrielle (dairy)</td>
<td>Middle-aged women with farm background, gay men</td>
<td>Lactose intolerant people, health conscious, local conscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamal (pasture)</td>
<td>rich people with horses, migrant workers, poorer African American families, wealthier (expensive “novelty” breeds)</td>
<td>migrant workers (meat), poorer African American families (meat), health conscious (milk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy (meat)</td>
<td>people 30-65 yo; small-scale</td>
<td>novelty/open minded/nature inclined; ethnic populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee (meat)</td>
<td>Three quarters women</td>
<td>Ethnic populations: Greek, Muslim, some Mexican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria (dairy, fiber)</td>
<td>Caucasian women, 30s+</td>
<td>Mexican population, different ethnicities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanda (dairy)</td>
<td>Women; more men with meat/Boer</td>
<td>Alternative milk users/lactose intolerant; parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin (dairy)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Dairy - upper middle class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.6 Who Raises Goats and Who Consumes Goats?**

Interestingly, dairy goat raisers were usually less specific on who raised goats than meat goat raisers. Dairy goat raisers often cite people’s motivations for raising goats to wanting milk for families, having environmental concerns, beginning homeschooling
projects, or generating income. The lack of specificity could have to do with the nature of goat dairy consumers versus goat meat consumers, which I will discuss later.

It becomes clear that interviewee descriptions of goat raisers and goat consumers highlight different social dimensions. Goat raisers are rarely described by race or ethnicity; age and gender dominate this discussion. Goat consumers are most commonly described by ethnicity.

The discussion of consumers based on ethnicity occurred early on in my research when I attended a goat seminar in the Upstate. I listened to a lecture on goat marketing strategies that focused my attention on issues of ethnicity and citizenship, even though the Othering of immigrants may not be intentional here.

The biggest goat packer/slaughterhouse is in NJ, about 1 million annually. Why? “Across the river from 8 million ethnics. Some of them speak English but all eat goat.” He talks about negotiating “haggle” with consumers. The seller has the advantage when “God’s telling him to eat the goat.”[...]He talks about 1.3 million Latinos and puts it in his own experiential context that Latinos “put goat guts in the trash can” and the city gets mad. It becomes Buzzardville.[...] To find a market he said to go to the nearest Muslim to get people to the farm or to look for the word “iglesia” and go there.
-Excerpt from field notes, goat seminar, 21 April 2012

Although goats arrived with Spanish colonists, goats have not been traditionally consumed in the United States, with cattle reigning as the primary source of red meat and dairy. Some people may be seeking out immigrant consumers simply because it is the most commonly cited market, or out of genuine desire to connect with people of color (Slocum 2006). Reports from the USDA (2009, 2011) and West Virginia University (Singh-Knight and Knight 2005) state that the primary consumers of goat meat in the U.S. are people from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Africa, Mexico, Western Europe and the Caribbean, with the Muslim population being the primary consumers. All three
reports consider these communities as the most significant customer base, with one including information about religious holidays, proscriptions, and generalized cultural preferences about age, cuts of meat, and slaughter methods (Singh-Knight and Knight 2005). Some people may notice the patterns of consumption and recognize the cultural and historical traditions shaping food preferences of some immigrant communities.

However, constructing immigrants as consumers based on tradition rather than engagement in local and sustainable food ideologies creates the designation of passive receivers rather than engaged actors. Additionally, associating immigrants with goats creates an assumption that citizens do not consume goats and that goats exist outside of normalized national cuisine. Goat products as not normal regional or national cuisine can also be seen in the discourse about health-conscious people primarily interested in goat dairy products or about goat products as an exotic novelty.

He provides an example about a woman from Maine--Boer goats raised “humanely.” He pokes fun a bit. She makes pepperoni sausage “you can make it out of armadillo” emphasizing that goat is fine for sausage. She sells it for $20/lb, “Jesus Christ, you’ve got like pizza.” For an 80 pound goat, you’d probably get 24 pounds of pepperoni. [...]He gives another example of a unique strategy. The producer cooks and sells the meat himself. The dishes they do are quarter pounders, kabobs and veggies ($9), and curries ($12) which they sell at public venues likes fair and shows. At the Richmond State Fair, they have a mobile cookery. For organically grown vegetables, $8, “did you see it coming?” and special bread. The goat meat averages out at $34/lb but this requires money and dedication. He shows a picture from the fair and says “not one recognizable ethnic in that crowd.” He identifies them as high schoolers, young folks and 20 somethings who seek unusual products. People think they’re buying something different, exotic. It’s duping mostly cuz they are paying some ungodly price. -Excerpt from field notes, goat seminar, 21 April 2012

Although the speaker refers specifically to novelty, his comments about organic vegetables and humanely raised animals point to health-conscious consumers, as well, and highlights the high costs of these healthy foods. Health-conscious consumers seek
out these novelty and specialty foods, which become confined to niche markets and relegates goat products such as this sausage to markets for consumers with the ability to pay for it. These are the consumers with whom many dairy goat raisers interact, which may contribute to the relative invisibility of their customers’ privileged statuses and the ambiguity in their answers of who consumes goat products.

To counter the naturalization of health consciousness of certain people in particular, I would argue that all people are concerned about their health, but knowledge about their personal health exists within power differentials. Participation in the sustainable food movement may not be a question of desire to participate in sustainable food practices so much as an ability and privilege based on economic resources.

A clear dichotomy emerged in regard to how my participants imagined the ethnicities of consumers and their ethnicities as producers. Discussions of ethnicity from Euro-American people, who represent the dominant ethnic group, point to moments of exclusion as well as inclusion. The fact that many of my participants’ consumers are described as recent immigrants or People of Color shows how food practices and economic activities contribute to a negotiated space of belonging and citizenship. Even more, many of my participants rely on their relationship with People of Color and immigrant consumers to facilitate their agricultural pursuits. If goats belong in South Carolina, don’t the people who consume their products also belong? Although typically my participants suggested that citizens consume goat dairy products and immigrants consume goat meat, this dichotomy is messier in reality. Several participants mention that people brought up on goats likely consume their meat and milk products, and several others discussed goat meat as a novelty for curious foodies.
Another important social position is age. About 40% of farmers in the United States are 55 years or older (EPA 2012a). My survey responses and interviews indicated that respectively, 35.7% and 20% of my participants were 55 years or older. The ages of farmers brings up issues of who will take over the farm. None of my eleven farmers with children discussed who would take over their farm, if anyone, with me.

The lack of interest among my participants’ children indicates that the children may see the immense work required for agricultural ventures and the lack of return from this labor. One couple had sold their business label to another woman because they did not have the desire to continue selling their goat products, nor did anyone within their family want to take over. They kept the animals and gave the new business owner the raw material. Another couple had the help of their children with much of the farm labor. However, the daughters seemed to be expected to live with their husbands after they married. While the sons did help, their role did not focus on the goat care. Besides the aforementioned family, only two other farmers discussed help from their children, and their involvement seemed to be in specific aspects of the business such as marketing. Two of the children I spoke to had dreams that differed from the farm life their parents had created for them, although they did help around the farm significantly. One of my participants talked about his grandchildren’s infrequent visits, which he said he expected because as they grew older, they became less interested in farm life, goats, and spending weekends with their grandparents. During my fieldwork, I met only one rather incredible young man who seemed very invested in the family meat goat farm, to the point where he obviously planned to expand and run the operations in the future. Children may not value an agricultural lifestyle because making it a livelihood is so difficult.
Another aspect of goat raising partially related to age is ability. Several of my farmers discussed health problems, such as arthritis, back surgery, and disability related to age, which led several of them to downsize their herds or to start using mechanized milking technologies. Solely an the increase in herd size, even with help of family members, could require upgrading mechanized milking systems, which can be expensive equipment. Many of them discussed the hard work required in goat raising and the frustration with putting so much effort into these animals and receiving relatively little in economic gain. Although we did not discuss it explicitly, stress and mental health play a role in these farmers’ lives. I did not ask specifically whether the goats put a strain on relationships within families and couples of my research participants, but some of them did hint at stress and strain. Several times the women would tell me I should speak with their husbands to understand their side of the story.

A final aspect of ability relates to gender. Several participants explained the rise in goat raising among women as ability to “do the work” (Trauger 2004). Several of my participants discussed goats as a good animal for women to handle.

If a female wants to milk something[...], a goat is a lot easier. And you can easily handle a one hundred fifty pound goat a lot easier [than] an eleven or fifteen hundred pound cow[...]And you’re going to get locked by both of ‘em and stepped on by both of ‘em[...]Goats get attached and know who you are, and men just don’t have that motherly instinct. [laughing] That’s what I think.

- Olivia, dairy goat homesteader

Relating women raising goats to their strength is an interesting discussion since for men as well, a hundred fifty pound goat would be preferable to an animal ten times heavier. Olivia’s last point, about the motherly instinct, seems a potential point for discussion. Although not all of my meat goat raisers were men, all of the dairy goat raisers I talked to were women. Even within couples, women did the majority of the dairy work. One
family was striking in that the women were all doing the milking and dairy processing while the men were all doing outside chores and marketing. Some women’s husbands did help, but one woman farmer said her husband felt too weird touching a teat. Several farmers mentioned a gender divide, with men having larger meat goat operations and women having smaller dairy goat operations. The gender divide likely has more to do with naturalization of women’s role as caretakers and the similarity between a woman’s reproductive work and a dairy goat’s reproductive work. Still, Nancy described how her husband cried over the serious illness of a beloved goat kid, and both Duke and Gamal expressed their affection for their animals.

These moments demonstrate that animals have the ability to encourage affection and enjoyment from their caretakers, which undermines traditional divisions of gendered emotional work and can help redefine masculinity as capable of care work. Sustainable agriculture’s small-scale may also facilitate connections to farm animals and farm work that may become less accessible as operations grow to larger scales.

The final social position to discuss is sexuality. All of my research participants are married heterosexual couples. Sexuality, and specifically homosexuality, did become a topic of discussion several times, much to my surprise. One farm in South Carolina continually came up in conversations about goats: Split Creek Farm and Dairy, owned and operated by Evin Evans. Evin Evans has become extremely successful, creating goat milk products that have been internationally recognized and widely circulated within South Carolina’s market (Hathaway 2007). While unable to speak with her directly due to her health issues, she became a repeated point of conversation to the point that I began to pay close attention to how people spoke about her. Discussions seemed to contain a
mixture of envy, admiration, and mistrust. The mistrust may reside in the fact that many of my participants described Split Creek operations as rather secretive and guarded. People also disproved of some of the practices at Split Creek, such as mixing the milk from the entire dairy herd, the grassy flavor of some of the products, and the monopoly on the goat milk market.

However, I felt something else was not being said. After one interview, I chatted a bit more with Reagan, and I remember saying somewhat awkwardly that Evin Evans owned Split Creek with her friend. Reagan said, “You mean her girlfriend?” Evin Evans is openly gay, and while it is discussed in the goat and agricultural community, my participants generally avoided that subject. Twice more my participants brought up the issue of sexuality to me. However, they framed it in a context of homosexuality being acceptable and that people just had to prepare themselves for coming into contact with LGBTQ people. It almost felt as if several participants wanted to prepare me for coming into contact with LGBTQ people in the goat-raising community. Despite the general admiration for Evin Evans, her sexuality did make some people uncomfortable, and her success challenges heteronormativity as the most suitable model for agriculture.

To raise goats, people often require an informal network of support. In general, raising goats was not a spontaneous decision, and most commonly my participants raised them because of other people. Three people were given goats; three people began raising goats as projects for someone else (specifically, children and livestock guardian dogs); and four people mentioned family tradition or always being around goats. One participant specifically mentioned always loving goats and two others said goats’ milk began their
Additionally, several of my participants talked about giving advice or even physical labor to their neighbors and friends raising goats.

Figure 4.7 Penny’s grandmother inspired her fascination with goats at an early age by telling Penny to “go find her pink goat” when she was underfoot. When the opportunity arose, Penny got herself two goats (Pink Goat on the left).

Many of my goat raisers furthermore relied on a network of people for their goat knowledge, either through online forums or local mentors and neighbors. Since many veterinarians do not specialize in goat health, my participants became their own goat health specialists and advocates. At the seminar I attended, maintaining goat health was an extremely important topic because people did not have resources like animal clinics to be the experts for them. Out of thirteen workshops, ten addressed health: “How to Keep Diseases Off the Farm,” “Goat Feeding & Health Care,” “When, Where, and How to Do Fecal Egg Counts,” “Prelude to Kidding–Essentials, Minerals, Vaccinations, & Other
Factors to Begin a Trouble Free Kidding Season” were a few of the lecture topics addressed.

However, this “goat community” consisted of disagreements and even rivalries as well as mentorships and friendships. While the standard is that what works on each farm will vary, some participants mentioned feeling pressured to raise their goats in certain ways, particularly concerning chemical medications and milk handling. Judgments of practices and the conflicting opinions can be seen in the following excerpt from Reagan, a dairy goat homesteader:

Reagan: [...]if I can avoid not, I just don’t like to give them a whole lot of chemicals. I’ve realized the more you get into the goat world, the more people want you to do stuff to ‘em. [...] But you know, after I went to that seminar, they were like, if there’s been a, if it rains one whole day [Bri: Yeah.] You should give ‘em dewormer. [Bri: Yeah, I remember Peggy sayin’ that.] And I was like, oh my word. First of all, it gets very expensive. [Bri: Yeah.] Second of all, what if they get resistance? [Bri: Yeah.] You know because I come from, I’m a nurse, so I come from a land of things like MRSA and VRE and C. Diff, where you wipe out good bugs, you get nothing but bad all the time.

Another instance of judgment occurred at the seminar, when I attended the dairy goat roundtable. Here a woman said that Split Creek pools their milk from all their different goat breeds and that she “would never do that.” I heard these types of distancing remarks throughout my research. Whether they indicate moments of moral superiority or markers of difference between goat raisers and their practices, I could not determine. However, a portion of the seminar’s proceeds was donated to Evin Evans because of the expense of her surgery, so despite disagreements about methods of practice, this community of goat raisers I met supported each other. How people choose to raise their animals could undermine as well as strengthen relationships between people raising goats.
Furthermore, people raising goats may experience isolation. Several people expressed their reluctance to continually call knowledgeable people in their network because they did not want to burden them with all of their questions. Goat raisers also are fairly bound to their places because of the care requirements for their goats and farm projects. Their responsibilities to their goats and agricultural projects could create strains in relationships with friends and families not involved in farm life and whose expectations of visits may be impossible for farmers and homesteaders to fulfill.

Goat raisers must overcome the gap in knowledge about goats, another contributing factor to goats as an “unfinished commodity” (Paxson 2013). Goats’ position as an unloved other contributes to the unfinished aspect of goats’ market value. Unloved others can be thought of as nonhuman animals that capture the people’s imaginations and that will inspire advocacy work from people in times of endangerment (Rose and van Dooren 2011). People may neglect, ignore, or actively destroy unloved others because of the position these unloved species occupy in the human imagination. Goats as unloved other may have to do with their association with immigrants and People of Color in the Global South, as well as people’s perceptions about goats themselves.

My goat raisers describe a lot of stigma and misinformation surrounding goats. People often picture goats as the pushy animal in the zoo that will eat everything, including tin cans and sweaters. These negative perceptions became particularly vital to overcome when the negativity affected people’s businesses. The idea of goats as dirty and smelly affected people’s willingness to try goat products, which was compounded when consumers had tried goat products that lived up to this expectation. Selling their goat products also could prove frustrating. When selling live animals, goat raisers found that
consumers wanted to offer about twenty dollars for an animal that the owners had spent months feeding, vaccinating, medicating, fencing and sheltering. Certain livestock sales in South Carolina offer good prices for goats, about seventy dollars, and off-the-farm sales can fetch prices of a hundred dollars or more. However, my participants who sold their animals for people interested in showing or at the high end of registered, purebred animals pay several hundred dollars for a doe or buck with an excellent bloodline. Since the purebred animals often have more health problems than those with hybrid vigor, the pressure to raise certain breeds still exist, particularly Boer goats for commercial sale of goat meat.

To overcome the gap of what people think a goat is and what my participants feel goats can offer requires goat raisers to open their farms to the public or to become very successful at the marketing-educating skill set. Other participants discuss how they encounter a lot of misunderstanding about what it takes to properly care for goats in terms of food, space, and general good animal husbandry. My participants perceive people raising goats as pets and not understanding their livestock nature—wanting to dress them up or keep them in dog pens—as well as people wanting to raise goats as purely livestock—tied to a cement block and not slaughtering humanely.

To raise goats properly, Renee, a meat goat farmer, told me, “You have to think like a goat.” Caring for goats requires embodying some of their characteristics. Several participants told me that they—goat people—were “weird” or different from the people raising cattle, sheep, or poultry. Paxson (2013) said that one participant tell her that people raised goats for their personality while people raised sheep because they loved the land.
Goats can help people become more grounded in their landscape. This could be similar in some ways to the benefits that local honey and pollen are seen to have. People consume a local product that comes from the landscape of South Carolina, which aids their bodies in becoming more in tune and more like their local landscapes. Goats can provide health where national and international industrially processed food cannot. During my interviews, many of my participants enumerated the benefits of both goat milk and goat meat (Figure 4.8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits Related to Product</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Milk</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easier for people with lactose intolerance, diabetes, spastic colon; More digestible; Good for sensitive immune systems—children and the elderly; Can help with allergies, insomnia, migraines, stomach ulcers, acid reflux and heartburn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meat</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lean, low fat, like venison</td>
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</tbody>
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**Figure 4.8 Health Benefits Associated with Goat Products**

Goat milk has the reputation of being easier on the digestive system, particularly for more sensitive people, than cows’ milk. It also has healing properties associated with imbalances in the body, like diabetes, ulcers, and allergies. Goat meat is seen as healthy because it does not have much fat but still has equivalent levels of protein and other nutrients found in other red meats.

Goats occupy an ambiguous position in the sociocultural landscape. On the one hand, they are an unloved other and associated with groups of people who do not traditionally “belong” in South Carolina. Immigrant communities and People of Color are seen as Others, as are health-conscious urban and suburban migrants (though to a lesser extent). On the other hand, people are making it their project to connect to people who are considered Other, and without People of Color and immigrant communities, some goat-raising ventures would have failed. Goats give families and couples as well as older
people work and food products that they consider healthy and meaningful, but the sustainability beyond their generation is questionable. People hold certain assumptions about what gender performs goat care and how the end product of goats affects these relationships. On the ground, though, I found the reality to be more complex and interesting because men, women, dairy goat owners and meat goat owners all express affection and concern for their animals.

All of these landscapes reveal insecure positions for goats in South Carolina along with the labor that people put into securing and establishing goats as part of these landscapes. Goats occupy an important role in farms and homesteads, particularly as co-creators of productive landscapes and of good food. However, since the most of the popular goat breeds are not from the United States, goats lack adaptations to hot and humid climates and spaces, making them vulnerable to parasites and other health issues. Additionally, goat products are not secure in the economic landscape, remaining “unfinished,” with the value of goat meat and dairy still to be determined. The sociocultural landscape deals with this determination of this value, since currently the main markets are also framed as “not belonging” or at least in transition. Part of economic insecurity also pertains to the regulatory policy in the political landscape that frames goat products as potentially dangerous. These insecurities throughout the different landscapes require immense labor and innovative strategies of goat raisers to secure their livelihoods and an agricultural way of living. Their success in securing their goat projects also depends on their social positions and social relationships with other goat raisers and with consumers. Goat raisers must exert control over goats to create the most productive types of animals possible; however, the relationships between goats and people cannot be
considered simply rational economic choices. Most of my participants describe the loving, sometimes familial bond between them and their animals, which confers goats a certain amount of power in human-goat relationships.

The success or failure of goat projects is directly related to the relationships—the between goats, other livestock, guardians (dogs, llamas, and humans), microorganisms, goat product consumers, regulators, friends and family, and the “goat community” as a whole. All of these relationships are constantly in flux, which creates moments that are beneficial as well as detrimental to one or several of species and institutions involved. These relationships unfold on farms and homesteads, at markets, over the internet, in informal and formal places of knowledge, across South Carolina, the United States, and the world. Although diversity characterizes this world of goats I have discussed, several themes run through the research results. Narratives of desire for self-sufficiency and sustainability echoed throughout my research, as well as did the trials and rewards to be faced toward these goals.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I explore why people raise goats in South Carolina, what strategies they use, and how their desires to pursue agricultural projects becomes complicated through their relationships with their goats and goats’ position in multiple landscapes. I showed the tension between goats as commodities and goats as friends and collaborators on farms and homesteads. This tension becomes exacerbated because maintaining the health and creating value of goats requires immense efforts on the parts of goat raisers due to prohibitive regulatory policy; dangerous ecologies; expensive and necessary inputs; and social stigma. These complications raise questions of who has access to pursue agricultural projects and whether these projects are socially sustainable. However, goats have become part of physical and mental landscapes through their work with other species, particularly humans, and can be a source of sustainability and connection.

DISCUSSION

Goats are much more than just animals. They are actors in the political ecology of places and they force reinterpretation of the relationship between humans and other species. Goats are participants in a complex web of other species directed by humans that constitute “farms” or “homesteads.” Goats carry landscapes in their bodies, and with the help of plants and microorganisms, goats can actively help people lead healthier lives (Paxson 2008, 2013). Humans and goats simultaneously shape and affect each
other’s lives. Humans have exerted biopolitical control over goats for at least 10,000
years. Through these controls, people have created animals that produce desirable
products, changing goats’ very natures to encourage friendliness, docility, and serenity,
somewhat surprising traits in prey animals.

Similarly, though, goats change the lives of their human caretakers. People often
become tied to the land and their animals because leaving jeopardizes all of their labor
and care: goat raisers cannot simply make rational economic choices. Goats affect the
people caring for them on an emotional level—bonds form between these two species that
transcend mere economic value. Peggy told me, “At one time, I did nothing but llamas,
and then I went right back into goats because I, I couldn’t get away from the goats. It’s
like in your blood”. Katherine similarly told me that she has “farming in the blood”. Even
if someone doesn’t literally consume goat products, goats may still find a way to be seen
as embodied in their caretakers and an essential part of people’s lives.

It seems that goats need only an informal network to facilitate homesteading and
farming ventures. My sample may be biased in that all but one of my participants had
goats at the time so they either had some use or love for them. One participant told me
that most people do not own goats for longer than three years because, as most
participants told me, raising goats is not for everyone. Still, many of my participants
recognized the desire to raise their own food, both in themselves and people they knew,
as a primary reason to raise goats.

However, goat-human relationships become complicated in the market and in the
political realm because goats must help their caretakers secure enough profit of some
kind to sustain the livelihoods of farms and homesteads. Goats live in insecure landscapes
in South Carolina. Because of these insecurities, the landscapes are at once full of potential as well as fraught with tensions. The people raising goats have multiple strategies for grounding their animals as belonging and make these places suitable with their time, labor, and capital. However, an intersectional analysis helped me recognize privileges as well as difficulties that goat raisers faced linked to their social positions. Therefore, raising goats does not merely depend on the skills, knowledge, and innovative strategies of goats’ owners but also privileges afforded to people based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and ability.

All of the landscapes complicate the efforts of humans, goats, and other collaborating species. South Carolina’s ecology and agricultural system make goats sick and kills them, due to heat, humidity, and different pasturing techniques. The most popular goat breeds have come to South Carolina from originating places very unlike South Carolina in climate or geography. Interestingly, the success of several of my participants economically relied on similar movements from people in whose cultures goats are a part of the cuisine. Although people conceptualized as traditionally eating goats live in South Carolina now, by eating goat products, particularly meat, they become the Other. This creates a divide between who raises goats and who consumes goats. People consuming goat meat are often seen as immigrants (generally from the Global South), People of Color, and/or people from poor and working class backgrounds whereas people consuming goat dairy products also includes upper and middle class consumers who are usually ethnically white and from suburban or urban areas. The consumption of goat is then a catch-22. People raising goats commercially want goat products to become successful and even mainstream, but yet eating goat products can
mark someone as not belonging, based on their race, class, ethnicity, or citizenship status. Goat products are labeled either as yuppie and elitist (milk) or lowbrow and bad-tasting (meat).

The difficult of marketing goat products becomes more complicated as commercially motivated goat raisers must contend with restrictive and unclear regulatory policy. Food production regulations favor large-scale productions, which limits the business of goat raising for profit to people with the economic capital to support it, in addition to the land and other inputs that goats require. Goat raising occupies a conceptual space that people simultaneously say it is easy and hard. Can goat raising be qualified as easier than cattle raising? Is it more difficult for people of certain social positions (working class and poor people, People of Color, recent immigrants)? Perhaps it can be said that goat raising means both difficulties and benefits.

Sustainable and local food producers recognize that they participate in a larger movement that transcends boundaries and has meanings on regional, national, and global scales. In this way, my participants’ local practices engage with national and global discourses about sustainable food systems, one example of hemispheric localism (Mendoza-Denton 2008). However, my participants’ discourse revealed another issue of local practices with global significance. Their practices engaged directly and intimately with the global through the movement of people and animals across national boundaries. This interdependency on animals and people who are not seen as local and therefore “belonging” brought into focus incongruities within local and sustainable food ideologies and calls into question what motivations reflect the realities of sustainable food practices.
Can a movement be local when it depends on migrants to sustain itself? Do migrants become local by consuming foods produced locally in the landscape?

People’s motivations also complicates the picture of who pursues sustainable food projects and why. Liberality, often associated with middle-class and white consumers (Guthman 2008; Slocum 2006) may not be the only or most useful ideological framework for understanding sustainable food producers. One participant expressed religious values that inspired her agricultural work. Helen described cheese-making as a “God thing,” a miraculous event to participate in and behold. Wendy, a meat farmer with a dairy goat herd, told me that although she came from a liberal perspective of environmental concern, which did not resonate with or motivate other farmers she knew, they both shared similar values of self-sufficiency. Several participants discussed self-sufficiency in the context of useful skills to have during or after disasters. Whether or not everyone comes from the same ideological background, people like my participants recognize the value of agricultural work as skills as well as income generating or lifestyle.

However, I question the usefulness of self-sufficiency as a motivation for a movement trying to connect people to their food and to create viable communities. It seems that resourcefulness and respectful interdependency, informed by a multispecies ethnography ethos, could be more fruitful approaches to achieving ecological, economic, and social justice in food movements. This multispecies ethos considers the contributions and collaboration between multiple species, giving value to the work done (or perhaps undone) to projects like agriculture and animal husbandry. I also wish to problematize tradition as an unsuitable motivation for sustainable food participation. While some farmers discussed their consumers’ interest as “merely” related to tradition, some realized
that their agricultural practices helped people continue their traditions. Traditions also allow consumers to engage with sustainable food spaces, perhaps in a limited way, but generating a connection that Slocum (2006) suggests these movements desire. The consumer-producer relationships across racial lines could also be a point of entry for understanding the sustainable practices that many People of Color have utilized out of resourcefulness, necessity, enjoyment, and caretaker ethical codes that are not part of the discourse in predominantly white sustainable food spaces.

Places do not have to be bound to the local and traditional. The fluid movement of people, animals, plants, and ideas creates and recreates places, food traditions, and agricultural practices. The global does not have to result only in the horrors like that of capitalist, industrial food systems that exploit people and the planet. The global could also be a site of connection and support. Without more flexibility, potentialities and alliances are lost because they exist outside the bounds of the social imaginary.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study contributes to the emerging interest in human-nonhuman relationships in the unique context of sustainable food discourse. However, several limitations arose during my fieldwork. One limitation was the relative homogeneity and small size of my sample. Typical sample sizes for ethnographic studies of sustainable food producers range from 8 farms to over 30 individuals (Brandth and Haugen 2011; Janssen 2010; Paxson 2008; Pilgeram 2011). While I was able to interview fifteen individuals, conduct surveys, and meet additional people informally through participant observation, I would liked to have talked to more men, People of Color, people raising goats for meat, and people in the Lowcountry to fill out my sample with more participants and more
diversity. While my sample’s homogeneity may in fact be representative of who raises goats in South Carolina, one probable factor contributing to my sample is that I am a white, middle-class female student, which influences with whom I had the most access in terms of initiating contact and building rapport during fieldwork. In particular, I may have missed people from working class or poor backgrounds, since as Gamal and others mentioned, goats are often considered the poor man’s cattle. Additionally, I may have missed farms and homesteads owned by People of Color, particularly since my participants rarely mentioned People of Color they knew raising goats. Also, my sampling strategy, which relied on using the resources available to me through the seminar I attended and goat association websites, probably limited me from finding people outside of these organizations.

Another limitation was my focus solely on people raising goats. To truly employ Mintz’s (1985) and Barndt’s (2002) commodity approaches, I would need to include more in-depth information about distribution and particularly consumption from other vantage points beyond my participants who raise goats. These strategies could have also introduced diversity into my sample. Several people told me they had been to several places, such as Indian, Mediterranean, Mexican, and Caribbean restaurants and groceries that sold goat products. However, due to time constraints and not finding gatekeepers, I was not able to pursue this direction of research.

Questions came to me while I began to analyze my data that would have enriched my subject, such as whether people grew up with agricultural backgrounds and what their plans for their homesteads and farms were beyond their care.
Future directions for this research include tracing the entire process of goats in the commodity chain. In this case, I could talk to livestock stockpeople at auction sales, retail grocers, restaurants owners, and other distributors of goat products to assess their perceptions of goats and their products. To investigate the nature of human/goat interaction at the level of the stockyard would be particularly fascinating. I could also conduct surveys with people about their perceptions of goat products and more in-depth interviews with regular consumers of goat dairy products and meat about the meanings and motivations for goat product consumption. My future enquiry would be enriched through intensive multi-sited work that includes more diverse demographic samples through South Carolina and beyond. In retrospect, with more time, I would like to have stopped at fields of goats, utilized goat sales resources like Craigslist, and stopped at feed stores. I also would like to undertake work in Texas, Tennessee, California, states in New England, and other places with strong goat industries. Taking this research internationally would provide the opportunity to compare production in the United States to places such as New Zealand, South Africa, and Europe. Goats have a lot to offer the current trends in animal studies in terms of their movements around the world and their ambiguous place in the market and in people’s lives. An expanded study of goat-human relationships could have implications for considerations for other livestock-human interactions, particularly newly introduced species.

**Conclusion**

Although their position in South Carolina is insecure, goats are becoming part of the social imaginary and the ecological, political, economic, and sociocultural landscapes through the work of people who value them and care for them (Appadurai 1996). Goat
raisers are crossing their favorite breeds to create hardier hybrids, and people constantly tap into informal networks to enlist the advice of other goat raisers about improving their goats’ health. Although raw goat milk is entangled in contentious claims about its safety and benefits, it has entered the public consciousness as important to consider and discuss and has been instrumental in questions about food safety and quality. Goat raisers are informing the public through innovative strategies about the benefits of goat products and the animals themselves. Goats, as a cross-culturally relevant livestock species, have the potential to connect goat raisers with a diversity of consumers and knowledgeable people. While I have shown that people raising goats face hardships in securing their livelihoods, I have also demonstrated that goats inspire people to advocate for them as companions; as valuable co-creators of healthy products and ecologies; and as sustainable parts of farms, homesteads, and food movements.

Goats represent a unique aspect of sustainable food movements, perhaps even a cornerstone (as one participant told me). Goats have the potential to connect diverse groups of people, combining cultural tradition with sustainability and resourcefulness. However, one must remain cognizant of how goats and other sustainable food efforts are framed. If goats truly are an essential aspect of sustainable food movements, they cannot be trivialized or constrained to niche markets. To ensure a mutually beneficial relationship it is imperative that those who raise these valuable animals, along with food producers in general, receive support across multiple scales if sustainable food movements are to be successful. Issues of exclusion and social sustainability may seriously inhibit the full potential of food movements. To address these issues, the goals
of sustainable food movements in terms of economic, ecological, and social justice and strategies for attaining them must be discussed and clearly articulated.
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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Basic questions
1a. How did you begin raising goats?
1b. How long have you had goats?
2. How many goats do you have?
3. What breed(s) of goats do you raise? Why do you raise these breeds?
4. Why do you raise goats? What do goats provide for you?
5a. What is your relationship like with the goats you raise?
5b. (If they have a family): What is your family’s relationship like with your goats?
6. What are the personalities of your goats like?
7. Are your goats for personal use, for sale commercially, or both? Do you sell or barter your goat products?
8. Who do you think typically raises goats? (In terms of gender, ethnicity, age, class, etc.)
9. How do you think goats fit into South Carolina’s agriculture/food system/landscape?
10. Do you think goats fit into the sustainable/local food movement? Why or why not?
11. What obstacles or difficulties do you face raising goats? What would help people raising goats? Is it easier for some people to raise goats than others?
12. What are some of the successes you have had?
13. What do you think the public should know about goats?
14. Where does your knowledge about goats come from?
15. Do you have a favorite (or several!) goat story?
16. Why do you think vets do not learn about goats in vet school? (added toward the end of interviewing period)

Questions specific for farms
1. Do you have certification(s)? What kind?
2. Are goats the main aspect of your farm?
3. Do you consume the goat products you make/sell?
4. Where do you sell your goat products?
5. How would you describe your customers? Why do you think they consume goat products?
6. Where do you predict the market for goat products is going?

Questions specific for dairy goat raisers
1. Who consumes goat dairy products?
2. How do you process goat milk?
3. What is special about goat milk and dairy products?
4. What do you think of raw milk and the laws in SC?
Questions specific for meat goat raisers
5. Who consumes goat meat?
6. How do you process goat meat?
7. What is special about goat meat?
APPENDIX B: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Location:
Gender:
Ethnicity/Race:
Year Born:
1. How long have you had goats?
2. How many goats do you have?
3. What breed(s) of goats do you raise? Please list all purebreds and percentages.
4. How did you begin raising goats?
5. Why do you raise the goats? Mark all that apply.
   - Meat
     - Halal/Kosher
   - Home use
   - Auction sale
   - Custom processed as freezer meat for individuals
   - USDA inspected and processed
- Dairy
  - Raw
  - Pasteurized
  - Milk
    - Cheese
    - Yogurt
  - Cosmetics (soap, lotion, etc. - please specify)
  - Home use
- Fiber
- Breeding
- Grazing/land management
- Pack animals
- Companions/pets
  - 4-H

6. Are your goats for personal use or for sale commercially?
   Personal
   Commercial
   Both
7. Do you have certification(s)? What kind?
8. Are goats the main aspect of your farm?
   Yes
   No
   They are a part of my operation (Please indicate a percentage)
9. Why do you raise goats?
10. Do you consider goats to fit into the sustainable food movement? Why or why not?
11. How would you describe your relationship with your goats?
12. What obstacles or difficulties do you face raising goats? (This can be at the personal, community, institutional, state, or national level.)
13. What are some successes you have had raising goats?
14. Do you sell your goats' products?
   Yes
   No
   No, but I barter/trade. __________

14a. If you answered yes to #14, please mark all that apply.
   On farm sales
   Farmers market(s)
   Grocery store
      Local
      Chain
   CSA
   Restaurants
   Internet sales
   Specialty store ______
   Other ________

15. What are some things you think the public should know about goats?
16. Do you have a favorite goat memory or story?
17a. Is there anything else this survey or project should address?
17b. Would you be willing to fill out another survey at a later date if I have additional questions? Y/N
APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Ruminating on Ruminants:
Goats and the People Who Raise Them in South Carolina
Bri Farber

This research is being conducted for my Masters thesis on people raising goats in South Carolina to discover their motivations for raising goats, their relationship with their goats, their successes, and their obstacles and to learn from them about goats. You are being asked to participate based on your experience with and knowledge about goats and related topics. You will receive a copy of this form for your own records.

I will conduct the majority of this research from May to August 2012. I will interview people raising goats and visit farms and homestead whenever possible. Interviews will take roughly 45 minutes to an hour. In exchange for your time during interviews, I am happy to work an equal amount of time on your farm or homestead in whatever capacity would be most useful for you.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may ask to withdraw from the research at any time. You may also ask that certain information not be included in final research reports. I will ask to use an audio recorder during interviews, and you may request that I take written notes instead. All answers will be anonymous, and I will obscure identifying data to the best of my abilities.

I do not foresee any risks in participating in this study. However, I have an ethical responsibility to the public and to animals and am morally obligated to report any unethical procedures I may witness. I do not foresee this occurring, but after discussing ethical responsibilities with advisers in my department, they recommended that I explicitly state this obligation to research participants so that everyone understands my position as a researcher. I will always come to discuss with you first any problems or issues that may arise as I conduct my research.

It is my hope that this study will increase understanding about the realities and benefits of local food for the general public and that the study will contribute to the rising awareness about and support of local food systems.
I DO ____ DO NOT ____ (please mark your choice) give the researcher permission to use audio recording devices during my interview.

I DO ____ DO NOT ____ (please mark your choice) give the researcher permission to take photographs of my operation.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant’s signature: ___________________________ Date ______________
Printed name: ________________________________

For more information concerning this research, please contact:
  Bri Farber
  Department of Anthropology
  1512 Pendleton St, Rm 317; Columbia, SC 29208
  Email: farberb@email.sc.edu
  Cell: (615) 477-0635

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact:
  Thomas Coggins, Director
  Office of Research Compliance
  University of South Carolina
  Columbia, SC 29208
  Phone: (803) 777-4456
  Fax: (803) 576-5589
  E-Mail: tcoggins@gwm.sc.edu