

FOOD VALUES AND THE HUMAN RIGHT TO FOOD: A SOCIOLOGICAL  
ANALYSIS OF FOOD INSECURITY IN OREGON

by

CRAIG G. VAN PELT

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of Sociology  
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

June 2018

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

Student: Craig G. Van Pelt

Title: Food Values and the Human Right to Food: A Sociological Analysis of Food Insecurity in Oregon

This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Sociology by:

Michael Dreiling	Co-Chair
Matt Norton	Co-Chair
Greg McLauchlan	Core Member
Galen Martin	Core Member
Stephen Wooten	Institutional Representative

and

Sara D. Hodges	Interim Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
----------------	--

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

Degree awarded June 2018

© 2018 Craig G. Van Pelt

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Craig G. Van Pelt

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology

June 2018

Title: Food Values and the Human Right to Food: A Sociological Analysis of Food Insecurity in Oregon

Treating food as a commodity is a dominant mode of valuing food in the United States, and around the world, in which people exchange money for food. But in a world that can feed over 10-billion people why is poverty still a primary barrier to food security? This dissertation adds to the food justice and political economy literature by arguing that food insecurity will linger far into the future, despite technological advancements, because of the current food system which values food as a commodity instead of valuing food as a human right. Through an analysis of 23 semi-structured interviews with volunteers and workers in Oregon, and field research at a community garden, this dissertation highlights how even in the minds of people who advocate for food as a human right, the human right to food may only a right to people with enough money. This research illuminates how thinking of food as a money-exchange commodity builds a socially constructed wall between hungry people and abundant food.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Craig G. Van Pelt

### GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene  
University of Colorado, Colorado Springs

### DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Philosophy, Sociology, 2018, University of Oregon  
Master of Science, Sociology, 2013, University of Oregon  
Bachelor of Arts, Psychology, 2011, University of Colorado

### AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Sociology of Food  
Social Inequalities  
Environmental Health  
Sociology of Developing Areas  
Food Security

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Fellow, Department of Sociology, University of Oregon  
2011-2018

### GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Julie and Rocky Dixon Graduate Student Innovation Award  
University of Oregon, 2016

Promising Scholar Award  
University of Oregon, 2011

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, this research would not be possible without the cooperation of many people across the state of Oregon. Farmers, consumers, educators, nonprofit workers, and others who took time to share their thoughts and experiences with me. They opened their homes, offices, and kitchens to me. Some even fed me while I asked them questions. Thank you to the Oregon Community Garden who allowed me to do the bulk of my dissertation research at their site. From the summer of 2016 to the summer of 2017 I served as an intern at the Oregon Community Garden. I learned about how the Oregon Community Garden functioned, who participated, its challenges and successes, and learned a wealth of plant growing knowledge. I am very thankful for their openness, help, and enthusiasm for this project.

I am sincerely appreciative for Dr. Matt Norton and Dr. Michael Dreiling, who provided academic support and guidance. Additional appreciation goes to Greg McLauchlan, Stephen Wooten, and Galen Martin for their help and suggestions. This project was supported in part through the Julie and Rocky Dixon Graduate Student Innovation Award at the University of Oregon.

To my mom, thank you for teaching me how to read. To my aunt (who passed before seeing the completion of this project), thank you for being one of my biggest cheerleaders. Thank you to my wife Diane. Some nights she took empty plates from my desk, when I was so intent on writing that I didn't even realize I had eaten. She responded with the proper amount of rational thinking when I wanted to punt my malfunctioning laptop. Diane responded with the proper amount of frustration to my frustrations, and she has also been a positive encouragement. Thank you.

Aunt Jonda

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Neoliberalism and the Exchange-Value of Food .....	3
The Human Right to Food .....	7
Community Gardens.....	9
Goals.....	11
Research Questions.....	11
Methods.....	12
The Rest of this Dissertation.....	15
II. FOOD INSECURITY: HUNGER AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS .....	18
Prelude to Yet Another Crisis .....	18
Foreshadowing Capitalism’s Next Food Crisis .....	18
The Crisis of Capitalism .....	19
Capitalism’s Food Crisis.....	22
Capitalism’s Food Crisis as Structural Violence.....	24
Conclusion .....	25



Chapter	Page
III. RATIONALIZING FOOD INSECURITY .....	28
The Alienation of Exchange-Value .....	32
Hunger in an Exchange-Value World .....	34
Default Explanations for Food Insecurity .....	38
Carrying Capacity, Land, & Water .....	38
Climate Change .....	42
World Food Insecurity .....	44
Thinking about Food .....	48
Alienation .....	48
Financial Food Sovereignty: Food with Stigma and Food with Dignity .....	49
Foucault and Financial Food Sovereignty .....	51
Stripping Human Rights Away without Feeling Guilty .....	55
Food Movements .....	57
Food Security .....	59
Food Justice .....	59
Food Sovereignty .....	60
A Brief World History of Food Insecurity .....	61
The Irish Potato Famine, 1845 .....	62
Russia's Famines .....	63
Bengal Famine, 1943 .....	65
Great Chinese Famine, 1959 .....	65
Ethiopia, 1983-1985 .....	66

Chapter	Page
North Korea Famine, 1994-1995.....	66
Somalia, 2010-2012.....	67
Syrian Civil War, 2011-present.....	69
USA Food Insecurity.....	70
Food Aid.....	71
Food Banks and Food Pantries.....	73
Food Gleaners.....	75
Farmers Markets and CSAs.....	77
Food Insecurity in Oregon, USA.....	78
College and Food Insecurity.....	79
IV. THE OREGON COMMUNITY GARDEN.....	82
Introducing the Oregon Community Garden.....	83
Describing Irrationality in an Exchange-Value System.....	85
On Food Values.....	86
Measuring the Value of Food.....	86
Community versus Individual.....	88
Free versus Cash.....	90
Noncompetitive versus Competitive.....	92
Rational versus Irrational Food Values.....	95
Discussion: The Garden and the Forest.....	97
Food Values in the County.....	99
History of the Oregon Community Garden.....	101

Chapter	Page
Teaching in the Garden.....	103
The Food Bank, the Garden, and the Local Community.....	106
Interviews: PAC Food Bank about Food Insecurity.....	107
Interviews: Local Food Community about Food Insecurity.....	111
Interviews: Oregon Community Garden about Food Insecurity.....	115
Interning at the Garden.....	120
More Aches and Pains.....	121
Winter in the Garden, and more Aches and Pains.....	125
Community in the Garden.....	128
Volunteer Labor Time.....	129
Salaries and Supplies.....	131
Community Building.....	132
Garden Planning.....	133
Simulation of Community.....	135
My Daughter.....	136
Conclusion.....	137
V. FOOD AS A HUMAN RIGHT?.....	139
Thoughts about Food as a Commodity.....	140
It's Problematic for Food to be a Commodity.....	141
Food as a Commodity, It's Not a Problem.....	144
Thoughts about the Human Right to Food.....	145
What is the Human Right to Food? Is food access really a right?.....	148

Chapter	Page
VI. FOOD WITH DIGNITY .....	152
Food with Stigma .....	153
Food with Dignity .....	156
Food with Dignity: Choices .....	157
Food with Dignity: Earned.....	159
Can Free Food have Dignity in an Exchange-Value Society?.....	160
Changing the Narrative about Food with Dignity.....	163
VII. CONCLUSION.....	166
Uncertain Answers to Food Insecurity .....	169
Vegetarianism.....	169
Basic Minimum Income versus Philanthrocapitalists.....	171
Raise the Minimum Wage.....	173
Housing.....	173
GMOs, Food Waste, and Technology .....	174
Nutritionism .....	176
Answers to Food Insecurity .....	178
REFERENCES CITED .....	183

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Free versus Cash.....	88
2. Community versus Individual.....	90
3. Noncompetitive versus Competitive .....	92
4. Measuring Food Values.....	95

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Food Organizations in the Pacific Northwest .....	86

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

“Moral condemnation only works if the condemned could have done things differently, if they had choices.” – Raj Patel, *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System*

How can any person be hungry when there is more than enough food to feed everyone? For many hungry people the problem of food insecurity emerges from basic economics: food is often not free. From broiled shrimp and steamed crab caught fresh that day, to macaroni and Ramen Noodles purchased from the shelves of the grocery store, to organically grown lettuce harvested by underpaid migrant labor, there is no getting around the fact that food is often not free. Because food is a basic need, but it also requires time to acquire it, food is often viewed as having value. At the bare minimum, there is labor required to gather and cook the food. Even a billionaire must properly manage financial assets to maintain the money stockpile used to pay the servants who gather and cook food.

And then when food is given away, it still has a cost of time and/or labor. At least babies can eat for free, right? But even when parents provide food to their children for ‘free’ they often must work to gain income. That income is then used to purchase food. For example, even a mother’s breast milk is not, in some sense, free. The breastfeeding mother (or her partner) must work to either harvest food, or work for income to purchase food, which allows the mother to consume enough nutrients to create breast milk. Many people might think denying a nursing baby food or breast milk is wrong, even though the baby does not have the ability to buy the food with money.

However, people who follow a Malthusian line of thinking argue that denying food to a poor person is acceptable if the poor person does not have money to pay for the food, because the poor are seen as lazy and undeserving (Malthus 1926). For some people, food is viewed as an exchange-value commodity that must be paid for with money. Other people view food as a basic human need that must be provided regardless of a person's ability to pay, because its use-value provides the nutrients and calories that people need to survive on a daily basis.

It is within the tension created by these two opposite values of food, exchange-value and use-value, that many food aid organizations operate as they attempt to provide food to the poor. Food security means reliable access to enough culturally appropriate, quality food to ensure an active and healthy lifestyle (Bassett and Winter-Nelson 2010). Food sovereignty is closely linked to food security, and is defined as the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems (Holt-Giménez 2011). Food security, and food sovereignty, are ultimately determined by a person's ability to exchange something of value for food. This is because food is a commodity (Magdoff 2012). The item most often exchanged for food is money, because the global food system treats food as a money-exchange commodity on the free market. Under this free market food system if people do not have enough money they are food insecure.

Amartya Sen was a foundational food theorist who questioned the problem of acquiring food (Sen 1981). Something is almost always required to exchange for food. During the 1943 Bengal Famine, the food output in these regions actually saw an



increase, even while starvation occurred. Sen argued that it is not necessarily a deficit in food production, but instead a problem of entitlements. Sen described entitlements as a person's original ownership over things such as land and labor, or a loss of exchange value— such as when wages decrease or the price of food increases.

As will be discussed in chapter 3, food insecurity is a global problem, and varies in its causes from culture to culture. This dissertation, however, focuses primarily on how food insecurity shows up in countries that have adopted capitalism. Capitalism, and neoliberalism, create distinct food insecurity issues. These issues which are distinct in capitalism match with Sen's work, who noted that exchange-value can create hunger even during times of abundant harvests.

### **Neoliberalism and the Exchange-Value of Food**

Neoliberal ideology believes that markets should be allowed to rise and fall on their own merits with very little, or no, interference from government (Harvey 2007). It argues that capitalism works best when publically owned entities have all been transferred to the control of the private sector. This means control of water, land, sewage, and food are often shifted to private ownership in the free market. In this economic ideology:

...human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets (Harvey 2007).

Commodities are created to be bought and sold in free markets. This is achieved by limiting government involvement and regulation within the economic markets. A capitalist free market, it is said, can best regulate itself. It is the consumer who decides what can be bought, and what price should be paid for it. But removing the government from the economy also removes protection for people. Protecting corporations often takes priority over people (Chomsky 1999).

Neoliberalism protects competition between individuals, between businesses, and between individuals versus businesses. Competition for some items may be morally permissible. But competition for food, for any reason, is morally questionable in a world that produces more than enough food. Yet this is where capitalism has positioned food as an exchange-value commodity instead of as a human right. People are paid to grow food, paid to ship food, paid to market food, and paid to sell food... with the prices of labor set by competitive labor markets (Marx 1992). Because of all the money involved, giving food away for free may be an abhorrent concept to free market economists and politicians who embrace neoliberal ideology.

But the danger of markets and competition determining the value of food in this system is that the value of money, and the value of food, are social inventions. The barrier created between food and the hungry, because it is a commodity, is therefore a socially invented problem. As will be shown in Chapter III, racism or another form of bigotry is more likely to be a determinant for food denial than actual food availability. Thinking of food as a money-exchange commodity builds a socially constructed wall between hungry people and abundant food.

The value of a commodity is a concept Karl Polanyi wrote about when discussing fictional commodities in 1944 (Block and Somers 2014, Polanyi 2001). The concept of money, and the concept of food as an exchange-value product, are created by society. Food has a commodity meaning only when people assign it a commodity meaning. Polanyi writes that a commodity is understood to be something that is produced by humans for sale. However, land and water have commodity meanings only when people assign them a commodity meaning, because land and water are both created by nature and not humans. Therefore, assigning land and water a commodity exchange-value is fiction.

Food production depends heavily on land and water. The prices of food, land, and water fluctuate with the rise and fall of prices in the free market... all based on fictional exchange-values. To deny people food based on their inability to pay suggests that protecting the fictional commodity exchange-value of food is more important than giving a hungry person a decent meal. As protection against the free market, which will allow people to starve if they cannot pay, charities and government intervention are needed. These programs are part of what Polanyi called the double-movement. Without charities and government welfare programs to support people when they are in need of healthcare, housing, or food—capitalism would collapse. Food Stamps and international food aid act as economic supports that keep capitalism from collapsing (Block and Somers 2014, Polanyi 2001).

Although many food aid organizations appear to be pushing back against the dangers of the capitalist food system, these food aid organizations are often operating within the free market. Water is not free. Land is not free. Therefore, many of these food

aid organizations depend upon donations of food, land, and money to continue functioning because of the challenges presented by the free market.

The rules of the hunger game are simple: It takes money to help people who do not have enough money to exchange for food. Modern hunger is often not an issue of lack of food, but instead a lack of money to purchase available food (Ó Gráda 2009). With so many monetary items involved with acquiring and distributing food, it is no surprise that poverty and food insecurity are co-morbid with each other (Bassett and Winter-Nelson 2010, Ó Gráda 2009).

The politics of protecting free trade are often a priority, even when that protection takes priority over the needs of people (Chomsky 1999, Sarfaty 2012). But the commodification of food is more than simply an issue with a food system obsessed with making profits. There are examples of communist and socialist governments who failed their citizens when it came to food access for the poor. Two of the worst famines in the history of the world occurred in China and Russia (to be discussed in Chapter III). When talking about food as a commodity, it has not only been capitalists who have denied access to food for the poor, but also governments who have denied access to food to the poor. To become narrowly focused on a critique of capitalism, or neoliberalism, risks losing sight of the bigger picture of food insecurity. Food insecurity means people do not have access to enough food for a healthy, culturally appropriate life. But do people really *believe* that food is something that should never be denied? What do people actually *believe* about the human right to food?

## **The Human Right to Food**

“Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible” (UN 1948).

The 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, in Article 1, states that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood” (UN 1948). Regardless of race, gender, religion, language, or economic status, all humans are born equal and entitled to basic human rights, and basic respect, which should be protected on the local level, national level, and international level. These rights are not earned. These rights are granted simply by being human.

These rights include the right to be not a slave, the right to be recognized as a person, the right to work, the right to not be tortured, the right to not be arbitrarily arrested and the right to equal protection of the law, the right to leave his or her own country and to return to his or her own country, the right to own property, and the right to marry, freedom of expression, the right to education, the right to rest, the right to take part in government, and the right to a lifestyle which provides a reasonable standard of living for health and well-being.

Within the list of Human Rights, there are two different forms of rights. One type of right, which requires “no labor” and another right, which does require “labor.” The right to recognition as a person before the law can be argued to not require any type of labor. Simply waking up in the morning is all

the “physical labor” this type of right requires. This is not ignoring the real world, where discrimination occurs. But for this example, imagining discrimination does not impede the right to be a person before the law, this right does not require physical labor. However, the second form of human right always requires physical labor. Regardless of the right being guaranteed to all humans, this right requires physical labor in which to exist. The human right to food, even under the best of circumstances, requires physical labor to enact.

People may grow their own food, or purchase food with funds earned from other labor, or even barter a trade to acquire food. This is reflected in the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food defined the right to food as:

“The right to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensure a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear” (FAO 2016a).

This definition expands upon the human right to food, which was included in the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948). In the 1948 definition, it states that everyone has the right to a standard of living that is adequate for health and well-being, which includes the ability to purchase a suitable quantity and quality of food for health and well-being. The Human Right to Food recognizes food has a very necessary use-value: without calories, people die. This does not, however, mean that the United Nations believes that governments should feed everyone because of the human right to food. It means that governments should

ensure everyone has the ability to live a quality of life that enables them to provide for themselves a high quality of food, and when a crisis hits such as war or natural disaster, then governments should intervene and feed people as necessary. Protecting the human right to food asks for government intervention, in a world that continues to embrace neoliberal capitalism. Of note, the United States and Australia were the only two countries who refused to recognize food as a human right in 1996 (Chilton and Rose 2009). The United States still has not recognized food as a human right.

### **Community Gardens**

Community gardens are urban open spaces that local residents use to grow food crops as well as ornamental plants (Blaine, Grewal, Dawes et al. 2010). There are two basic formats that community gardens take. The first type of community garden allows people to rent small plots of land and grow fruits and vegetables for their own consumption, or to sell. Renting small plots addresses food access and control, but it may not address food justice issues. This rental type of community garden requires money to rent it, and perhaps even money to purchase seeds, tools, fertilizer, and pesticides. This exchange-value model may be cost-prohibitive to low-income people who may not have the monetary resources to access this community garden.

A second type of community garden, the free community garden, allows volunteers and community members to work at a garden, which then distributes the food grown to people who are low-income and food-insecure. Volunteers and community members may also share in the harvest, taking some food home. While the rental type of

community garden benefits people with some level of purchasing power, this second type of community garden benefits people who are food insecure due to low-access and poverty. The free type of community garden attempts to address the use-value of food by giving access to fresh, locally grown food to people.

Starting any type of community garden is complicated, because it requires accessing land as well as equipment (Ackerman-Leist 2013). Because of money, many local food movements have aided already privileged white neighborhoods instead of impacting historically marginalized neighborhoods (Broad 2016). In addition, in the most recent U.S. Farm Bill, funds to sustainable agriculture and the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) were cut while preserving many subsidies to corporate agribusiness (Broad 2016). The political power of people who might most benefit from community gardens (i.e. the poor) is often a limiting factor. Even land itself can be an unstable form of property, as places where community gardens currently exist may be re-zoned, or sold, to make room for development (Ackerman-Leist 2013). Private land owners might capitalize on the hard work of community gardens, which have transformed the urban landscape, and sell the upgraded land without consulting the people involved with the garden.

This dissertation will question how an organization with a human rights view can survive in a commodity food world.



## Goals

Food has exchange-values and use-values. This research questions how food values interact with food as a human right. Free food is still not “free,” even when promoted as a human right. Food requires work to grow and harvest. Food requires land, water, and time. To better understand this dynamic of use-value versus exchange-value, this study has two main goals:

*Goal 1:* Understand the successes and challenges of a food aid organization that gives away free food while operating within a free market economy. Specifically, how does the Oregon Community Garden operate in the capitalist food system?

*Goal 2:* Contribute toward a social understanding of food insecurity, focusing on the tension created by free markets and food access.

### *Research Questions*

Toward these goals, this research will be guided by four central research questions. 1.) How does the Oregon Community Garden reconcile the tensions of providing free food within a food-system that privileges the exchange-value of food, land, and water? 2.) What message does The Oregon Community Garden convey about the human right to food on the one hand, and food value on the other? 3.) How do people accepting food from The Oregon Community Garden feel (guilt, shame, pride, no emotion)? 4.) What causal mechanisms of the capitalist food system prevent food from being a human right?

The human right to food is part of the war on poverty. But even food aid organizations that want to give food away are often dependent on donations of free

groceries or money because food is not a free product (Guptil, Copelton and Lucal 2013). How does an organization provide use-value when every inch of nature appears to have an exchange-value? Such is the challenge of The Oregon Community Garden, a local community garden that gives away free food. The Oregon Community Garden is dependent on donations, money, volunteers willing to donate time, and land.

The Oregon Community Garden is part of the County Food Bank, whose goal is to end hunger in the county. Ending hunger is a difficult chore because of food's exchange-value. Land, water, seeds, and fertilizer all have exchange-values that fluctuate in the free market. Collecting and distributing donated food requires labor time, and money for vehicles, and money for gas, and money for electricity to store perishable food while waiting to distribute it. These are just some of the challenges faced by a food aid organization trying to give away free food in a capitalist food system. Learning the successes, and challenges, of the Oregon Community Garden can help develop food security initiatives in the United States, and in other countries.

### *Methods*

This dissertation used field research and semi-structured interviews to understand the current and future challenges of a food aid organization operating in a commodity-based food system. I used field research through an internship with the Oregon Community Garden. Taking field notes about my personal experience at the garden helped understand how the Oregon Community Garden operates (Luker 2010). During my research, I wore a badge on my hat that informed people I was conducting research. Volunteers and visitors knew me as a researcher and an intern. I did not conceal my

purpose at the Oregon Community Garden. This also allowed me to chat with volunteers and visitors throughout the day.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were performed at the Oregon Community Garden, or at a location selected by the interviewee. In addition, I conducted interviews with local community members, other food aid organizations, and other actors in the local food system to get a full understanding of food insecurity. The interviewees (n=23), ranged in age from 20s to 60-plus, drawn from the local food community near the Oregon Community Garden using theoretical sampling and snowball sampling. Some of those interviewed were from a snowball sample (Singleton and Straits 2009), gained from The Oregon Community Garden. From these surveys and interviews, I asked the interviewee for another contact to interview. Generally, this resulted in my last interviewee (someone involved in food aid or an actor in the local food system) helping me contact my next interviewee (normally another person involved in food aid or in the local food system). I also found potential interviewees through the internet, and references from other volunteer organizations.

My initial questions focused on food access, food as a human right, and causes of food insecurity. Each interview session had a common theme about food insecurity. But questions varied depending on the interviewee (volunteer at the Oregon Community Garden, volunteer at another food organization, community member, etc). This created a broad understanding of local food insecurity by learning from their different experiences and diverse points-of-view. The questions were semi-structured, but my investigation remained open to other directions the interviews went (Luker 2010). The ability to explore and analyze interview topics with deeper, impromptu follow-up questions was

influenced by the grounded theory method (Charmaz 2006). At the end of each interview, participants were given a short demographic survey.

Interviews were transcribed, and then coded using Atlas.ti. Coding began by looking for themes of ‘value,’ ‘human right,’ and ‘commodity.’ Then ‘private property’ and ‘community’ were coded. My own experiences at the Oregon Community Garden, recorded in a daily journal, were used to compare my experiences to the responses of interviewees.

Participants were given an informed consent. This consent was presented at the 5th grade level to accommodate the wide range of education levels of participants who may be found at a food aid organization. People were asked if they had any questions or concerns before I started my interview. Some participants may have experienced emotional distress when discussing their personal history with food insecurity. This was only expected to be a minimal risk. Participants were informed during the informed consent process that they can stop the interview at any time, and skip any question they did not feel comfortable answering.

The records of this study were kept private in a password protected file. Pseudonyms for people and places were used. The pseudonym key was stored separately in a locked file away from the research records. Research records (including audio recordings) were kept in a password protected file. Audio recordings were deleted after transcription. Research records were destroyed within 3 years.

The study was expected to benefit the area the Oregon Community Garden serves by learning about the challenges involved with addressing food insecurity. These benefits were expected to outweigh the minimal risks. There were no expected benefits directly to

research participants. No money was offered for participation.

Because of the diverse actors connected to the local food system and The Oregon Community Garden, I did not anticipate any racial or gender exclusion. The only group that was actively excluded from this research was minors. A brief demographic survey was filled out after each interview to determine if there were any common beliefs held about food by people based on a shared religion, income class level, education level, sexual orientation, gender, or other reason. *The majority of interviews were performed before the election of President Donald J. Trump.*

### *The Rest of this Dissertation*

The following chapters of this dissertation discuss the tension between food as a human right (use-value), and food as a commodity (exchange-value).

Chapter II, “FOOD INSECURITY: HUNGER AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS,” will explore the theoretical foundations of this dissertation from a primarily Marxist perspective. Themes of social inequality, the crises of capitalism, and the problems of relying on economic growth to solve food insecurity will be discussed. The exchange-value of food makes it an unstable necessity in volatile free markets. This presents a broad critique of economic growth solutions to food insecurity that tend to protect the free market of the capitalist food-system, which therefore perpetuates the vulnerability of poor people and the near-poor to food insecurity.

Chapter III, “Rationalizing Food Insecurity: A Brief History,” presents an overview of the history of global hunger, then narrows to focus on food insecurity within the United States. From there, it will zoom down to food insecurity in Oregon. The

tension present in the exchange-value of food versus the use-value of food will be highlighted through this historical discussion of food insecurity on global, national, and state level. This will introduce a range of food organizations such as food retailers, government food aid organizations, nonprofits food aid organizations. Issues such as famine, food waste, backyard gardening, community supported agriculture, industrial agriculture, food stamps/supplemental nutritional assistance programs, food pantries, and college food insecurity will be discussed.

In Chapter IV, “The Oregon Community Garden,” I will give the history of the Oregon Community Garden, as one of the organizations within Oregon that attempts to alleviate food insecurity. I will also discuss where the Oregon Community Garden appears to fall within the growing food movement/food social justice movement spectrum. This chapter will also cover sustainability issues, funding, leadership/governance, volunteers, and relations to the larger food culture in the county. This chapter will also answer research question one: *How does the Oregon Community Garden reconcile the tensions of providing free food within a food-system that privileges the exchange-value of food, land, and water?* The answer will explore how the Oregon Community Garden is organized, its history, the challenges that it faces, and then link the garden to the tension between food values and human rights.

Chapter V, “Food as a Human Right?” will answer research question two: *What message does the Oregon Community Garden convey about the human right to food on one hand, and food value on the other hand?* The answers to this question will focus on the organization and mission of the garden, its mission, and the meaning that actors give to what they are doing. In addition, interviews with people from other organizations will

be used for comparison. How are the meanings and messages for food the same at these locations, and how are the meanings different?

Chapter VI, “Food with Dignity,” will answer research question three: *How do people accepting food from the Oregon Community Garden feel (guilt, shame, pride, no emotion)?* The answer to this question will focus on the individual level experiences that actors in the variety of positions value food. Do people value food as an exchange-value commodity, or as a use-value. Based on how they value food may influence how they regard free food as having stigma.

Chapter VII, “Conclusion,” will answer question 4: *What causal mechanisms of the capitalist food system prevent food from being a human right?* This chapter summarizes the points made in chapters IV thru VI into a concise picture of food insecurity. It illustrates how these lessons can be applied to the broader discussion of food insecurity across the United States and globally. Although many people may argue food is a human right, they actually view food as an economic privilege for those who can afford the exchange-value.

## CHAPTER II

# FOOD INSECURITY: HUNGER AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS

### **Prelude to Yet *Another* Crisis**

On Friday December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017, President Donald J. Trump signed into law a new tax reform bill for the United States (Sullivan and Tackett 2017). The bill passed with unified support from Republicans in the House and the Senate, led by Speaker of the House Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. The tax bill drastically cuts taxes. These tax cuts are forecast to increase federal deficits by over \$1-trillion over the next ten years because of the reduction in tax money collected by the government.

Republicans have defended the cuts by promoting a belief that economic growth will be enough to overcome the deficit shortfall (Covert 2017). The projected deficits from insufficient taxes will trigger government spending reductions via the PAYGO Act if other actions are not taken (Hall 2017, OMB 2017). Without Congress intervening, the list of programs impacted by reduced government spending include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the supplemental nutrition program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and child nutrition programs.

### **Foreshadowing Capitalism's Next Food Crisis**

Based on production capability, zero hunger could have already been achieved because the world can already produce more than enough food to feed everyone (WFP 2017). So why are there millions of people who are food insecure around the world? Why



are there food insecure people in the United States? To ignore, misunderstand, misrepresent, or be totally blind to the problem is to court sickness and death.

This food problem is not an inability to grow enough food, but an inability to acquire enough money to buy food. The free market food system leaves hundreds of millions of people malnourished or starving (Patel 2012). In 2007-2008, while the United States was dealing with a financial crisis, other parts of the world were facing the food price crisis (Magdoff 2012). The food price crisis meant people struggled to acquire food, not because of a lack of food production, but because food was trading on the free market at prices higher than many people could afford.

Different questions need to be asked about why the food system leaves millions upon millions of people hungry. When food is treated as private property with a monetary exchange-value and profit margins to be protected, then people are vulnerable to food insecurity. Modern food insecurity is a socially constructed crisis that denies access to food even during times of abundant food production. To understand this valuing of food, this chapter will first discuss the crisis of capitalism. Second, the chapter will discuss the food crisis of capitalism, which is only one of the many forms of suffering that occurs under capitalism (health, shelter, education, etc). Third, the chapter will discuss how capitalism's food crisis is one of many forms of structural violence that cannot be remedied by economic growth.

### **The Crisis of Capitalism**

Capitalist ideology does not care about environmental sustainability, or care about basic human needs, because capitalism is focused on profit (Foster, Clark and York

2010). The profit comes from the surplus-value of labor, meaning that workers are not paid the full value of their labor when they produce a product for sale (Marx 1992). The surplus-value goes to owners. This lingering characteristic of capitalism, with workers not being paid the full value of their labor, has created national and global wealth and income inequalities (Marx 1992, Stiglitz 2002, Stiglitz 2012).

Not only are workers not paid the full value of their labor, the low wages leave people undernourished. In the poorest countries of the world, persistent poverty is often comorbid with persistent food insecurity (Bassett and Winter-Nelson 2010). This undervaluing of labor also leaves workers vulnerable to the crisis of capitalism.

Fred Magdoff and John Bellamy Foster (Magdoff and Foster 2011) summarize the business aspect of the crisis of capitalism here:

“In the boom phase of the ordinary business cycle, factories and entire industries produce more and more, while at the same time expanding productive capacity (structures and equipment) through new capital formation. Corporate owners and managers assume that the boom will never end and, not wanting to miss out on the “good times,” end up producing too much and overbuilding capacity in relation to effective demand. Since effective demand is no longer sufficient to provide a market for all of the goods produced and/or potentially produced, and to realize anticipated profits, the business cycle enters its downward phase. Realized profits (together with expectations of future profits) decline, investment falters, and the economy sinks.

For these as well as other reasons the capitalist system is prone to periodic crises of overaccumulation of capital during which the poor and near-poor suffer the most. Recessions occur with some regularity, along with depressions, which are less frequent” (Foster and Magdoff 2011: 87-88).

Every recession, or depression, is an economic crisis. The reason the poor and the near-poor suffer the most is because they have the least money to endure a financial downturn. The poor are already struggling to financially survive under capitalism. Workers must sell their labor on free markets, competing against other workers, and this

competition drives down wages (Marx and Engels 1978). During the time Marx and Engels were writing, the Irish flooded into London in the 1800s (Zuckerman 1998), and their sheer numbers pushed down wages because there were so many people competing for jobs (Engels 2009).

“The conditions of the working class in industrial countries at the time he [Marx] was writing were dreadful. Agricultural and handicraft workers were driven off the land and into cities and factories. Industrial production in factories had greatly intensified exploitation and worsened working conditions. Workers, including women and even young children, were driven by economic necessity to work extraordinarily long hours for near starvation wages. Protection for workers’ welfare and rights was minimal” (Sayers 2009).

As the means of production become more efficient, often leading to less intensive skills for workers, the steps of manufacturing products are simplified through production efficiency (Marx 1992). Production efficiency brought by technological advancement (AI, drones, robots) may also drives down wages or even displace labor (Ford 2015), meaning less people with less money in which to participate in the free market of labor. If people don’t have jobs, they can’t buy stuff. If people do not have strong wages, they will struggle to buy stuff.

When an economic crisis occurs, it is not just a crisis of capitalism, but a crisis for people who must still pay for basic needs such as shelter, food, water, and healthcare in a free market economy. Without strong social welfare programs in place people are at risk of illness, suffering, and death. As will be shown in Chapter III, capitalism is not alone in putting people at risk for food. The history of food insecurity spans across many political and economic ideologies, with the common factor remaining the value of food being a barrier to food access. Poverty is a bigger predictor of food insecurity than actual food production capabilities.

## Capitalism's Food Crisis

“...the free market is not the benign, self-regulating mechanism that the free market fundamentalists have claimed it to be. It does not always serve the general interest or lead inevitably to economic growth and prosperity. On the contrary, as Marx argues, the free market operates as an alien system with a life of its own. It is an uncontrollable and inherently unstable mechanism. It leads to periodic crises in which huge numbers of people are thrown out of work and useful means of production are wantonly destroyed. These show that the capitalist system is incapable of mastering the productive forces which it itself has created” (Sayers 2009).

Food insecurity (Alkon and Agyeman 2011), the inability to purchase sufficient food on a regular basis to lead a healthy, active life, is a permanent aspect of capitalism. First, the low wages associated with the free market forces many people to struggle to attain enough calories (Patel 2012). Second, when food is traded on the free market, there is no guarantee the price will remain at levels that everyone can afford (Magdoff 2012). For example, 2007-2008 was the most recent food crisis. During this crisis, food prices went so high as to limit the amount of food many people in countries around the world could purchase, which was a direct result of increases in energy and fuel prices (Cohen and Garrett 2010, McMichael 2010b). Riots occurred in some cities as people protested the dramatic rise in food prices. While the economy globally has improved, another economic crisis will come. Third, capitalism is driven toward profits, which often means reducing or replacing labor through increased productive efficiency in the pursuit of profit (Luchette 2017, Marx 1992).

Capitalism drives people to work long hours for starvation wages with few protections for workers welfare and rights (Polanyi 2001). But the crises of capitalism are perpetual. This means, the loss of wages, even the loss of starvation wages, is a regular occurrence for capitalism. When people are ‘thrown out of work, and useful means of

production are destroyed,' this makes people vulnerable to food insecurity. Workers are vulnerable to the regular everyday exploitation of capitalism, as well as the downturns in the economy during a crisis. Some basic needs for human survival can be temporarily abandoned during economic hardships, such as minor healthcare or shelter. But food is a non-negotiable basic need. Without calories in a sufficient daily amount on a regular basis, people die.

In an interview with *Civil Eats*, Food First director Eric Holt-Giménez argued, “Our food system is in crisis because capitalism is in crisis and is passing off the worst effects—or “externalities”—of the crisis onto society and the environment. Global warming, extreme inequality, the rise of fascism, the persistence of hunger, and the spread of diet-related diseases are all reflections of a profound systemic crisis” (Luchette 2017).

While the crises of capitalism are linked to the economy, the fallout from these crises result in problems of food insecurity, homelessness, illness, and general poverty. The food crisis of capitalism posits that there will be persistent food insecurity—but also spikes of food insecurity (and starvation) that are co-morbid with economic crashes. In other words, even during times of abundant food, food security cannot be guaranteed in a free market. If welfare programs are cut during times of economic strength, there will not be money to deal with capitalism’s next food crisis. History conclusively shows there will be more economic dips, dives, and crashes (Amadeo 2017). Therefore any plan put forward by the U.S. Congress, the World Bank, or the United Nations that has economic growth as the foundation of its cure to food insecurity may have a fundamental

misunderstanding, or blissful ignorance, of the violence capitalism has wrought upon billions of people.

### *Capitalism's Food Crisis as Structural Violence*

What is structural violence? According to Johan Galtung, when the impact to health is unavoidable, then violence is not present even if the suffering is at a very low level (Galtung 1969). Galtung used the Neolithic period as an example because a life expectancy of thirty years during that overall difficult time period, even though low, would not be considered structural violence. However, the same short life-expectancy today (whether caused by wars, social injustice, or both) would be seen as violence. Galtung argues, “The violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances” (Galtung 1969:171). According to Galtung, structural violence describes the rules that inhibit basic human needs. These rules are often long-standing, embedded in socially invented institutions—economic, political, legal, religious, and cultural—that promote rules which prevent people from reaching their full potential.

For Marx, capitalism is the source of structural violence that prevents people from reaching their full potential. As already discussed, people are not hungry because of a lack of food in the world, but from a lack of money. Capitalism is a socially created form of structural violence, and it is unstable.

István Mészáros wrote about the structural instability of capitalism:

“Its mode of unfolding might be called creeping—in contrast to the more spectacular and dramatic eruptions and collapses of the past—while adding the proviso that even the most vehement or violent convulsions cannot be excluded as far as the future is concerned: i.e., when the

complex machinery now actively engaged in “crisis management” and in the more or less temporary “displacement” of the growing contradictions runs out of steam” (Mészáros 2017:4-5).

The problems presented by capitalism present a global-structural crisis (Mészáros 2017). The crisis is the embedded system of collapses in which emerging from one financial crisis is often like the sun rising, with another financial crisis looming on the horizon. The timing of the next crisis, however, is not as predictable as the rise and fall of the sun. Instead the next collapse lurks in the future ominously.

Any food security, health, or other strategy to meet basic needs that involves privatization and building up the economy to alleviate poverty is sowing the seeds for crisis. This is not just another economic crisis, but a crisis at the individual level, where people will feel the violence of the capitalist free market system. If the economic structure causes hunger and malnutrition, in a world that has more than enough food to feed everyone, then the economic structure is violent. In a world with abundant food this is morally unjust.

Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore wrote, “To understand world-ecology is to face history and the future. It is to recognize that the way we live and the very categories of thought that separate humans and the natural world are historical—not eternal realities. Capitalism’s binary code works, moreover, not just as description but as a normative program for ordering—and cheapening—humans and the rest of nature” (Patel and Moore 2017:207-208).

## **Conclusion**

Capitalism’s rules about humans and nature were made up by humans. If humans can make up the rules of capitalism, which is historically a structurally violent system,

then humans can make up new rules about how humans and nature can interact. This type of social change is needed not for the present, and to help insure the future. Another wave of structural violence is coming. More and more human invented crises are coming unless the rules are changed.

President Trump and the Republican controlled U.S. Congress cannot stop the next economic crisis by growing the economy. Any plan for helping poor people that involves growing the economy, drawing from the ‘rising tide raises all ships’ mentality, fundamentally remains blind to the economic rogue waves brought on by the crises of capitalism. Smaller ships, i.e. the poor and middle-class workers, often get capsized during economic crashes.

The 2007-2008 economic collapse is still an open wound for many people in the United States. The highs and lows of the real estate market were dramatically portrayed in the 2015 movie *The Big Short*, directed by Adam McKay, which was based on the 2010 non-fiction book *The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine* by Michael Lewis. There were people who made a lot of money during the implosion of the real estate bubble in the 2000s. There were also people who lost their home, their job, and had to rebuild. The people who lost during the real estate crash far outnumbered the people who gained.

Strengthening the economy, locally or globally, may appear like a correct direction to the economically-focused because food costs money, and a stronger economy appears important to help people get more money. But the structure of capitalism will continue to leave people vulnerable to food insecurity. And the free market will continue to leave people vulnerable to drastic and sudden bouts of food insecurity. Zero hunger,



therefore, is impossible to achieve when food is traded on the free market—because when the market crashes, food insecurity can spike even during times of abundant food.

The exploitation of other humans and nature for profit is second nature within capitalism. Second nature, however, implies it is not natural... but learned. The only way to avert another food crisis of capitalism is to change the rules. Changing the rules will require a fundamental shift in how humans interact with nature, and each other. Decisions about growing food need to be based on calories and sustainability, not profit margins. The focus on profit now often exploits people and the nature by robbing environmental sustainability from future generations.

Denying access to food on a regular basis should not be treated as the same luxury as purchasing the newest iPhone, yet this is exactly the type of dystopia in which capitalism's food crisis exists. The rules about a just and sustainable food system need to include producing and distributing enough food for everyone now, equitably, as well as protecting the ability to produce food in the future.

## CHAPTER III

### RATIONALIZING FOOD INSECURITY: A BRIEF HISTORY

“There are people in the world so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread.” — Mahatma Gandhi

Hunger and poverty existed long before capitalism. Hunger and poverty existed before computers, before television, automobiles, sliced bread, and even before the invention of the printing press. The issue of hunger has lingered after the arrival of each of these human creations—even during times of abundant food. But why? As pointed out in Chapter I, there are between 750-million to 2.5-billion food insecure people in the world today. Why aren't these hungry people storming grocery stores, raiding farms, or hosting a second Bastille Day? It's because of how people think about food. The way people think about food makes it a protected commodity.

As Sen noted, even when harvests increase, food insecurity and famine can occur if wages decrease or the price of food increases. In other words, famines and food insecurity are a socially constructed problem. As this chapter will highlight, the rules that societies invented have led to widespread hunger and death. While capitalism is the focus of this dissertation, there is no way to isolate the tragedies of past hunger to one specific political or economic ideology. What the tragedies have in common is that people died when there was more than enough food in the world to feed everyone. Famine, and food insecurity, are not about food production capabilities. History shows us instead that the real issue is how people think about food as a protected commodity.

When people think about food, they appear to value food in three ways: commodity-exchange value, use-value, and exchange-value. Commodity-exchange value

is primarily what Sen is focused on with famines, food prices, and the wages earned by labor. If people have enough money they can access food. Exchange-value is similar to commodity-exchange value, except the exchange does not necessarily mean money. This exchange could involve trading labor for food access, or perhaps trading some other item for food. Use-value considers how food can be used, such as for cultural remembrance, social gatherings, and of course for the all-important calories which sustain human life. Exchange-value, and commodity-exchange value, prevent people from accessing food even during times of abundance. Use-value, on the other hand, does not socially construct reasons to deny access to food. For people who think about food for its use-value, if there is abundant food, then no one should be hungry. But the tension between use-value and the two exchange values is ever present.

Consider Wales and their Food Values project. The people in Wales appear to think the same way about food as people in the United States, Oregon, and the rest of the world. Food is sold to make money, food make community, food makes people overweight, there is massive food waste while there are a growing number of food banks (Powell 2017). About the challenges facing the Wales food system, Jane Powell writes, “When food is so much part of our lives, and has so many apparently unrelated aspects, how do we join the dots and make it work on all fronts – health, the economy, the environment, social justice, farming, climate and culture?” The questions asked by Powell are fundamentally about what does food mean? The answer to what does food mean involves everything—health, culture, community, family, economy. But the answer varies depending on a person’s place in the food system: farmer, food retailer, consumer.

The Food Values Project in Wales ran a series of seminars in 2015 and 2016 to tackle the challenge of understanding the beliefs, emotions, and identity of people help to shape the food system (Wynne-Jones, Powel, Packer et al. 2017). By doing this, it was learned that people in Wales want everyone to eat, food waste should be reduced, and that people wanted to connect with local community and local food producers. However, it was learned that there was also a disconnect between community desires for feeding everyone and the corporate desires to profit from food (Wynn-Jones and Project 2015). This is use-value versus exchange-value, or more accurately, the use-value of food versus the exchange-value of food, where the exchange-value includes a profit margin, or its surplus-value.

Powell writes about food values in Wales (Powell 2017):

“As a society, we are increasingly isolated from each other, as the technologies that are supposed to connect us actually draw us apart: the car that means we can live far away from our jobs and families, the internet that gives us enough company not to bother with our neighbours down the road, the smartphones around the dinner table – and in many homes, no dinner table at all. Loneliness is epidemic, and in a culture where the economy is all-important, those who are not in good jobs - the young, the old, the underpaid, the sick, their carers – get left behind.”

Wales re-iterated through their Food Values Project that food has a range of use-values and exchange-values. The primary use-value of food is nutrition. The use-value of food can also be strengthening communities as part of the local economy (McKibben 2007a), bringing together families and the community through cultural reproduction (Willette, Norgaard, Reed et al. 2015), or nuanced such as communicating symbolic meanings (Barthes 2013). Many nonprofit organizations prioritize the nutritional use-value of food and endeavor to give it away for free, while for-profit organizations prioritize the exchange-value of food. Exchange-value, at its most basic in economic

markets, is the principle that monetary price has the ability to determine an object's value (Patel 2009). The monetary exchange-value, or price, is created by bureaucratic rules and rationalized markets without regard to persons and seeking as much efficiency as possible (Weber 1946). The exchange-value of food has left the poor malnourished because they didn't have enough money to buy sufficient amounts of healthy food, even during years of abundant food supply (Patel 2012, Ó Gráda 2009).

The issues facing Wales are the same issues facing the poor and food insecure in other countries. It is not a lack of food, but the meaning that people apply to food, which creates modern food insecurity. People cannot get away from the idea that food has a monetary price. In other words, free food is irrational, whereas paying money for food is a rational process. This is a rationalized truth which has been around for centuries—it is unfortunate but permissible to deny people food if they cannot pay.

This chapter elaborates a theoretical framework for understanding food value in a world of unequal wealth. First, theoretical considerations are discussed for how food value has been rationalized. Second, a history of food insecurity is discussed, trending from global, to the United States, and finally to Oregon. Third, a discussion of remedies to food insecurity are explored to understand where the Oregon Community Garden fits within the food aid discussion. By seeking to understand how the Oregon Community Garden fits within the broader food system, this chapter contributes toward a framework for how food is valued differently, and similarly, amongst for-profit food organizations and nonprofit food organizations.

## **The Alienation of Exchange-Value**

A society's culture can be understood by the way it transforms the environment into culturally meaningful phenomena (Greider and Garkovich 1994). This means the values and ideas that are most important to culture can be seen by the way it interacts with the surrounding landscapes and ecosystem. When different peoples look at a forest, one society may see an ecosystem to be protected; another society may envision a profitable opportunity for lumber harvesting; another society may see an area that can be cleared for the growth for commercial soybeans; and yet another society may see an area that should remain undisturbed for religious purposes. In capitalist societies, environmental resources such as water, land, and various minerals are transformed into commodities to generate a surplus-value, also known as profits. Resources that were once shared among communities, the commons, have been transformed into private property (Patel 2009). By turning the commons into private property governed by rational markets, it forced people to sell their labor for money because they no longer had access to their only means of survival.

The transformation of nature and labor into properties that are sold on markets contributes to the decline of community and increases alienation (Mészáros 2005). To access any commodity requires something of equal value to exchange. Under capitalism, labor, nature, and the means of production act as separate objects of production which are brought together only through the profit-driven motive of capitalism (Burkett 2009). Through the commodification of everything, people are isolated from the world both physically and socially, able to interact with the world only by selling their labor to access commodities. Marx calls this version of alienation 'commodity fetishism':

There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities (Marx 1992: 165).

Instead of people working together as a community to benefit from the environment, people compete against each other to access land, water, or food. This competition for "local" resources often includes international competitors who have no connection at all to the local communities in which they extract profit (McKibben 2007a, McMichael 2013). And because of the global food system many people do not know where their food comes from or who grew it. In places where people were once able to grow local foods, now the global food system has been transformed into an import/export dependent model, involving multiple countries and regions (McMichael 2010c, McMichael 2013).

Furthermore, food produced from this global food system embodies alienated human labor. Wage-laborers are not paid the full value of their labor because the surplus-value of their work becomes profit for owners. The final product of this labor is not to satisfy an immediate use-value such as nutrition, but to satisfy a need external to the labor, surplus-value (Marx, Engels and Tucker 1978). Alienated laborers receive a fraction of the final sale price of the commodity, and then hope there is enough money left over to purchase shelter, food, and other necessities to survive.

Alienated laborers may not even recognize the final product that resulted from his or her labor. For example, a food laborer who plants seeds in the spring or summer may

not be around in the fall to harvest the food. The laborers who harvest the food in the fall may load that food into trucks, but not know the final destination of the food. Deborah Barndt refers to this as the distancing of labor, because farm laborers have no idea where their products actually end up (Barndt 2001a). In all these stages of the food system the labor is not to satisfy a use-value. An example of this alienated relationship with food is shown in Barndt's study when she writes about a cashier who visited a farm. The cashier revealed that her relationship to food had been reduced to numbers when she named vegetables growing at the farm by their price look-up (PLU) numbers (Barndt 2001a). In other words, the cashier identified food by its exchange-value which was rationally determined by the markets. In a rational economy, money is "the most abstract and impersonal element that exists in human life" (Weber 1946: 331).

### **Hunger in an Exchange-Value World**

Poverty and hunger remain decades after the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights was signed. Human rights are meant as a promise to all people that regardless of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religion, all humans are guaranteed a lifestyle that can provide all the basic needs for life such as housing, healthcare, and food (OHCHR 2016, UN 1948). But the human right to food, guaranteed to all humans, is actually only a right for people who have enough money. When food is a product on a rationally governed market, exchange-value protects profit first and people's needs second. John Bellamy Foster notes:

Marx's critique of adulteration in *Capital* transcended Engels's earlier work, however, reflecting the more detailed data and improved science of the 1860s, which made clear the degradation of commodified food being fed to workers and even to the middle class. Factory owners, food



manufacturers, and shopkeepers took advantage of working-class customers by adulterating food products—not simply by watering them down, but by incorporating deceptive, dangerous, and even toxic ingredients into their production, and reducing their nutritive value, all to save costs and enhance their saleability (Foster 2016).

It's not just that owners put a price on food. The concept of food having a monetary price is rationalized nationally and globally. For some people this means accepting food for free can create stigma or embarrassment (Potash and Potash 2010). Some people feel ashamed about accepting free food or charity, leading them to completely avoid accepting free food because they feel that if they didn't pay, they didn't deserve it. To them food is a rational exchange-value product, accessed with money earned by individual successes on competitive labor markets. Using SNAP, formerly called food stamps, may be a reminder of their individual economic failure in the competitive labor markets. People who need help may avoid using SNAP or other welfare services even when they qualify because they believe accessing food with dignity requires money.

Prioritizing food as an exchange-value commodity has led to more than stigma. It has caused health problems, notably malnutrition, which disproportionately impact the poor and people of color (Holt-Giménez 2011, Morales 2011, Norgaard, Reed and Van Horn 2011). The results of protecting exchange-value are seen on bodies marked by food injustice, because their malnourished bodies act as embodiments of their poverty. The term embodiment, in eco-social theory, refers to the stories our bodies tell (Krieger 1999), which cannot be separated from the circumstances of our existence. People who are malnourished often have bodies which are painfully thin because they do not have enough money to access adequate amounts of healthy food on a regular basis (Bassett and

Winter-Nelson 2010, Patel 2012). Other malnourished people have bodies which are obese and/or at risk for diabetes, not from overeating, but due to their inability to purchase adequate amounts of healthy food on a regular basis (Bassett and Winter-Nelson 2010, Nestle 2007, Patel 2012, Potash and Potash 2010).

There are also various levels of food insecurity. The most well-known level of food insecurity is famine, or *extreme* food insecurity. To transition from food insecurity to famine requires an increase in the daily death rate above one per ten-thousand, an increase in underweight children who are more than two standard deviations below the average weight of children to twenty-percent or more of the population, and the presence of extreme malnutrition primarily impacting young children (Ó Gráda 2009). A severe famine is defined as a daily death rate above five per ten-thousand people. Ó Gráda (2009) uses the term famine to describe “a shortage of food or purchasing power that leads directly to excess mortality from starvation or hunger-induced diseases” (4).

Other forms of food insecurity are undernourishment, malnutrition, overnutrition, and micronutrient deficiency (Bassett and Winter-Nelson 2010). Undernutrition and micronutrient deficiency are associated with the inadequate intake of food to meet caloric, vitamin, or mineral needs. Malnutrition can be the underconsumption, or the overabsorption of protein, calories, or micronutrients in a diet. Overnutrition is the overabsorption (or overconsumption) of proteins, calories, or micronutrients which manifests in obesity.

Most types of food insecurity can be intuitively linked to poverty because of the inability to acquire enough calories and nutrients. Overnutrition, on the otherhand, is hard for some people to link to poverty. Many Americans are overweight while being

simultaneously malnourished. This is not just a problem of affluence, but is often associated with low-income people as well as people of color because of their limited purchasing power to access healthier food options (Morales 2011, Patel 2012). An abundance of bad food choices is not food security, it is a health problem when healthy food access is limited to those with enough money.

Friedrich Engels (2009) wrote about various illnesses associated with insufficient bodily nutrition for the working poor, especially for children, such as it taking longer for the bones to harden, skeletal deformities, and deformities of the legs:

“How greatly are all these evils increased by the changes to which the workers are subject in consequence of fluctuations in trade, want of work, and the scanty wages in time of crisis, it is not necessary to dwell upon. Temporary want of sufficient food, to which almost every working man is exposed at least once in the course of his life, only contributes to intensify the effect of his usually sufficient but bad diet” (Engels 2009:112-113).

In some instances, food has even taken the place of money for desperate laborers, whereas money cannot take the place of food. Dorceta Taylor mentions time periods when some owners paid workers with food instead of money during a recession (Taylor 2009: 280). But even the poor who hold up signs to offer their labor in exchange for food may find little interest in their services during an economic downturn (Block and Somers 2014). This illustrates the importance of food, as well as illustrates a different way to think about food: food has a use-value, health.

When food is thought of as a commodity, food is not free, and is worth trading labor for. Working for food was an acceptable alternative to working for money, because food was not seen as an inalienable human right. Instead, people viewed food as a commodity. Trading labor for food is not the same as working in a garden to grow food, or hunting a wild animal for food. These workers were willing to trade their labor hours

for food, allowing the owners to monetarily profit. Perhaps because of their poor bargaining position, the workers had to accept whatever payment for work they could get. Absent labor opportunities or welfare programs, poor people find themselves at risk for starvation (Block and Somers 2014). This risk of food insecurity can occur even in areas where there are ample food supplies.

### **Default Explanations for Food Insecurity**

#### *Carrying Capacity, Land, & Water*

Carrying capacity refers to the environment's ability to provide enough food and water for human life to survive (Paarlberg 2013). Concern about the planet's ability to support a growing human population is a Malthusian argument, based on the 1798 essay by Thomas Malthus on population, stating that the planet has a limit to how much life can be supported by the earth's resources (Malthus 1926).

As the global population grows, nations have become more conscious of land needed to grow food to sustain their own people (McMichael 2009). In so doing, countries and transnational agricultural corporations have been buying land in the Global South for biofuel crops. Governments sometimes sell land that families have lived on for generations to benefit transnational corporations and foreign governments (McMichael 2013). When it comes to acquiring land, McMichael explains, there is more going on than just growing food to eat. Capitalism requires increasing energy inputs. One answer for this has been biofuels. The push for biofuels has meant that land which could be used to grow food is being used to grow plants for fuel (McMichael 2010b).

The pursuit of “green” biofuels to offset the energy consumption needs of capitalism has simultaneously contributed to the rising cost of food, meaning poor people in the Global South are struggling to feed their families (Dockstader 2012, McMichael 2010b, McMichael 2013). Such was the case in 2008, when the food price crisis led to violent revolts in countries around the world who were literally starving because they could not afford to buy food (Bank 2013, Cohen and Garrett 2010, Herdt 2004). Interestingly, the most food insecurity occurred in Global South cities, because those in rural areas still had the ability to grow their own food. But those in the city were dependent on the ability to “buy” food (Bank 2013). Carrying capacity arguments distract from how current resources are being consumed by richer nations. Issues related to environmental resource exhaustion are blamed on overpopulation by the poor, while ignoring consumption patterns of the rich (Park and Pellow 2011).

Another example of the chase of profits being more dangerous to health than overpopulation dates back to American colonialism. Native Americans were accustomed to hunting and gathering over large areas of land without fences or a concept of private property (Anderson 2005, Smith 2005). However, when gold was discovered in California, or when ranchers wanted land for cattle, the land which once was free and open to everyone became a valuable commodity. White settlers were willing to kill thousands of Native Americans for profits (Almaguer 1994, Smith 2005). To justify the killing of Native Americans, their differences in appearance were emphasized to “other” them (Escobar 1995, Fanon and Philcox 2004, Said 1979). By “othering” them, white settlers could alleviate the guilt of killing something else because Native Americans were a lesser human (Almaguer 1994, Smith 2005).

According to Almaguer, some of the othered qualities described Indians as having tattoos, Indians were not Christian, and Indians were savage. Indians became the symbolic enemy, for which the white population used this symbolism as a license to murder. As settlers continued to encroach in Indians' traditional lands, violence against Indians and Indian retaliation against white Americans increased. In the early 1850s, Indian women were routinely kidnapped and used as concubines or sold... which led male Indians to retaliate. The treatment of Indians as unequal continued when later in 1850 the new California government formally implemented a military policy against the California Indians (volunteer military expeditions). The U.S. congress reimbursed California for these military expeditions (Almaguer 1994). When Indians showed resistance, the retaliation for their resistance was so violent that sometimes an entire Indian village would be destroyed along with everyone living in it (Almaguer 1994). The environment had plenty of resources for everyone to share. This was not overpopulation, but the structurally violent nature of capitalism which sought to privatize land.

Another example of the privatization of common resources involves water. In Bolivia, the World Bank encouraged the privatization of public resources, including water (Lewis 2009). Bolivians were accustomed to water being a common good, but a subsidiary of Bechtel (a San Francisco based corporation) was selling water to make a profit. The privatization of water takes control out of the hands of communities and puts it into the hands of corporations. According to Shiva, communities who saw their water privatized had their water prices increase from 200-percent to 600-percent (Shiva 2002). The World Bank and the IMF have forced countries to privatize state-owned utilities, including water, so that they are eligible for globalization-focused loans (Opitz 2006,

Sarfaty 2012, Shiva 2002). People in Bolivia held protests and eventually won back their rights to the water (Gould and Lewis 2009).

Privatization of water is not the only cause for water conflict. Industries such as electronic chip manufacturers and cotton dye industries use processes that consume high amounts of water (Shiva 2002). These industries are being located in Global South countries because of the lower ability of these countries to enforce safe environmental standards. With developing countries adding high water use industries, it actually creates water shortages. Around the world many sources of environmental resource conflicts can be traced back to resource exploitation in privatization and globalization, not overpopulation problems putting a strain on the planet's carrying capacity.

Historically, and in modern times, the people making decisions about how global society is organized have been the elite (Mills 1956), corporations run by the elite (Domhoff 2013), and global economic institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF which have been guided by Global North countries (Prashad 2007, Sarfaty 2012). The exclusion of the world's poorest countries in these decisions has resulted in an economic world system that leaves the poorest people vulnerable to socioenvironmental health hazards that the richest countries can more easily avoid (Parenti 2011). Overpopulation is not nearly as hazardous to people's health as capitalism has been (Farmer 2005, Klein 2014a). Even if there are too many people in the future, currently the planet can feed everyone. Overpopulation and carrying capacity are not to blame for modern food insecurity.

## *Climate Change*

In *This Changes Everything*, Naomi Klein argues that climate change has become an “existential crisis for the human species” (15). The burning of fossil fuels, driven by the global capitalist market, is causing the planet’s rising greenhouse gases to concentrate in the atmosphere at dangerous levels (Roberts 2009). Predictions about what this concentration of gases might bring include massive heat waves, longer breeding seasons for mosquitoes, rising ocean levels that cover coastlands, environmental refugees fleeing to escape wastelands, and environmental wars over resources (Bullard, Johnson and Torres 2005, Moeller 2011).

Climate change is also a profit opportunity for biotech companies. There will be increased occurrences of droughts, floods, and famine due to climate change (Klein 2014a). Klein argues that the increase of these climate crises will help promote the adoption of genetically-modified crops which are drought tolerant and flood tolerant. However, climate change is not responsible for why in 2017 people are food insecure while surrounded by abundant food.

In *Tropic of Chaos*, the predictions are that by the year 2050, between 250-million and 1-billion people will be moving as a result of climate change (Parenti 2011). Climate change, as Parenti explains, is an increasing driver of immigration. The immigrants, however, are caused by a convergence of climate change and neoliberal policies. The opening of the Mexican market to free trade (foreign investors) meant small farmers and fishermen were now competing with transnational corporations (Parenti 2011, Patel 2012). Foreign boats take much of the fish through overfishing, and subsidy supported imports could sell for cheaper than locally grown food, leaving little for Mexican



fishermen and farmers to sell or eat. The result was debt, bankruptcy, and seeking work elsewhere for many Mexicans.

Mexico, and other Global South countries, are examples of the economic instability sowed through the Cold War and the neoliberal economic policies that emerged from it (Parenti 2011). These policies put Global South countries into permanent economic crisis, extreme inequality that breeds violence, and weak governments incapable of addressing social crises. When the economic crisis, inequality, violence, and weak governments are matched with climate change (which acts as a multiplier effect), then all of this becomes what Parenti refers to as the “catastrophic convergence” (Patel 2012).

Western military leaders recognize the breeding ground for potential violence that can emerge from this catastrophic convergence and are preparing to provide stability through military intervention. But Parenti argues that the United States history of counterinsurgency has contributed to the economic instability of Global South governments. In other words, the U. S. military’s damage to other countries has created a political environment that cannot respond effectively to a crisis within its country. This catastrophic convergence hampers the ability of poorer countries to respond to a crisis such as a typhoon, drought, or famine.

Food *security*, in the face of climate change, is an economic privilege most often reserved for the rich. To protect against climate change the wealthier nations may protect themselves with expensive sea-walls and storm barriers, while the poorer nations will be left to fend for themselves due to harsh immigration laws that inhibit people from migrating to more food secure and environmentally safe regions (Klein 2014a). The

dangers of climate change are avoidable, somewhat, through migrating to areas that have stronger food systems and stronger economies. But migration is an economic privilege which is not available to everyone in 2017, and migration was not available to everyone in the past either.

### **World Food Insecurity**

In 2017, when people speak of food insecurity in the world, there is a clear link to the poorest countries. This is because poverty and hunger are practically synonymous with each other, and because corporate interests trump community interests. Even for the Wales food values project there was a disconnect between human needs and corporate needs. For countries in South America, Africa, and parts of Asia where poverty is still extreme, there were still high levels of food insecurity (Bassett and Winter-Nelson 2010).

Why these areas? Colonialism brought many Global South countries under the rule of the Global North. Under this system, countries with economic and military strength (colonizers) conquered other countries to exploit land and export natural resources (Galeano 1997, McMichael 2012). During colonial rule the colonized countries were forced to use labor to extract resources, and then sent those resources to the Global North. This led to a resource imbalance ... the legacy of which became the world-system which continues to ship resources from the Global South (periphery) to the Global North (core) (Wallerstein 1984). The world-system increased the Global North's strong financial position and left the Global South dependent on financial aid and loans, which further benefitted the financial strength of the Global North (Haan 2009, Stiglitz 2002). Poverty is a manmade environmental health hazard that fosters illness and death (Farmer

2005, Gloyd 2004), which is also called structural violence. This structurally violent global society meant people could not meet their most basic needs because of institutional oppression and poverty (Farmer 2005, Gloyd 2004, Parenti 2011).

It is this structural violence that aggressively protected food as a commodity. A fairly recent example of the problems that come with treating food as a commodity happened in the “food price” crisis of 2007-2008. This crisis was triggered by dramatic increases in oil prices and droughts (Cohen and Garrett 2010). This food crisis was followed by a second “food price” crisis in 2010. The food price crises meant many people struggled to feed their families due to the dramatic increase in food prices. During these crises it was not the availability of food that created the crises. It was food price, which had a priority value than human needs.

Food is not free, and therefore price and poverty came into play for people struggling to avoid hunger (McMichael 2012). The global food price crises went unnoticed by most of the Western world, while people in the poorest countries struggled day to day for food. For example, a world-wide increase in the price of grain by 30-cents a pound is not a crisis for Global North countries where the price of bread would increase from \$1.99 to \$2.29 a loaf. However, in Global South countries, where they survive on grain and not bread, an increase of 30-cents a pound meant that people might pay 65-cents for a pound of grain instead of 35-cents. People in the Global South are financially vulnerable to global food price shifts (Cohen and Garrett 2010).

Philip McMichael writes about the world food crisis:

“Beyond price trends, the crisis is embedded in a fundamental structural transformation in the world food system. What we might call the “food from nowhere” regime emerged through the steady displacement of staple food crops with exports—whether through Northern agro-export dumping

practices, or via the embrace of capitalist export agriculture in the Global South as a debt repayment strategy. Thus Chile, the largest supplier of off-season fruits and vegetables to Europe and North America, experienced declines in the 1990s of more than a third in food cropping in beans, wheat, and other staples as corporate plantations displaced local farmers into the casual labor force. By the end of the twentieth century, twenty to thirty million people around the world were estimated to have lost their land under the impact of trade liberalization and export agriculture... the consequences are a depletion of smallholder food production for the working poor and greater vulnerability to rising food prices” (McMichael 2010a:60-61).

Food prices have often contributed to famines, meaning people are left to die not because of lack of food, but because of lack of money to buy food (Ó Gráda 2009). Food as a commodity, or food as a human right, are both social constructions of food. Denying someone food because of lack of money is therefore a socially constructed crisis when there is enough food. This goes against overpopulation arguments that people are hungry because there is not enough food to feed everyone (Magdoff 2012). The overpopulation argument distracts from extreme poverty which has created food access issues. In a free market where food prices fluctuate, people of color, the poor, and other marginalized groups will often be left vulnerable to food insecurity. Food is only a human right if there is enough money to purchase it (Sen 1981). Within the functions of a free market economy, the poor are often marginalized in the pursuit of profit (Chomsky 1999, Stiglitz 2002), denied even the basic human right to food. Thus food is a privilege, not a right, in Financial Food Sovereignty.

It’s not just that food is needed to survive, and thus is worth trading labor hours to attain. The lack of food is known in every culture around the world. A particular disease may be more prevalent in certain areas of the world. But hunger is known worldwide. And unlike any other social inequality that is embodied, hunger is the embodiment of

poverty (Adair 2002). Hunger, and starvation, is a side effect of the global food system in a free market. One of the most famous of all embodied health problems is poverty when it is reflected through hunger and famine. But how can humans allow other humans to go hungry when international law guarantees the human right to food?

Food sovereignty, in the capitalist food system, means a person's ability to choose food with money. The more money someone has, the greater his or her ability to choose food. In fact, indigenous peoples were often forced to abandon their traditional ways of gathering food, because of the dominate colonizers who altered traditional food systems into food commodity producing farms and plantations (Almaguer 1994, Anderson 2005). In the United States the colonists were often supported financially, and militarily, by the U.S. government. Not only were indigenous peoples forced off their lands, they were often killed to make room for prime food commodity producing lands (Galeano 1997). Indigenous peoples often did not have the ability to choose their food because of the land grabbing tendencies of the global food system (McMichael 2010a).

People with high Financial Food Sovereignty may still be malnourished or overweight because of their personal food choices. But with their high Financial Food Sovereignty, they have the ability to choose whatever food they want based on their economic status. People with low Financial Food Sovereignty are more likely to be malnourished, undernourished, and food insecure. Financial Food Sovereignty, then, is the ability to control access to food through economic strength.

Poverty leaves people hungry.

Not a lack of food, but poverty.

And this is allowable because of Financial Food Sovereignty. If a person does not have the ability to access food due to lack of money, then protecting the commodity trumps human altruism. But why do people allow the basic need for food to be trumped by Financial Food Sovereignty? In other words, why is available and healthy food denied to the poor because they do not have enough money? And why do the poor accept the prioritization of food's exchange-value over their own use-value?

### **Thinking about Food**

#### *Alienation*

The ability to view food purely as a commodity is due in part to the process of alienation within the food system. Alienation, as Karl Marx describes, is the separation of laborers from the fruits of their labor via capitalism. Not only are workers separated from the final product of their labor, but they are also separated from other people and nature. The product of their work is not to satisfy a need, but to satisfy a need external to the labor (to earn money) (Marx and Engels 1978). A person does not work to grow food. A laborer works to earn a profit for owners, and get paid a cash wage, so the laborer can then buy food. Depending on the various stages of production involved with creating a product, a laborer may not even recognize the final product that resulted from his or her labor. For example, a laborer who mines metal may not recognize the final product of that labor: a smartphone. The product of labor does not belong to the laborers.

A food laborer who plants seeds in the spring or summer may not be around in the fall to harvest the food. The laborers who harvest the food in the fall may load that food into trucks, but not know the final destination of the food. Deborah Barndt refers to this

as the distancing of labor, because Mexican farm laborers have no idea where their products actually end up (Barndt 2001b). The laborers who sell food may not have the money to buy the food they are selling. In all these stages of the food system, labor is separated from the product of labor because food is a commodity. Food production is not merely a way to meet immediate physical hunger needs, but to produce a commodity to be sold, and the selling of the commodity provides the laborer with cash. A woman in Barndt's study, a cashier visiting a farm, revealed that her relationship to food had been reduced to numbers because she was able to identify vegetables growing in the field by their price look-up (PLU) numbers (Barndt 2001b).

This relationship to food as a commodity is not only a United States phenomenon. In the modern world food system, many people do not know where their food comes from or who grew it. Where people were once able to grow local foods, now the world food system has been transformed into an import/export dependent model (McMichael 2010a, McMichael 2013). Around the world, people are alienated from food, and from the food system. Further, social class boundaries emerge from this economic alienation from food.

### *Financial Food Sovereignty: Food with Stigma and Food with Dignity*

The ability to know your farmer, and to choose where your food comes from, is often an issue of economic and social class. Pierre Bourdieu writes about distinction associated with eating food, especially based on the types of foods people choose to eat. Food consumption is a display of cultural capital, which is a way to display one's knowledge and social standing within a culture.

For Bourdieu, the food choices of the working classes tended to be food that met immediate dietary needs and took up a larger percentage of their budgetary spending, whereas the food choices of the professional classes took up a lower percentage of their budget even though they spent more on food and chose foods that were more delicate, refined, and rare (Bourdieu 2012). “The disappearance of economic constraints is accompanied by a strengthening of the social censorships which forbid coarseness and fatness, in favor of slimness and distinction. The taste for rare, aristocratic foods points to a traditional cuisine rich in expensive or rare products (fresh vegetables, meat)” (Bourdieu 2012: 32). According to Bourdieu, who was writing in 1978, there was even a middle-class, teachers, who operated between the working and professional class in terms of food consumption. Although they did not have the economic capital of the professional classes, they spent money on food that was rare or exotic to display their knowledge of food as a sign of their cultural capital.

In these three classes discussed by Bourdieu, their ability to choose food, and to display their cultural capital, is strongly correlated with their economic class standing. The working class has low ability to choose, the teachers showed a medium ability to choose food, and the professional class showed a high ability to choose food. The medium and high ability to choose food was a way to display cultural capital, a sign of their distinction. These basic economics are not only a sign of the ability to display cultural capital of low, medium, or high... but also a sign of one’s personal food sovereignty.

Financial Food Sovereignty, directly correlated with someone’s economic standing, is reflected in levels of low, medium, and high. In addition, a fourth level can



be added: the unemployed or extremely poor, who may be considered to have No Financial Food Sovereignty. These displays of Financial Food Sovereignty are conscious across the United States. The ability to choose any food, at any time, is a display of high Financial Food Sovereignty... having food with dignity. The inability to choose food at any time, perhaps by going hungry... or using food banks or food stamps to supplement food intake, is a display of No-Financial Food Sovereignty, or Low-Financial Food Sovereignty.

For example, voting with your fork is a display of medium- or high-Financial Food Sovereignty, but this type of movement to vote with your spending (Szasz 2007) still leaves No- and Low-Financial Food Sovereign peoples vulnerable to food access issues.

To actually grow your own food, or at least to know your farmer, has become a standard mantra of farmer's markets and the local agriculture movement (Ackerman-Leist 2013, Pollan 2006). Instead of being alienated from food, the local food movement is about connecting shoppers with locally grown food and local farmers. Customers who participate in the local food movement are most likely displaying medium- or high-Financial Food Sovereignty, because they have the time and money to visit local farmer's markets or to participate in CSAs.

### *Foucault and Financial Food Sovereignty*

Financial Food Sovereignty is heavily fixed within the public consciousness. It is so strong, that people who accept food aid may feel guilty for being unable to purchase

the food on their own. These people who accept food aid most likely have No- or Low-Financial Food Sovereignty.

In the book *Unending Hunger*, Megan Carney describes that people who are eligible to accept free food feel guilty about accepting free food (Carney 2015). Thus, they try to avoid food aid when possible, even when they qualify for it. This is without physical intimidation or coercion, because shame is the punishment. The invisible watchdog of shame guides people to act in a certain way when acquiring food, because people in the United States readily accept the norm of money being the normal way to access food. The power of this knowledge is a way that Financial Food Sovereignty guides people to continuously view food as a commodity instead of a human right.

When discussing the panopticon, Foucault describes how people feel constantly watched, and will act in a certain way because they know they are being watched by society. "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (Foucault 1979). This watchdog is created by the group in power. And in the United States, this power group has positioned food as a commodity. If someone cannot purchase food with money, there is an internal alarm that signals to people they are deviating from society norms.

Some people will then spend more of their limited savings on food instead of investing in education, health, or a better residential neighborhood. In addition, people will spend their limited money on cheaper, often less healthy food, in an attempt to make their budgets stretch (Potash and Potash 2010). This is the power of Financial Food

Sovereignty, in that people have so much respect for food as a commodity, that they will deny themselves access to free food. The poor and marginalized groups will dehumanize themselves, thus making it okay to allow themselves to go hungry, or to eat less nutritious food. This message puts the responsibility on individuals to help themselves, to pull themselves up by the bootstraps, instead of looking at bigger problems in society (Hedges 2009). In the eyes of the hungry, food may not be seen as a human right, and therefore it is okay to deny oneself access to free food.

This dehumanization, the denial of food to the hungry, is an example of rationalization. Rationalization is a systematizing of one's actions in the sense of an increased methodicalness to one's nature, a systematic way of working and living (Weber and Kalberg 2008). The free market instills in people a systematic way of thinking about commodities, and food is a commodity.

Weber writes:

“The reason for the impersonality of the market is its matter-of-factness, its exclusive orientation to the commodity. Where the market is allowed to follow its own autonomous tendencies, its participants do not look toward the persons of each other but only toward the commodity; there are no obligations of brotherliness or reverences, and none of those spontaneous human relations that are sustained by personal unions” (Weber and Kalberg 2008: 426-427).

For example, in the United States, immigrant women receive a message from society that being a good consumer means being a minimal consumer of state health benefits (Carney 2015). For this reason, many migrant women resist getting aid from WIC and other government assistance programs even if they are eligible. This is a rationalized form of self-alienation. People are alienated from one another, and their own bodies, through the accepted rational actions of the free market. It appears as if these

immigrant women accepted their low Financial Food Sovereignty by allowing themselves to embody poverty through their experience of hunger. In their view, humans only have a right to food if they earned it or can pay for it.

To have Medium- or High-Financial Food Sovereignty is a sign of economic strength. The inability to feed yourself is a sign of poverty. Hunger therefore is a badge of dishonor, because it reveals poverty. Hunger is the embodiment of poverty, often revealed through obese bodies or being extremely underweight bodies. The term embodiment, an eco-social theory, refers to the stories our bodies tell (Krieger 2005), which cannot be separated from the circumstances of our existence. There are stories of farmworkers who developed premature arthritis from working long hours in the fields (Holmes 2013), women who developed breast cancer from suspected exposure to cosmetics and pesticides (Zavestoski, McCormick and Brown 2004), people who get asthma from exposure to indoor or outdoor air pollution (Brown, Morello-Frosch, Zavestoski et al. 2012), or soldiers who develop liver failure and have children born with birth defects due to Depleted Uranium (Sanders 2009). All these resulting illnesses are the expression of the stories told by the bodies. Each of these health issues tells a story about the bodies of people who are suffering from environmentally caused illnesses.

“Ecosocial theory thus posits that how we develop, grow, age, ail, and die necessarily reflects a constant interplay, within our bodies, of our intertwined and inseparable social and biological history. Three additional assumptions, relevant to this article, are that we, as human beings, desire and are capable of living fully expressed lives replete with dignity and love, that epidemiologists are motivated to reduce human suffering, and that social justice is the foundation of public health” (Krieger 1999:296).

To be hungry is to be underdeveloped. To be hungry is to feel the stigmatizing pressure of the panoptic gaze of society. And to have No- or Low-Financial Food

Sovereignty is most often revealed through malnourished human forms which have embodied their poverty.

*Stripping Human Rights Away without Feeling Guilty*

How does one deny food to hungry people, even when it is a human right in most countries? This is part of Financial Food Sovereignty. People, the poor, are dehumanized under the gaze of Financial Food Sovereignty. Just like the medical gaze (Foucault 1994), which causes people to treat others a certain way as soon as they hear the diagnosis. For Financial Food Sovereignty, paying for food is a way to be a good consumer, but using welfare is looked down upon because you weren't able to help yourself. The gaze of Financial Food Sovereignty is a powerful influence on how people enforce the rationalization of exchange-value food access.

Within the human right to food framework, the human right to food *should be* guaranteed with money or without money. As long as people have access to food that provides a dignified and healthy way of life, then the human right to food will have been met. But with the self-patrolling and guilt that comes from accepting free food, the only dignified option for many people is to buy food with money. Poor people turn a gaze upon themselves if they have not worked to earn food. People are dehumanized, or dehumanize themselves, if they cannot afford food, under the gaze of Financial Food Sovereignty. It appears that because of this powerful diagnosis, poverty makes someone unworthy of accessing healthy food. And it becomes acceptable for the human right to food to be denied. It is very similar to "othering," by Edward Said, who argued that representations were created of the Eastern world to promote the superiority of Western

culture and the inferiority of Eastern culture (Said 1979). Othering occurs within Financial Food Sovereignty, because those who have access to enough money to meet their caloric intake are one level of food consumer, and people without money are another level of food consumer. At a root level, this is about humanizing versus dehumanizing.

When sustainable agriculture advocates speak of food sovereignty, they are often advocating to create stronger local economies (McKibben 2007b, Pollan 2006). Sustainable agriculture advocates also speak about helping local farmers, getting more local farmers, and growing as much as your own food as possible. Even growing food in your own backyard garden is advocated. This is similar to the Wales Food Values project, in which there is a tension between human nutrition needs and economic needs.

But the ability to grow your food, in your backyard, most likely requires medium- or high-Financial Food Sovereignty, because growing your food on your land requires money. For example, in *The Good Life*, Scott and Helen Nearing packed up their things and moved to Vermont. Scott Nearing was a professor, and the Nearings had enough money to buy a farm when they wanted it. In fact, when neighboring farms went up for sale, the Nearings had money to purchase those farms too (Nearing and Nearing 1989). For the Nearings, the less they had to interact with civilization the happier they were. This individual, separatist ideology led them to pursue a self-sustaining lifestyle. They built their home, and chose the food they grew, to be as self-sustaining and energy efficient as possible (Nearing and Nearing 1989). This level of control allowed the Nearings to spend very little money on food, and also to control the nutritional content of

the food they were putting into their bodies. Within Financial Food Sovereignty, this level of control is very humanizing because people earned the food they consumed.

The ability to buy land, to buy seeds, to buy water to grow food, are all based on how much money someone has to devote to food production and food consumption. Working hard to grow food in your garden with your tools on your land is an option only available to those with the financial resources. Julie Guthman argued that alternative food movements romanticize this ability to grow your food and take control of your diet (Alkon and Agyeman 2011), without fully acknowledging how race grants greater food access to white people. In this food system, food as a commodity will perpetually benefit white people, the middle-class, and the upper-classes. And those without enough money will continue to struggle with hunger and malnutrition.

### **Food Movements**

Food has never been “free.” It has always required work to harvest, hunt, or grow. Yet the rationalized relationship created by Financial Food Sovereignty maintains food as a human right, while dehumanizing the poor, which makes hunger acceptable for the undeserving poor because *the poor are not human*. If people want food, they should pull themselves up by the bootstraps to earn it. Food is a privilege only for the humans who have earned it by paying money. This thought process extends to the poor, who self-police themselves, willing to deny themselves the basic nutrients of survival because they respect food as a commodity.

Food aid organizations operate under, and against, a food system that prioritizes Financial Food Sovereignty. Food aid organizations often need donations, volunteers,

money, and land to operate. Food aid organizations exist within the question of *how to answer the human right to food* while working within a neoliberal economy. Within this food system that values food as a commodity, how can the human right to food be a guaranteed human right? Even the best intentions appear to be limited, or dictated, by money flow.

Food aid organizations are keenly aware of corporate food. "... the hunger that in 2009 affected over a billion people worldwide has its root causes in monopoly control over production and distribution, in the income differences between people, and in the unequal distribution of profits from food production. Never before in human history has food been concentrated in a single production matrix as it is today. Fewer than 50 companies control most of the world's seed production, agricultural inputs, and food distribution worldwide" (Stédile and Martins de Carvalho 2011: 21). The corporate food regime has brought about this global food crisis because it is environmentally destructive, financially volatile, and socially unjust (Holt-Giménez 2011). The large players in the corporate food regime pressure governments to accept products that have environmental and health concerns, and to adopt practices that are socially unjust (Patel 2012).

Food movements have arisen, in part, to address the problems of stigma and alienation created by Financial Food Sovereignty. Food movements have risen up to help the poorest who are left hungry under the rise of industrial agriculture. These movements confront the profit driven corporate food regime and fight for those who are affected by the unequal impacts of industrial agriculture. The main actors within the Food Security movements can be broken into three basic groupings: Food Security, Food Justice, and Food Sovereignty.



### *Food Security*

Food security movements are concerned with making sure there is access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life (Coleman-Jensen, Rabbitt, Gregory et al. 2016). Households with limited resources turn to Federal food and nutrition assistance programs like WIC, SNAP, and the National School Lunch Program, or obtain help from emergency food providers such as food pantries (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2016). Food security movements and assistance programs often treat food as a commodity. They help low-income people either purchase food, or they give food away for free, to protect people against the vulnerability created by capitalism.

### *Food Justice*

Actors within the Food Justice movement are concerned with food insecurity, but are also concerned with issues of racial inequality in the food system (Morales 2011). Food justice often views food as a commodity. For example, the food insecurity created by food as a commodity has disproportionately impacted people of color. During the 1960s and 1970s, large retailers made profit-driven decisions to pull out of neighborhoods and relocated to suburbs, leaving many poor and people of color without access to local food markets (Morales 2011). In many poor neighborhoods this process created *food deserts*. Corporations avoid low-profit areas, because food is a commodity, and therefore should seek the places that have the best markets for those commodities.

Food justice seeks to right these wrongs by getting more access to food markets in poor and minority neighborhoods, as well as getting more people of color into farm

ownership. However, the food justice movements often do not challenge the view of food as a commodity. Instead, they try to find solutions to help people access that commodity.

### *Food Sovereignty*

Actors within the Food Sovereignty movement are concerned with food security, but also concerned with who controls production. In addition to having access to food, the people, and the populations of every country, have the right to produce food (Stédile and Martins de Carvalho 2011). Only control over production can guarantee people access to their own food for an entire year, and only control over production can guarantee that food is environmentally and culturally appropriate. The ability to have control over production helps people to survive and to live in dignity.

Food sovereignty promotes the right of consumers to control their own food and nutrition, and promotes a living wage for all food producers (Stédile and Martins de Carvalho 2011). Supermarkets often display a wide variety of food, but most of that food is not locally sourced, and food that comes from questionable labor practices that do not pay living wages (Patel 2012).

The limitation with food security, food justice, and food sovereignty movements is that they often rationalize the human-nature relationship by maintaining food as a commodity. When food is a commodity, then it is traded on free markets. If food is traded on free markets, then the Food Crises of Capitalism predicts that food security, food justice, and food sovereignty will fail in their missions to eliminate food insecurity. Instead of eliminating food insecurity, these movements act as a double-movement to help people endure the crises of capitalism without preventing the next crises. Broadly,

these movements appear to fail at confronting the historical patterns of capitalism which perpetuate and maintain food insecurity. In addition, they tend to reinforce that food is an exchange-value commodity. Instead of bucking historical trends of food insecurity, they may reinforce them.

### **A Brief World History of Food Insecurity**

One problem with discussing the history of food insecurity and famines is that there is not much documentation about famines before the 1800s (Ó Gráda 2009). Although folklore and oral histories offer some insight into past food insecurity, a lack of food before 1800 may have been less of a problem because of the lower total population. Thus, a famine would not have incurred the massive loss of life that people associate with modern famines. Another issue with the lack of historical data for food insecurity, is that excess mortality is a defining feature of famine. “For most historical famines, however, establishing excess mortality is impossible” (Ó Gráda, 2009: 92). This is not just because of the changing claims of oral histories. This is also because of the influence of politicians who could more easily control the flow of information that was circulated about food insecurity. Harder evidence is more accessible for modern famine and food insecurity, although some modern politicians have had success in disrupting the flow of information about famine.

The problem of famine existed long before capitalism (Ó Gráda 2009). Famines, either through food scarcity or poverty, are not a modern invention of free markets.

Modern famine is a socially constructed disaster (Sen 1981), a catastrophic convergence of social factors that come together to create a human-made disaster (Parenti

2011). Many books have been written about epic famines. Following is a general overview of some of the most well-known famines which have occurred since 1800. It becomes painfully obvious that each is a human-made disaster related to the inability to access available food.

### *The Irish Potato Famine, 1845*

In Ireland, the potato became so valuable to food production that it became a primary source of food for many families. It was more than just potato blight which hurt the Irish (Reader 2009, Zuckerman 1998). First, land rents, owned by England, forced the Irish to grow and sell commodity crops for the benefit of the English owners. Second, the potatoes that were grown were being bred to be larger, and a specific variety. However, this new variety which was being raised to sell was less nutritious than varieties the Irish had been growing. The old type of potato the Irish had been growing actually led to a population explosion because of its highly nutritious value. The commodity potato that the Irish were forced to grow for land owners required a person to eat more potatoes to get their daily nutrition. Third, the Irish owned less land. A tradition of fathers passing land to sons, meant that property lots were being divided, and divided again. There simply wasn't enough land to grow the amount of potatoes that people had grown just a few generations earlier, as grandfather's *single* property was now *multiple* properties held by grandsons. Less land, the rents paid to the English, and less nutritious potatoes are some of the factors that made Ireland more vulnerable to the potato famine which hit in 1845 (Reader 2009). Reader's analysis, therefore, suggests that the Irish potato famine was a human-made disaster.

Furthermore, aid to Ireland was delayed because of political disagreements in England (Zuckerman 1998). Many in England believed that sending aid to Ireland would only reinforce the sloth and laziness which had led to the potato famine, because once again the Irish would be supported without fully understanding the power of hard work (Zuckerman 1998). However, many people think denying food to a poor person is acceptable if the poor person does not have money to pay for the food, because the poor are seen as lazy and undeserving (Malthus 1926). Famine is a correction for laziness, or overpopulation, in the eyes of some people. The use of food denial as punishment for laziness, instead of lack of ability to provide food aid, seems to ring true here, as only a few years later, the English began the Crimean War, in which they spent five times the amount of money for that war compared to the amount they spent on aid to the Irish (Zuckerman 1998).

Denying food aid to the Irish actually helped the profit margins of capitalists, in a time period that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels consider the launch point of capitalism (Marx 1992, Tucker, Marx and Engels 1978). Those Irish who could, immigrated to more economically stable countries. But the flood of Irish into Europe depressed wages by flooding the labor market with desperate, hungry workers who would work for whatever wage they could get (Engels 2009).

### *Russia's Famines*

Between 25 million to 30 million people died throughout the Russian famine of 1921. During this time, the Soviet government refused to even acknowledge the problem until July of 1921 (Kirimli 2003). World War I, and a civil war, disrupted the economy of

the Soviet Union. A famine was then able to sweep through Russia caused by the combination of a long-lasting war, revolution, internal strife, terror, banditry, disease, and disorder (Kirimli 2003). People resorted to eating rats, even cannibalism in Russia when access to food was disrupted (Kirimli 2003). Food aid did not begin to arrive until after a long-delayed call for help from the Soviet government. Russia reached out to the United States for food aid. Herbert Hoover's relief effort fed nearly six million Russian a day (Ó Gráda 2009). The far reaching impact of the famine, and the delay in getting the food to hungry people, were human decisions. Many people were already too sick and too weak to come to aid locations when food began to arrive. This was a socially created food crisis, because around the world there was available food. There was enough food to prevent this wide-scale loss of life. But from war, and government problems, millions of people could not access to food.

Barely ten years later, another famine hit Russia. This time between five million and six million people died in the 1932-1933 Famine. People who died of the famine succumbed to malnutrition as well as disease that is comorbid with famine (Ó Gráda 2009). Cannibalism was an infamous issue for the soviet famines of the 1920 and 1930s (Ó Gráda 2009), with meat sold at the market possibly made from human flesh.

For the 1932-33 famine, it is often argued that Stalinism, and its priority of rapid industrialization, trumped the needs of the poor who died by the thousands every week from hunger (Ó Gráda 2009). Instead of investing money into the basic needs of getting food to people, Russian authorities chose to invest in industrialization.

### *Bengal Famine, 1943*

This famine in Bengal India during WWII cost the lives of over two million people in a population of sixty million (Ó Gráda 2009). Because of the war, there was panic about war supplies, which influenced the government to deem those involved with the war effort a priority class over others when it came to accessing supplies of rice. In addition, boats were sunk that belonged to commercial fishermen out of fears that any invading Japanese might be able to use them (Ó Gráda 2009). It was market failure and government errors combined, not a decline in actual food availability, that greatly contributed to this famine.

### *Great Chinese Famine, 1959*

From 1959 to 1961, the Great Chinese Famine killed more people than any other famine in history: somewhere between 16.5 to 45 million people died in just over three years (Meng, Qian and Yared 2015). Most of those individuals were living in rural areas. Because authorities first concealed and then denied the crisis, the exact mortality numbers for famine remain uncertain (Ó Gráda 2009). However, even the conservative estimates for the famine's death toll still make it the deadliest famine in history. There was enough food in the world, but the Chinese government was reluctant to ask for help, especially from capitalist countries such as the United States (Meng et al. 2015).

In addition, food was treated as a commodity by the Chinese government. The government had a strict procurement program to collect agricultural products for export, and the enforcement of this program to collect foods for export left many people starving

(Meng et al. 2015). The people growing the food had very little control over their nutritional needs, even when there was enough food in the world.

#### *Ethiopia, 1983-1985*

The 1983-1985 Ethiopia famine, in which half a million to one-million people died, is attributed to drought and war (Ó Gráda 2009). During this same time period, the price of regional foods such as sorghum and tef soared above normal prices (Ó Gráda 2009). The increase of food prices creating food access issues is similar to the 2007-2008 food price crisis which left many people food insecure (Cohen and Garrett 2010).

Although the “natural disaster” of a drought was an issue, the ability to access existing food was the real issue. A natural human survival response to a natural disaster, migration, was prevented by militias who limited the movement of poor Ethiopians within the country (Ó Gráda 2009). During this famine, the government also covered up the impacts of the famine from outsiders. This meant that aid was delayed from reaching people sooner because the need was not known until the release of a shocking BBC television report which inspired a massive relief effort (Martlew 2009). So not only was the ability of poor people to migrate to more food secure locations restricted, but also the knowledge to outsiders who could have delivered available food was also restricted.

#### *North Korea Famine, 1994-1995*

It is hard to know the loss of life associated with the North Korean famine because of the government control over information coming out of the country. It is estimated between five-hundred thousand to three million people died in the famine (Ó



Gráda 2009). While a heavy rainfall triggered the famine which wiped out crops and impacted livestock, problems also came from economic mismanagement (Ó Gráda 2009).

The famine was triggered by a combination of natural disasters (floods), government deficiencies, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 which had been North Korea's major trading partner (Goodkind and West 2001). North Korea, because of its geography and climate, has only a short growing season, which makes it difficult for the country under ideal circumstances to feed its people. So the loss of the Soviet Union, combined with the floods, along with a trade embargo by the United States, meant country was unable to meet the caloric needs of its people (Goodkind and West 2001). This famine, similar to the famines in Ethiopia and Russia, may have had far fewer deaths if government decisions had been made differently.

#### *Somalia, 2010-2012*

Somalia is one of the poorest countries in the world, and has been beset by a twenty-year long civil war (FAO 2016b). The combination of drought, war, and government instability, along with a weak economic infrastructure, left thousands of people food insecure. During the 2011 Famine the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) sought emergency food assistance, as well as assistance in getting farmers access to seeds, water, and tools to help rebuild their lives and re-establish income(FAO 2011).

As has been discussed already, a basic defense against famine is migration. The ability to move is one of the things that many people used to escape the Irish Potato Famine, with immigrants moving to other parts of Europe as well as the United States

(Reader 2009). And for the 2011 Somalia Famine, migration may have also played a part in the severity of the famine. Wealthier households foresaw trouble ahead, and had the financial means and social networking to move before the actual onset of food insecurity (Majid and McDowell 2012). Minority populations in Somalia have strong, but more limited social support mechanisms, when compared to many other groups. When the wealthier and more socially connected Somalians left before the famine fully hit, those left behind did not have the same social networks in which to contact for help or to draw attention to their plight.

For Somalia, although there was a drought, there was also enough food in the world to feed everyone. The food crisis was not a matter of too many people for the planet to feed. Instead, this was another human-created food crisis based on war and poverty.

In 2016, Somalia is still food insecure, although various programs are attempting to bring stability to the region (Ali 2016, FAO 2016b). The World Food Programme is providing cash-based assistance to those in need, while also monitoring local food sellers to make sure the prices do not become inflated (Ali 2016). “WFP has established a country-wide network of retailers and is constantly adding more, so that vulnerable people receiving cash-based transfers can have a greater choice about where and when they shop” (Ali 2016). The cash-based food assistance, while currently only \$1 a day, allows for poor families to choose what food they get. This is actually an empowering form of assistance. While it still treats food as a commodity, it provides people with some ability to access the commodity of their choice, instead of receiving a generic food box.

It is not just the loss of calories which impacts people during a food crisis. It is the loss of control, the loss of choice. To be vulnerable to the food decisions that someone else makes for you is a loss of sovereignty at the most personal level: you can't choose what you put into your very own body.

*Syrian Civil War, 2011-present*

“Now in its sixth year, the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic is complex and multifaceted, having developed into several, simultaneous and interlinked wars involving a bewildering mosaic of national and international combatants. The human cost is equally bewildering. In 2011 Syria's population numbered just under 22 million people. Today, the exact figure is unknown. In August 2015 the UN estimated that 250,000 people had been killed in the war. By the beginning of 2016, 4.6 million citizens had fled the country, becoming refugees after long and perilous journeys to neighboring or distant countries. Of those who remain in Syria, some 13.5 million people need humanitarian assistance - 6 million of them children; 1.5 million with disabilities; 4.5 million in hard-to-reach locations; close to half a million trapped in besieged areas - 6.5 million of them internally displaced” (WFP 2016).

Syria is another example of a human-caused food crisis. There is no getting around the fact that food crises in the world, even when there is an environmental problem such as drought or natural disaster, are not caused by a lack of food in the world.

But migration, a basic defense against food insecurity, is not always an option. With Global North countries feeling ethnocentric pressures to close their borders to countries linked with terrorism, immigrants from the Middle East are finding it difficult to escape hunger. Of those effected by the Syrian Crisis, over 8 million are children who are living in refugee camps, or still living in Syria (UNICEF 2016). Of all the people who have little control over food choices, or access to money, children are the most vulnerable to No- and Low-Food Sovereignty.

## USA FOOD INSECURITY

With much of the Global South still playing catch-up, it might seem as though migrating to the United States would be an upgrade in economic lifestyle. But food insecurity exists within the United States as well. Hunger in America is unacceptable in light of the extraordinary abundance of food produced by American agriculture, meaning there is never a lack of food, and everyone is aware there is no lack of food in America (Poppendieck 2000). Food insecurity in the United States, as with the rest of the world, is strongly correlated with poverty.

For the time period 2013-2015, other factors associated with food insecurity in the United States included unemployment rate, households with children, households with a single parent, men or women living alone, black (non-Hispanic households), Hispanic households, and households located in rural areas (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2016).

In the United States rates of food insecurity can vary widely within each state. For example, at the county level, food insecurity can range from 4-percent to over 30-percent within the borders of a single state (America 2016a). The counties with the highest levels of food insecurity tended to be rural. The majority of these rural counties with high food insecurity were located in the Southern United States (America 2016). In addition, 96-percent of counties in the United States that had a majority African American population, and a majority of the counties that had a majority Native American population, fall into the high food insecurity poverty counties (America 2016a).

People of color tend to be more susceptible to not only food insecurity, but also susceptible to lower food access, as grocery stores have started a trend to relocate from poor areas to areas that can financially support the stores (Alkon and Agyeman 2011).

People who live in food deserts access whatever food they can find, which is typically cheaper and less nutritious food. This trap of cheap food to fend off hunger leads to greater risk for obesity and diabetes, primarily a concern for the poor and people of color (Patel 2012). People in the United States who live in food deserts have low-, or no-, Financial Food Sovereignty.

### *Food Aid*

To meet the needs of the hungry and malnourished there are government programs which intervene to feed people who are left malnourished due to poverty (Bassett and Winter-Nelson 2010). These food insecurity interventions occur at the national, state, and local levels. Polanyi refers to charities and government interventions that assist in this way as part of the double-movement, where society protects itself against the inherent perils of a self-regulating market (Polanyi 2001).

SNAP, WIC, and the School Lunch Program, are just some of the government interventions that are part of the federally funded double-movement. But even the federally funded double-movement has a political hurdle, as these food aid programs are primarily funded through the Farm Bill. The 2014 Farm Bill, also known as the Agricultural Act of 2014, is the primary food and agricultural policy implemented by the United States government, typically every five years (USDA 2016b). The Farm Bill deals with agriculture and other issues overseen by the USDA (2014). The Farm Bill often refers to crops as commodities and uses terms such as “price loss coverage,” and “effective price.” Dollar value is often associated with food crops. There are many struggles getting the Farm Bill passed, particularly the struggle between protecting

farmers' incomes and protecting the poor from food insecurity. Food, as a commodity, is an issue that is discussed every five years as modifications to the Farm Bill are proposed and voted upon by the U.S. Congress. The Farm Bill funds various programs from 2014 through 2018, including determining how much money to allocate for SNAP and WIC. As mentioned in Chapter II, federal welfare programs may be at risk because of the tax reform bill signed into law by President Trump in 2017.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the food stamp program, provides monthly assistance to help low-income households purchase food items at SNAP authorized retailers (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2016). SNAP is available to all individuals who meet financial and nonfinancial eligibility criteria. From October of 2014 to September of 2015, the average benefit was about \$127 per person per month (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2016).

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a federally funded nutrition program that provides grants to States to support the distribution of supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and nonbreastfeeding postpartum women; for infant in low-income families; and for children in low-income families who are younger than five years old and found to be at nutritional risk (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2016). Most WIC agencies provide vouchers that participants use to acquire supplemental food from authorized food retailers. In 2015, WIC served on average eight-million participants per month, with the average benefit of \$44 per month (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2016).

Another federally funded program, The National School Lunch Program, operates in over 100,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child-care

institutions, serving free, or reduced-price lunches, to low-income students (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2016). In 2015, the school lunch program provided lunches to an average of 30.5 million children each school day (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2016).

SNAP, WIC, and the School Lunch Program help give access to food while also not challenging the view of food as a commodity. These programs help people exchange money for food. If you do not have enough money, and have been denied access into these programs, then you might go hungry.

In addition to government programs that offer assistance to food insecure people, there are various nonprofit food aid organizations that attempt to meet the nutritional needs of the hungry. These groups are often called emergency food providers (Ackerman-Leist 2013).

### *Food Banks and Food Pantries*

A food bank is a non-profit organization that collects and distributes food to hunger relief charities such as food pantries, after school programs, church feeding programs, and soup kitchens (America 2016b). A food bank is typically a large storage facility that receives food donations from food wholesalers, grocery stores, and other sources in the food industry. Food banks are a large central distribution center for food, sometimes having several semi-truck loads of food delivered, and sent out, every week.

Food pantries are one of the smaller arms that reach out to the community directly. Whereas a food bank may store millions of pounds of food, the food pantry is one place that people can go to get a food box for emergency food assistance (America

2016b). Several food pantries, soup kitchens, and other emergency food providers may all get their food from the same food bank.

These nongovernment food aid organizations may be able to access federal funds because of Community Transformation Grants. Section 4201 42 U.S.C. 300u-13 of the Affordable Care Act discusses Community Transformation Grants (2010). These grants could be used as ways for food aid organizations, and schools, to get healthy food options into schools and communities. The purpose of these grants is for disease prevention as well as overall physical and mental wellness within a community. This section of the Affordable Care Act recognizes racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare, which can result in poor nutrition for marginalized groups.

Without the double-movement, capitalism would be in jeopardy, as poor people might revolt in order to access food, healthcare, and shelter. But one example of the double-movement prioritizing exchange-value occurred in December of 2016. The United Nations did not ask for donations of food to help feed hungry Kenyan refugees, but instead asked for money to help people purchase food (UN 2016).

Charities are another example of the double-movement. Food aid charities such as food banks, pantries, and soup kitchens operate with people who provide volunteer labor time. Volunteers at these organizations often give their volunteer labor time in addition to normal wage-labor time. Why? Because volunteers need money to pay their own bills. During my field research I noted that volunteer labor time might be given after retirement, in addition to paid employment, or given in exchange for class credit. For people who perform short-term international health volunteering, some volunteers may



give volunteer labor time in exchange for resume building, for the adventure and travel opportunities, or to have a personal life changing experience (Lasker 2016).

Just as volunteers have bills to pay such as rent, nonprofit organizations face many of the same monetary costs as for-profit organizations. Land and water are commodities which have prices that fluctuate on the free market even though they were not created through human labor (Polanyi 2001). My field research noted that electricity, fuel, salaries for people who direct the nonprofits, and supplies can all contribute to the costs of a nonprofit. Because providing free food still costs money, organizations endeavoring to provide free food are behaving irrationally.

### *Food Gleaners*

Farmers, for their part, can't grow food for free. They need a living wage. If they cannot pay the bills, the farmer may lose the farm.

Paying bills, and the profit-based decisions associated with it, can lead to food waste on farms. 40-percent of food is wasted in the United States, and one-third of food is wasted globally (Ackerman-Leist 2013). Some of the wasted food includes products that cannot be sold at market value even though they are still edible. This food is often thrown away because it is cheaper to throw the food away, or to leave it rot in the field, than for a farmer to gather it and take it to a charity. Money, not need or human rights, oftentimes dictates whether food reaches the poorest.

On September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015 the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency called for a fifty-percent reduction in food waste in the United States by 2030 (Worland 2015).

“Let’s feed people, not landfills,” said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy in a press release. “Today’s announcement presents a major environmental, social and public health opportunity for the U.S.” (Worland 2015).

Food waste is not just from farmers. It comes from hospitals, college university dining halls, restaurants, bakeries, and other locations. Groups who go to farms, bakeries, grocery stores, and other places to save unsold food because it goes to waste are called food gleaners.

Cutting the United States food waste from forty-percent to twenty-percent is an important step in the right direction. Even cutting good waste globally would be a good thing. But cutting food waste does not answer the problem of food insecurity for the United States or the world. Food insecurity existed in the past. Just because there was food, or is food now, does not mean it is freely available. Someone still has to pay for food even when the goal is to give food away for free. With a plentiful global food supply, the current problem with food insecurity is not a lack of food, but a lack of money. Remember in the past there was plenty of food, yet people still died from famine.

Furthermore, cutting food waste, surprisingly, may be a problem for food insecurity. Reducing food waste could also mean there is less food available to give to hungry people. Theoretically, reducing food waste could mean that more food is being given to people who need it. But cutting food waste, if not well thought out, could add to the food insecurity problem. This is because in the United States it is not a lack of food which causes food insecurity. In fact, people can sometimes be surrounded by food, and prime farmland, yet still be food insecure.

### *Farmers Markets and CSAs*

Not everyone is surrounded by pristine farmland. For those living in the city, access to fresh food may need to come from farmers markets or CSAs.

A farmers market is where two or more farmers-producers sell their agricultural products directly to the public at a fixed location (USDA 2016a). In contrast, a community supported agriculture (CSA), involves participants paying an annual or seasonal subscription fee in advance for the share of the expected produce in the season. Farmers markets, and CSAs, can offer a range of products such as meat, fish, poultry, dairy products, grains, fruits, and vegetables (USDA 2016a).

Many CSAs and farmers markets accept SNAP benefits. However, because of the risk of CSAs, payment for CSA food cannot be accepted more than 14 days in advance of the delivery/availability of the food. Either SNAP benefits, or money, is required to access food from CSAs and food markets because food is a commodity.

In Oregon, not only is SNAP accepted at Farmers markets, but there is another program called Double-Up Food Bucks. This means that when people use their SNAP benefits at a farmers market, their SNAP power is doubled up to \$10. Meaning, if a person spends \$10 worth of SNAP benefits at a participating Oregon farmers market, that person will be able to get an additional \$10 worth of food (Oregon 2016). This helps alleviate some of the problems of cost at farmers markets. But it also reifies food as a commodity. There is food in Oregon, and there are hungry people in Oregon, so this program allows people to trade money (or SNAP) to get the food into the hands of hungry people.

## Food Insecurity in Oregon, USA

“Hunger is often viewed as a quantity issue: if there are hungry people then the logical conclusion is to produce or distribute more food. Though when you consider areas of rich agricultural production, like Oregon, further examination shows this abundance is not shared by all. Oregon produces over 200 agricultural commodities, yet nearly one in seven residents are experiencing food insecurity, and the state continues to rank in the top five states for hunger” (Food Bank and Masteron 2013: 8).

The U.S. state of Oregon was once ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in the United States in terms of food insecurity with 5.8-percent of households food insecure due to insufficient money for food (Leachman 1999). In this case, *first* is actually *worst*. Yes, in 1999 the farming state of Oregon was the most food insecure state in the United States. The good news is that Oregon’s national ranking has gone down because it is currently tied with Ohio for 6<sup>th</sup> place (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2016). The bad news is that food insecurity has actually gotten worse since 1999, with Oregon seeing 16.1-percent of households reporting low, or very low, food insecurity for the years 2013-2015 (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2016).

Oregon’s national ranking has “improved” because other states have gotten distinctly worse when it comes to food insecurity. How bad has it gotten? North Dakota is currently ranked 50<sup>th</sup> in the United States for food insecurity, meaning this is the most food secure state. But North Dakota is reporting that 8.5-percent of its households are food insecure. In 1999, Oregon’s 5.8-percent level of food insecurity was the worst. If Oregon had 5.8-percent for the years 2013-2015, it would have been the most food secure state by a wide margin.

Poverty is an issue for Oregon, as are rural areas which have less access to food. Another issue is monocropping, instead of growing a wide variety of crops. Growing monocrops in huge acreages requires large inputs of fertilizers and pesticides. In addition,

monocropping creates communities that become dependent on importing food from around the world instead of being self-reliant for food (Food Bank and Masterson 2013). For Oregon, growing grass seed was one of the important monocrops for farmers (Velazquez 2016). Oregon grass seed was even used to grow the grass on the fields for the World Cup Soccer matches in Brazil (Manning 2014). But growing grass seed means food must be imported from some other region in order to feed people.

History shows that Oregon has the potential to be self-reliant. In the last 100 years, 70-percent of agricultural crop diversity in Oregon has been lost to the growth of industrial agriculture (Food Bank and Masterson 2013).

In industrial agriculture, only 19-percent of the total value of a food sold comes back to the farmer, and less than 5-percent of the food consumed in an area is produced in that area. By improving the consumption of locally grown foods, Oregon consumers could also help local farmers and the local economy (Food Bank and Masterson 2013, Pollan 2006). Because food is so often treated as a commodity, improving the local economy is a market-based answer to addressing food insecurity. More jobs equals more dollars, and more dollars equals higher Financial Food Sovereignty. The theme in Oregon, as elsewhere, is economic strength to help people get more money in which to access to abundant food. People around the world have trouble negotiating a non-commodified relationship with the environment, and with food.

### *College and Food Insecurity*

How do you escape poverty? A popular answer is college education. Historically, those who get a college degree earn more money than those who do not have a college

degree (Abel and Deitz 2014). The report by Abel and Deitz notes that, compared to historical trends, current college students are paying more to attend college than in the past, and also earning less upon graduation than in the past. It was unclear whether this trend would continue.

As college tuitions reach record highs, the reliance on student loans has intensified (Abel and Deitz 2014). College costs lots of money, which puts pressure on paying other bills with limited money. Stretching the dollar only goes so far, as many food insecure college students can attest. A survey of almost 3,800 students from community colleges and four-year colleges found that twenty-two percent of students have the very lowest levels of food insecurity (Dubick, Mathews and Cady 2016). The survey by Dubick et al. found that thirteen-percent of students at community colleges were homeless. This study highlights a common problem for people who are food insecure. Food insecurity is often associated with housing insecurity. Sixty-four percent of food insecure college students reported some type of housing insecurity (Dubick et al. 2016).

At a rural university in Oregon, fifty-nine percent of the college students reported food insecurity, which compared to only fifteen-percent of the general population (Patton-López, López-Cevallos, Cancel-Tirado et al. 2014). Students at the Oregon university who were employed were almost twice as likely to report experiences with food insecurity, which suggests that financial assistance and employment are falling short of meeting the demands of attending a university for college students during the recession (Patton-López et al. 2014). In the Oregon university study, students who reported food insecurity were less likely to report a grade point average greater than or equal to 3.1. The

college food insecurity, and the lower grades it represents are important because education is stereotypically thought of as a way out of poverty. Escaping poverty is linked to food security. But food insecurity hinders a person's educational success in a catch-22.

The rationalized logic of the commodification of knowledge and food makes escaping food insecurity a daunting task. The rest of this dissertation explores a different relationship with food and knowledge, a relationship based on community instead of individual, a relationship based on use-value instead of exchange-value. In a word: irrational.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE OREGON COMMUNITY GARDEN

This is not a dystopian vision of the future, but the present reality: Food insecurity exists among abundance. Capitalism's food crises, and the lingering food insecurity created by capitalism, are readily embraced and defended by society's rationalized embrace of an exchange-value relationship with nature. Hunger persists among abundant food supplies because society accepts this is just the way things are: a rationalized neo-Malthusian perspective that if people don't work to earn food, then they deserve hunger—going so far as for some people to police themselves and deny themselves food aid if they do not have money to exchange for food. The pervasiveness of this food value thought system, which protects food as a commodity, can be found in many of the food aid organizations designed to relieve food insecurity.

While food aid organizations embrace helping the poor, they also appear to reinforce the cultural hegemony of food as a commodity. Cultural hegemony is the wide acceptance of rules and beliefs influenced by the ruling class, whose ideals are reinforced through leaders at organizations such as media and schools (Gramsci 1992). These leaders, whom Gramsci refers to as intellectuals, promote the ideals and values of the ruling class.

... every "essential" social group which emerges into history out of the preceding economic structure, and as an expression of a development of this structure, has found (at least in all of history up to the present) categories of intellectuals already in existence and which seemed indeed to represent an historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social form (Gramsci 1992:6-7).



Applying Gramsci's ideas on cultural hegemony to the persistence of rationalized food insecurity, noting the historical patterns from Chapter III, then it appears that rationalized food insecurity will endure into the future because the leaders, along with much of society, have embraced the concept of food as a commodity. Many food organizations, regardless if they are for-profit or non-profit, view food as a commodity, with an exchange-value most often negotiated with money. Chapter II noted the problem of depending on money, or even economic growth, as a path to eliminate food insecurity. If food is widely accepted as having an exchange-value, there is little reason to believe more famines will not occur in the future, regardless of food supplies, because the food system is dominated by rational actors. Occasionally irrational actors enter into this dystopic food system. One of those irrational actors is the Oregon Community Garden.

### **Introducing the Oregon Community Garden**

According to the executive summary report from the Oregon Food Bank (Food Bank 2016), 1 in 5 Oregonians received assistance in 2015. 28% of people in Oregon reported they often worry about where they will get their next meal. Oregon's enduring history with food insecurity makes it a strong location to study a food aid organization. By studying one food aid organization, we learn about the struggles of food insecurity, specifically the various challenges of providing free nutrition within a capitalist food system, as well as about the challenges of trying to implement a rights-based understanding of food in a world dominated by commoditized vision of food. The Oregon Community Garden provides such a case-study to learn about its challenges and successes.

The Oregon Community Garden has been in operation for over twenty-five years. It provides an important location for a case study because of the ways it fits within, and opposes, the hegemonic exchange-value food system. It works with the PAC Food Bank to grow more than 20 tons of fresh organic produce each year to give to those who need food. In addition, the Garden offers classes in sustainable living and sustainable gardening, while using more than 2,400 volunteers from the community every year. Sometimes the garden may have ten volunteers for the entire day, and other days the garden may have over one-hundred volunteers before lunchtime. The garden extends over 2.5 acres behind a church in town, and it operates twelve months a year. The late fall to early spring are slower growing seasons, and therefore the garden is open fewer days each week. The late spring to early fall are the most productive growing seasons, and therefore the garden is open five days a week. The productive growing seasons allow for some food to be preserved or frozen to offset the lower production months of fall and winter.

But how does the Oregon Community Garden reconcile the tensions of providing free food within a food-system that protects food, land, and water as commodities? This rest of this chapter will help us understand the tension between use-value and exchange-value by learning how food holds counter-hegemonic values at the Oregon Community Garden. First, a look at various actors in the Pacific Northwest food system to understand what it looks like to be an irrational food actor. Second, how does the Oregon Community Garden exist in a society that commodifies everything. Whereas the capitalist food system embraces the rational exchange-value of food, the Oregon Community Garden embraces the irrational use-values of food.

## **Describing Irrationality in an Exchange-Value System**

This chapter is the result of field research and qualitative methods. These approaches were appropriate for addressing *what does it look like to prioritize food's use-value over exchange-value?* First, using qualitative methods, I hoped to be able to describe how different food organizations prioritize food value in the Pacific Northwest. For this description, I analyzed written materials including brochures, websites, and scholarly works. The information about these organizations helped describe how each of them prioritized food as having either a use-value or having an exchange-value. This, in turn, helps us understand how the Oregon Community Garden fits within the broader food system. Most of these organizations identify food access with money, with the solution to food access problems requiring more money.

Second, I conducted semi-structured interviews with volunteers at the garden, and others within the local food community. This analysis helps understand how the food organizations and individuals at the county level perceive food value. Those participating in these interviews were grouped as the Oregon Community Garden, PAC Food Bank, or Local Community.

Third, I conducted field research as an intern at the Oregon Community Garden. This internship occurred during the summer of 2016 through the summer of 2017, along with volunteer work at the garden which occurred before and after this time period. While doing field research at this garden I participated in daily activities such as harvesting, planting, composting, soil preparation, weeding, and learning exercises. In addition, I took part in the garden's free lunch, which is served every day the garden is open. I took part in teaching, planning meetings, helped with special events, and

occasionally I was left in charge of the garden when both directors were away due to illness or meetings. I worked in sunshine, rain, sleet, and even snow. The experience at this unique community garden, which grows food to give it away for free, helped me understand how it fits within the broader discussions of food value.

### ON FOOD VALUES

For the purpose of this research, food values are defined as either rational or irrational. For example, the Oregon Community Garden places irrational food values on growing community through the production of food while also providing a source of free food for the hungry. There are three irrational food values which are apparent at the garden: community, free food, and noncompetitive food access. The opposites of these are rational food values of individualism, cash-exchange, and competitive food access.

#### *Measuring the Value of Food*

Table 1: Food Organizations in the Pacific Northwest

	Name	Brief Description
Nonprofit Food Organizations	Oregon Community Garden (OCG)	A nonprofit community garden in the state of Oregon, which grows food to give away for free, and builds community.
	Oregon Food Bank (FB)	Food Bank collects food from farmers, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, individuals and government sources. We distribute that food through a Statewide Network of 21 Regional Food Banks and approximately 970 partner agencies serving all of Oregon and Clark County, Washington.
	Beacon Food Forest (BFF)	Located in Seattle, WA, Beacon Food Forest strives to design, plant and grow an edible (and free) urban forest garden. This will rehabilitate the local ecosystem and bring the community together.

	Food Not Bombs (FnB)	Food Not Bombs is a world-wide volunteer group that collects food that would otherwise go to waste to create free vegan and vegetarian meals as a protest to war and poverty.
	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	Federal nutrition program that supplements food budgets to buy healthy food for low-income people.
	The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	U.S. Federal programs provides grants to States for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five found at nutritional risk.
For-profit Food Organizations	Portland Farmers Market (PFM)	Portland Farmers Market is a nonprofit organization operating seven farmers markets in Portland, OR. These markets feature for-profit vendors.
	Whole Foods (WhF)	Retailer of high quality organic products.
	WinCo Foods (WC)	An employee-owned grocery store chain.
	McDonald's (McD)	U.S. Fast-food chain that primarily serves hamburgers and fries.

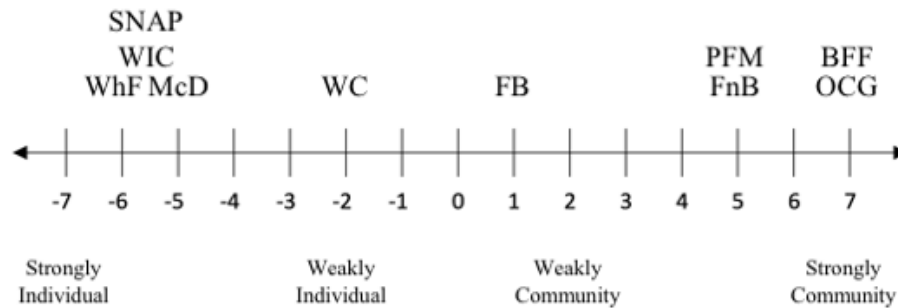
Table 1 lists six nonprofit food organizations, and four for-profit food organizations. These organizations were selected because of the different aspects they highlight about the food system. The way an organization values food was measured by its emphasis of use-value or exchange-value on three dimensions: 1) community versus individual, 2) free versus cash, and 3) noncompetitive versus competitive. First, each food organization was scored, and the results are displayed in number lines for each dimension (see Figures 1, 2, and 3). Then a three-dimensional scatterplot was created to illustrate how different organizations value food<sup>1</sup> (See Figure 4).

---

<sup>1</sup> Different questions or criteria may create different scores for the food values dimensions. But the most likely outcome, even with more complex models, is that different organizations value food differently. Some lean toward use-value, others lean toward exchange-value.

## Community versus Individual

Figure 1: Community versus Individual



*Community versus individual* measures how *each* organization prioritizes food value for community building. Community building may require extra effort and is less rational than prioritizing food as an individual experience. Each organization was scored on seven criteria to describe how it prioritizes food for its community building use-value. “True” gets +1 point, “False” gets -1 point, “somewhat/other” gets 0 zero points when it is not clearly True or False. The points from the seven criteria create a score range of +7 to -7. The results are shown in Figure 1.

Four organizations appear to value food “strongly as a community building tool.” For the Oregon Community Garden, the Beacon Food Forest (Forest 2017b), Food Not

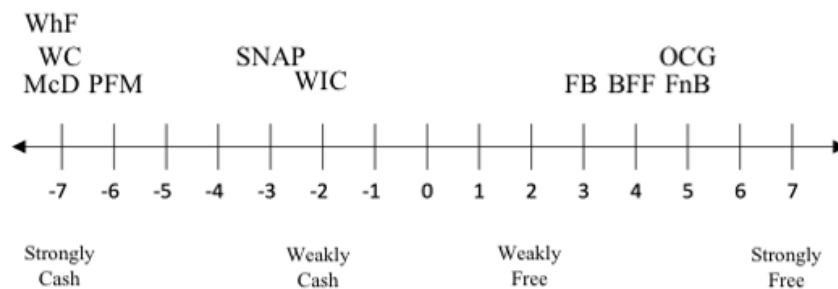
Bombs (FNB 2017), and the Portland Farmers Market (Market 2015, Market 2017b), there appears to be a strong use-value in food's ability to bring people together. All four are dependent on volunteers, which implies people from the local community come together for purposes other than personal financial gain to make these organizations function. At Beacon Food Forest and the Oregon Community Garden, food was specifically grown for people in the community to have access to free food. People helped in the growing and harvesting of food, learned how the food is grown, and even ate lunch together. For Food Not Bombs, providing free food is a way to help people who are poor, as well as a way to support protest groups. At the Portland Farmers Market, the food market is likely the main draw, but the community-building atmosphere includes music as well as cooking classes.

Four other organizations appeared to value food as “strongly individual.” For Whole Foods (Foods 2017c), McDonald's (McDonald's 2017), WIC (USDA 2017c), and SNAP (USDA 2016c, USDA 2017b), the use-value of creating community is not a priority. Two of these organizations are nonprofit government food aid agencies, and two of these organizations are for-profit businesses. They fall on the strongly-individual side partly because the only reason people go to them is for food or employment. At these organizations an automated kiosk, or perhaps a phone app, could be substituted for the entire social experience. Although WIC and SNAP are used to buy food at grocery stores, these purchases are primarily corporate foods. Because of the corporate foods, any profits generated by using these organizations are less likely to stay within the local communities (McKibben 2007a).

WinCo Foods (WinCo 2017b) and the Oregon Food Bank (Food Bank 2017) were weakly individual, and weakly community, respectively. WinCo Foods is an employee-owned store, meaning the bulk of financial benefits generated by the store stay with employees who live in the local community (WinCo 2017a). There is a shared ownership in the success of WinCo. Conversely, the Oregon Food Bank is weakly community. The financial benefits from rescuing food reduces food waste, and helps poor people access food through a wide distribution network (Food Bank 2017). The Oregon Food Bank itself does not appear to generate a sense of community, but the food bank works with many organizations in the state to help build community.

### Free versus Cash

**Figure 2: Free versus Cash**



*Free versus cash* measures if food access is determined by the ability to exchange cash. Cash exchange is a highly rational process guided by the market and profits. Each organization was scored using seven criteria to describe how it prioritizes food access for its use-value or its exchange-value. “True” gets +1 point, “False” gets -1 point,



“somewhat/other” gets 0 points when it is not clearly True or False. The points from the seven criteria create a score range of +7 to -7. The results can be found in Figure 2.

Three organizations appear to value food as “strongly free” because they prioritize food for its use-value. The Oregon Community Garden, Food Not Bombs, and the Beacon Food Forest fall into this category. In addition, the Oregon Food Bank appears close to “strongly free” in the way it values food for its use-value. First, the Oregon Food Bank and Food Not Bombs work with local food retailers, farmers, and food distributors to rescue food which cannot be sold, but can still be eaten by those who need it (FNB 2017, Food Bank 2017). The challenge of collecting this food and distributing it has fuel costs, which means even if people want to give food away, it still costs someone money. Second, the Oregon Community Garden, as well as the Beacon Food Forest, exist because of access to land and water. But someone pays for the access to these important resources. In addition, Beacon Food Forest has sections of its property which are individual garden plots that people pay money to access (Forest 2017b). Third, the Oregon Community Garden and the Oregon Food Bank have paid staff in addition to volunteers. So even when these food aid organizations work to give food away for free, there are cash obstacles.

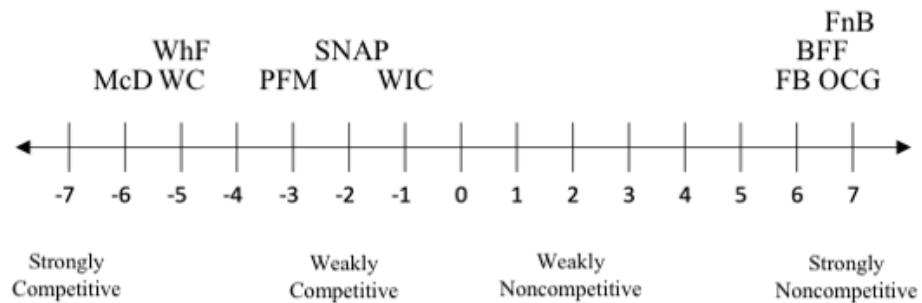
Two organizations appear to value food as “weakly cash.” The two government programs, WIC and SNAP, believe no one who is hungry should be denied food. These two organizations provide cash supplements, or food vouchers, which allow people to access food. The emphasis was that hungry people cannot walk into a grocery store or farmers market and then just walk out with food. The exchange-value of food is still protected, and it is up to the consumer to procure the WIC or SNAP benefits which can

then be exchanged for food. While grocery stores and restaurants clearly require cash-exchange to access food, it may be surprising to some that SNAP and WIC so heavily endorse the need for cash. SNAP has a work requirement to be eligible for the program (USDA 2016c). WIC has a lengthy application process to determine the eligibility of a child, and then has only specific items which can be purchased with the coupons/EBT card at the grocery store (USDA 2017c). If someone grabbed the wrong size of apple juice using WIC, she has to return the item because she doesn't get the cash-discount value. Users of WIC had 'money' which was only eligible to exchange for specific items.

Four organizations appeared to value food as "strongly cash," meaning without money people can be denied access to food. Whole Foods, McDonald's, WinCo Foods, and the Portland Farmers Market, all emphasized the exchange-value of food.

### Noncompetitive versus Competitive

**Figure 3: Noncompetitive versus Competitive**



*Non-competitive versus competitive* measures if food is valued as a product sold on competitive markets. Competition is a rational process to help determine who can access food, but also involves winners and losers. Each organization was measured on seven criteria to describe how it prioritizes food as a product accessed on competitive markets. “True” gets +1 point, “False” gets -1 point, “somewhat/other” gets 0 points when it is not clearly true or false. The points from the seven criteria create a possible score range of +7 to -7. The results can be found in Figure 3.

Four organizations appear to value food as “strongly noncompetitive,” meaning the use-value of food takes priority over the potential profit value of food. The Beacon Food Forest, the Oregon Community Garden, the Oregon Food Bank, and Food Not Bombs all strive to provide access to food in a noncompetitive manner. The Oregon Food Bank and Food Not Bombs collect unsold food from stores and restaurants to distribute to people who need it. The Oregon Community Garden, and the Beacon Food Forest, grow food with the intent that whoever needs food can access the food for free. For these organizations nutrition is not a competition because losing this competition would be unhealthy.

Three organizations appear to value food as “weakly competitive,” meaning the potential surplus-value or exchange-value of food is slightly more important than the use-value. SNAP, WIC, and the Portland Farmers Market fall in this category. SNAP and WIC grant access to food, but still protect the exchange-value of food. Both SNAP and WIC are meant as supplements to a food budget, meaning people are still expected to find sources of cash to compete on the food market (USDA 2016c, USDA 2017c). WinCo

Foods, various vendors who sell at the Portland Farmers Market, and Whole Foods accept cash as well as SNAP and WIC (USDA 2017a, WinCo 2017a). In fact, there are vendors at the Portland Farmers Market who participate in a program called “double-up food bucks” (Market 2017a). This program doubles the value of SNAP benefits for every \$1 spent, up to \$10 at farmers markets. For \$10 spent you can get \$20 of fresh food.

The food sold at the Portland Farmers Market, although still a commodity, does not need to be uniform in quality or appearance to compete with food sold in other parts of the state or the country. The Portland Farmers Market itself is a broad, organic organization, whereas individual vendors may fit more into the “strongly competitive” category. The Portland Farmers Market emphasizes it wants to create a strong market for farmers and vendors to sell their products, but also create a community environment that encourages people to stay longer than a typical errand-run to the grocery store (Market 2015). The Portland Farmers Market reduces food miles for food, as well as operates to collect compostable materials.

Three organizations appear to value food as “strongly competitive,” meaning food is a surplus-value generating product. McDonald’s (McDonald's 2016), Whole Foods (Foods 2017b), and WinCo Foods (WinCo 2017b) are all in the business of selling products for profit. McDonald’s and Whole Foods not only sell food, but also sell shares of stock (Foods 2017a, McDonald's 2017). The food sold needs to be uniform in quality to food sold in other areas, and the food is competitively priced. In addition, wage-labor sold on competitive labor markets is one of the key ingredients along the entire food chain, from farm to table, which adds to the final sale price (Patel 2012). Food that

cannot produce a surplus-value, or at least garner an exchange-value, is often thrown away or donated to local food aid organizations.

### Rational versus Irrational Food Values

Figure 4: Measuring Food Values

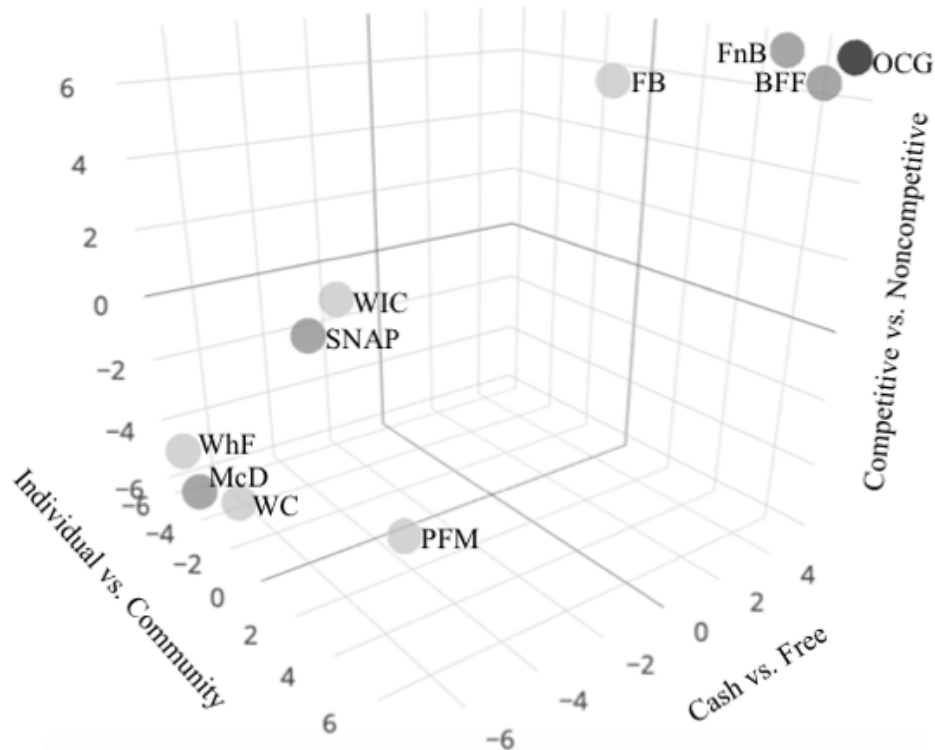


Figure 4 is a three-dimensional scatterplot using the scores from the three food value dimensions. This illustrates the differences between the ten organizations as they are now categorized into three food value types: Individual-Cash-Competitive, Community-Cash-Competitive, and Community-Cash-Noncompetitive.

*Individual-Cash-Competitive* organizations appear to be highly rational, emphasizing that food is for individual use, has a cash-value, and is accessed on competitive markets. They strongly influenced, and are influenced by, the cultural hegemony of food as a commodity. This group includes two nonprofits, WIC and SNAP, along with three of the for-profits, McDonald's, Whole Foods, and WinCo Foods. WIC and SNAP do not do anything to change the relationship that people have with food, or how people use food. Food is primarily an individual source of nutrition that requires cash to exchange in order to access food.

*Community-Cash-Competitive* organizations appeared to be strongly rational, emphasizing that food is part of a community, has a cash-value, and is accessed on competitive markets. They strongly believe in the hegemonic concept of food as a commodity, although not to the extent of the individual-cash-competitive organizations. The community-cash-competitive group has only one for-profit in it, the Portland Farmers Market.<sup>2</sup> Food access and consumption is more of a community experience, but food retains its cash exchange-value.

*Community-Free-Noncompetitive*<sup>3</sup> organizations appeared to be highly irrational, emphasizing that food is part of a community, and the use-value of food is important enough that it should be free and made available without competing on markets. This group includes four nonprofits: the Oregon Community Garden, Food Not Bombs, the

---

<sup>2</sup>The Portland Farmers Market itself is not a for-profit, but the vendors who participate are predominately for-profit.

<sup>3</sup>Nonprofits are organizations. The nonprofits in this article are guided by a lot of bureaucratic rules and regulations. When they are called irrational here, it is because of their emphasis on granting free food in a society dominated by exchange-value/surplus-value rules.

Oregon Food Bank, and the Beacon Food Forest. Of these four nonprofits, only two go the extra step of trying to grow food for the purpose of giving it away for free. The Oregon Community Garden and the Beacon Food Forest found use-value for communities that share in growing food together to provide free food access. Importantly, they help illustrate the range of food values that exist in the United States, and globally, by highlighting that food can be more than a source of income or nutrition, it can be a source of community.

These four nonprofits weakly reinforce the culturally hegemonic standard of food as a commodity, not by making people compete for food, but by making these organizations compete for money by applying for grants, tax allocations, and private donations. Any nonprofit that is not actively seeking donations of money will most likely cease to exist in a world that has embraced the cultural hegemony of food. Instead of the consumer providing the money for food access, it is a donor. The impact of this cultural hegemonic standard for food nonprofits, which reinforce food as a commodity, will be explored further in chapters V and VI.

### **Discussion: The Garden and the Forest**

The Beacon Food Forest strives to revitalize the local ecosystem in Seattle (Forest 2017b). And the Oregon Community Garden provides organic fruits and vegetables free to anyone who needs them. For both the Oregon Community Garden and the Beacon Food Forest, food brings people together to work, to eat, and food should be available for free. In addition, these two organizations were regionally specific. They were not a franchise or a chapter of a national organization. Most food aid organizations provide

cash, such as SNAP or WIC, or glean food that has been unsold, such as Food Not Bombs and the Oregon Food Bank. The extra step to grow food serves as a bold statement in the midst of the competitive exchange-value culture.

One key difference between the Oregon Community Garden and the Beacon Food Forest is the economics.<sup>4</sup> The garden provides a free lunch each day it is open and does not ask for a donation to help cover lunch costs. The food forest offers lunch, but suggests each person bring a donation to cover lunch costs of \$2 to \$5 (Forest 2017a). The garden also provides gloves, jackets, and boots for people who may need them while the food forest reminds people to bring their own gear. Although irrational, providing gloves, jackets, and a lunch without even the request of a donation removes the potential stigma of economic class for potential volunteers at the garden. The very poor can work in the garden alongside middle- and upper-class people, and even accept free food for lunch, or to take home, without stigma because everyone gets the free food. Because of this the Oregon Community Garden is acting against the rational exchange-value food system both physically and mentally. It is easier for people who need free food to accept it when food is free to everyone because it is no longer considered undignified food aid. How

---

<sup>4</sup> Other interesting food organizations/locations to consider for food access are Personal Home Gardens, Wild Foraging, and Pike Place Fish Market. First, Home Gardens and Wild Foraging may be individual or involve several people, and this article is specifically looking at organizations. Home gardens may or may not be nonprofit. Second, Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle is interesting because people go there for reasons other than food access. The fish toss is a famous tourist attraction, and the Fish Market is one part of a much bigger shopping complex. Plus, the fish that come to Pike Place Fish Market are not produced to be commodities. Nothing about wild fish in the ocean involves humans actively doing to produce the fish. Humans harvest fish from the sea, but the fish themselves are not produced to be commodities. Third, I cannot analyze every single food organization in the Northwest, but there are plenty of organizations I could have interpreted for food value.



easy, though, will be discussed in Chapter VI. One last difference between the food forest and the garden is that the food forest has a section offering garden plots where people can pay to rent plots for growing food. In contrast, all space at the Oregon Community Garden is for the community for free.

Of course, the Oregon Community Garden and the Beacon Food Forest are not immune to the economic forces that surround them. The garden and the forest depend upon financial support from the government and private donations to exist. They are entangled within the rationalized economy that puts a price on everything, making the irrational existence of the garden and the forest precarious. A dependence on financial donations from private organizations and individuals, in an economy that routinely has a crisis (Chapter II), is not the best strategy. But the key point is this: *they want to give food away for free*. Not everyone is going to win all the time in the free market. Competition has winners and losers, which makes not being able to attain Super Bowl tickets acceptable—whereas not being able to access food because of competition is a personal health crisis. How an organization prioritizes food value, exchange-value versus use-value, is a decision. How an organization decides who to deny food access to is a decision. The hegemonic standard upon which most organizations base the decision to deny food is on exchange-value, a lack of money, in a world with abundant food.

### **FOOD VALUES IN THE COUNTY**

The Oregon Community Garden is a unique community garden located in a Pacific Northwest city. The atmosphere of the town is best described as eclectic. Is it a farming community? Sure. But seeing rusted Volkswagen minibuses driving down the

street is also a common sight, as are farmers markets, and college students. This location provides an interesting intersection of sustainable agriculture, food politics, and environmental awareness. It is unique because it is run by volunteers who grow food to be given away. In this section, I will give the history of the Oregon Community Garden, as one of the organizations within Oregon that attempts to alleviate food insecurity. This section will also answer research question one: *How does the Oregon Community Garden reconcile the tensions of providing free food within a food-system that privileges the commodification of food, land, and water?* To answer this, exploring the food values of the county in which the Oregon Community Garden will be done through semi-structured interviews.

The Oregon Community Garden is one of many community gardens within the state of Oregon. The garden is spread out over 2.5 acres, located behind a church in town. It operates twelve months a year, with different days of operations for each season. The late fall to early spring are slower growing seasons, and therefore it is open fewer days each week. The late Spring to early fall are the most productive growing seasons, and therefore it is open five days a week. The productive growing seasons also allow for some food to be frozen, to offset some of the lower productive months of fall and winter.

The day to day operations of the Oregon Community Garden fluctuate based on volunteer availability. From one day to the next, the garden may have a few dozen volunteers for an entire day... or a group of over one-hundred volunteers who arrive for a few hours of work. Based on this variable of volunteers, each day requires a lot of planning from the garden director, Grace. Not only does Grace need to plan out the next day, she needs to think a few days ahead to schedule various garden work to best

maximize the volunteers. Larger groups can tackle a different set of jobs. For example, a fraternity that volunteers may have several strong men who could be assigned to some of the heavier jobs. Although the director typically has a good understanding of how busy the garden will be on any given day, to the casual visitor, there is no way to predict if the garden will be filled with people, or nearly empty, before showing up. Day of the week does not matter for volunteer availability, although “rain” tends to lessen volunteer participation.

Garden volunteers are important, because all the food grown at the Oregon Community Garden is given away for free.

#### *History of the Oregon Community Garden<sup>5</sup>*

The Oregon Community Garden began as a collaboration between a church with unused land, the PAC Food Bank, and a gardening group looking for a new project. After discussion, the three groups agreed in 1990 to begin working together to make the garden a reality. The gardening group saw it as a training ground for new gardeners. And the church saw it as a way to bring fresh, organically grown, healthy food to the PAC Food Bank for people facing financial challenges. The first years included laying down the water lines for irrigation, building a tool shed, building compost bins, and building ten raised garden beds. In addition, starts (young plants that have been grown from seeds), were donated by local organizations because the Oregon Community Garden did not yet

---

<sup>5</sup> I helped update the history of the garden, however most of the historical work was done by two other people. For protection of anonymity, they have not been named here. The bulk of the historical work, however, was not done by me.

have greenhouses. By the end of 1991, the Oregon Community Garden had sent about 2,000-pounds of fresh produce to the PAC Food Bank.

From 1991 to 2000, the Oregon Community Garden had four directors who guided the garden and helped it develop. They focused on training classes for organic gardening and composting. By 1995, a larger tool shed and a small greenhouse had been added. But less than half of the developed land had been developed for farming by this point.

From 1996 to 2000, the size of the garden increased dramatically. This was accomplished with the generosity of the local community which donated commercial compost, manure, and food scraps collected from a local market. Food scraps were used for composting. During this time, a composting toilet and a small arbor were added, along with a second greenhouse, a fruit orchard, and a well for crop irrigation. As you can already begin to see, in the first nine years of the Oregon Community Garden, it existed because people clearly wanted it to exist. People *wanted* to grow food to give it away for free. This appears to be counter-hegemonic to the national standard set by U.S. society.

In 2000 Grace, became the director, and was still the director in 2018. Under Grace's leadership, another greenhouse and a shade house were built, and new areas of the Oregon Community Garden were developed for planting, along with other sheds and improvements. A shed was built to store hats, boots, rain jackets, gloves, and other garden apparel to borrow was created. Even kneeling pads were available for those who wanted extra cushioning to kneel directly on the ground.

An outdoor kitchen was also built. The kitchen is an important community tool for the garden, because not only does the garden give away all the food it grows, it also cooks free lunches every day it is open for its volunteers. In addition, people are taught preserving. The cooking and preserving skills are provided for free. That's right, the knowledge from the garden is not sold, but it is given away for free. Volunteers are also encouraged to take home produce, as long as they weigh it before taking it home. As Grace often said, they aren't just growing food here, they are growing community. The kitchen is an important part of that community growth.

These changes such as the kitchen, sheds, and other improvements led to more volunteer participation, and more "free food" produced as nearly every part of land in the 2.5-acre garden was used by 2018. In 1991, approximately 2,000-pounds of food was sent to the PAC Food Bank, and in 2014 over 60,000-pounds of food was sent to the PAC Food Bank according to the Oregon Community Garden's history. In 2016, the Oregon Community Garden celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

### *Teaching in the Garden*

In addition to giving away thousands of pounds of food every year, community outreach and teaching are core parts of Grace's direction of the Oregon Community Garden. At the Oregon Community Garden people learn to grow and harvest zucchini, cabbage, tomatoes, cucumbers, peas, fava beans, Asian pears, apples, lettuce, chard, pumpkins, carrots, celery, corn, eggplant, peppers, onions, and other foods.

Under Grace's leadership, teaching has been a staple at the Oregon Community Garden. Garden staff and volunteers help others to learn *by doing*. Whether it is

composting, weeding, planting, or preparing soil for planting, teaching is a common practice in the Oregon Community Garden. This helps to embed knowledge in the people who are learning, especially if they attend on a regular basis. The hope is not just to educate people, but to help people learn the information so that they can teach others. Sharing the knowledge freely is a key component of the garden's mission.

Depending on the day, anywhere from ten to over one-hundred people might be there volunteering throughout the day. The gardening techniques they learn from Grace require a lot of hand labor because pesticides are rarely used, and electric and gasoline tools are also rarely used. To suppress weeds, leaves are spread over walking pathways. These pathways were part of trench leaf composting, which meant the leaves over a few years decompose, become soil, and are then placed into the garden beds for fresh soil. Every part of the garden is important and maximized for production, even the walking paths! But it is a physical process. Manure is distributed throughout the garden using wheelbarrows, weeds are pulled by hand, ground is turned and prepped for planting using shovels and rakes (and hands).

Prepping the soil for planting is typically a large group project which involves spreading manure on the garden beds. The beds differ in length from forty feet to over sixty feet. Soil amendments are then added on top of the manure. To add the soil amendments, the person must kneel low to the ground to spread powdered limestone first. The limestone powdered (lime) makes the soil less acidic. Second alfalfa is spread on top of the lime. Alfalfa provides nitrogen for leaf formation. Third, powdered rock phosphate is spread on the garden bed. The rock phosphate helps roots and flower blooms. The more flower blooms, the more fruits or vegetables. Finally, kelp is spread, which

provides potassium to aid in the plant's cell formation. All four of these soil amendments are added by hand. Because of the powder, if the person is not low to the ground, wind may blow the soil amendment away. After the four soil amendments have been spread atop the garden bed, the soil is then turned using shovels. This process makes the soil healthier, and also softer for planting.

While these gardening techniques are physically more challenging, the Oregon Community Garden has been fortunate to have many volunteers and student groups who have come to help. The spreading of soil amendments, and the planting of garden beds, goes quickly with organized plans to utilize groups of people. A group working together, obviously, can do a project much quicker than a single person. Throughout the day, volunteers were asked pop questions about what they were doing and why they are using specific techniques. When they answered correctly, they were given encouragement. When they answered incorrectly, they were reminded of the correct answer. The groups not only learn the process by doing, but they are constantly re-learning the techniques and the reasons why, so that they can teach others in the future. In addition to the daily learning opportunities that are offered in the garden, visitors can sign-up for in-depth gardening, preserving, composting workshops, pruning workshops, and cooking classes if they so choose.

People from around the city, state, country, and world have visited the Oregon Community Garden to learn about its ability to grow community as well as to grow food in this learning garden. From the local area, in addition to volunteers, the garden participants have included a very diverse mix of people such as elementary school classes, high school classes, alternative high schools, autistic students, senior citizens,

fraternities and sororities, various food and environmental college classes, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, students visiting from other countries, exchange students, blind people, church groups, homeschool students, people court-ordered to perform community service, and others. Some of the biggest and most productive groups were businesses who participated in a volunteer day coordinated through the United Way. It takes a lot of support from the local community for a garden to grow food and then give it away for free.

The garden is run with the idea that anyone who wants to participate can participate. People in wheelchairs have been in the garden. Blind people have been aided to participate in group activities. Small children have access to child-size wheelbarrows and child-size shovels so that they can learn from and help the adults. Garden participants learned gardening skills, with the goal of also teaching them life skills as they participate in giving back to the local community.

### **THE FOOD BANK, THE GARDEN, AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

This section takes a look at food access in Oregon, specifically within the county the Oregon Community Garden operated in. This section was based on interviews to help describe how people working at the PAC Food Bank, the Oregon Community Garden, and the Local Food Community view the problem of food insecurity. Again, it appeared that there was a culturally hegemonic and rational answer to addressing food insecurity issues—and an irrational answer. Of the people interviewed eight were from the Oregon Community Garden, seven were from PAC Food Bank, and eight were from the Local



Food Community. These twenty-three interviews were performed between the summer of 2016 to the summer of 2017, during the same-time period of my internship at the garden.

*Interviews: PAC Food Bank about Food Insecurity*

There were twenty food banks in Oregon, and PAC Food Bank was one of them. It offered many services in an Oregon county to address food access issues for low-income people. It is a central hub for food collection and distribution to food pantries and social service programs throughout the county. Its programs include community gardens, education, food gleaning, meal sites, and emergency food boxes. It supports other organizations mentioned in this dissertation, such as The Farm, The Banquet Hall, and The Oregon Community Garden. To do this work, and support these other organizations, takes a lot of labor, time, and financial support.

PAC Food Bank operates out of a large facility that regularly receives and distributes truckloads of food every week. But it is dependent on donations. Because of the great need in the county, PAC Food Bank is often caught between a rock and a hard place, i.e. economics and politics. Over the course of several weeks, I got to know some of the people at PAC Food Bank, learned about their beliefs, and recorded our conversations for transcription. Volunteer labor time, and even the time of people who are paid-labor, is often constrained, so I did my best to meet people where it was most convenient for them. Sometimes this involved coffee houses, other times at home, or at their office.

One conversation took place with Pattie, in a small conference room, where we were somewhat isolated from the hustle and bustle of the PAC Food Bank. She has been

with PAC Food Bank for eight years, she's married, holds a masters degree, and considers herself politically mostly moderate. Because the Oregon Community Garden is one of the organizations that operates under PAC Food Bank, I saw Pattie out at the garden from time to time. She told me:

We haven't gotten involved in trigger subject matters that would say to people 'I'm not giving them my money.' That upsets the staff here, because the staff would want us to lean in one direction, they want us to be the voice for people who don't have a voice. With our clout and our finance and our reputation, our staff feel like we should be the voice and taking up strong stands in trying to help people. Which would be minimum wage, sick leave laws, family leave, and I'm so sure the list is huge but those are ones that pop to mind right now.

What Pattie was talking about are social justice issues. To address the social justice issues, such as minimum wage, means to address food access issues with a money solution. Sonata is one of the people who wishes for more of a social justice stand from PAC Food Bank. I spoke with Sonata in the same conference room that I spoke with Pattie, but on a different day. Any minutes I could squeeze in with people, who were working hard to do so much in the county, was worth it. Sonata is mostly liberal, also a Democrat, single, Christian, and has a four-year degree. Sonata also spoke of the financial challenges faced by PAC Food:

Sonata: We are non-profit so that in itself is difficult.

Craig: Right.

Sonata: We often times don't have funds to do some of the things that we'd like to do... Sometimes we don't even have the resources to push these big projects that we all come up with and think would be just phenomenal... And we have to realize that we're a non-profit, we are running on limited funds and we're serving an entire county.

One of the projects that Sonata talked about is wrap around services that would "cover all the bases... housing, food, medical help ... just to cover all your bases and just make sure that there's plenty of support for all aspects of the person and what they need."

What became clear is that Sonata, and Pattie, believe that income is the primary barrier between people and food access. They also believed that answers to food insecurity involve political policy changes. Whereas Pattie was more reserved, Sonata was one of the people who was more outspoken about it.

Danielle agreed that food insecurity is a money issue. I spoke to Danielle in a large conference room, isolated from the craziness of PAC Food Bank. I imagined large meetings are regularly held in this room because it has multiple tables. Danielle has a masters degree, she's married, considers herself mostly liberal, and a Democrat. She's been with PAC Food Bank over eight years as either a volunteer or staff. Danielle spoke to me about the Affordable Care Act, which includes a community health improvement plan. Danielle told me, "each county basically, or each county area, has to have a community health improvement plan." Later she mentioned, "access to healthy and affordable food is in the community health improvement plan. I mean it is like, it is a departure from the old way of thinking about health. So, I see health and housing being more integrated, and food being more integrated in the future." Housing was important because as housing prices go up, it puts a strain on food budgets. People are then forced to make hard decisions between paying the rent, or eating food. Food budgets are more flexible, whereas missing a rent payment could lead to eviction.

In fact, it was unanimous for people I spoke with at PAC Food Bank that money is a primary issue for food insecurity, and addressing the lack of access to money is how to solve the problem. Adam is single, has a four-year-degree, and considers himself mostly liberal. His answer to address local food insecurity:

A guaranteed minimum income, I think it's really ultimately needed... I think improving local food sovereignty and food production especially on

a small scale, it's going to be really important as the future heads because of changing climate. We are already seeing it, it's already happening you know.

... I think one of the things that happened with the guaranteed minimum income, too is what you find generally is rich people hold their money, middle class people pay off their debt. Poor people spend it because they have to... they have to buy food, they have to pay their bills and pay their rent. That's money that's been spent basically as opposed to going into a café somewhere. So, that guaranteed minimum income, not only does it provide people with a baseline so that they can get what they need, it also means that you get money immediately injected back into the economy. You created kind of a good positive feedback loop in the sense of there is more demand, creates more opportunity for jobs, at least potentially.

Their answers around food access reinforce the culturally hegemony of food as a commodity. Mariah has been with PAC Food Bank over eight years. She identified as interdenominational, mostly liberal, single, and has a masters degree. Mariah's comments, like many others, reinforce the same theme of food insecurity and income. Mariah said, "Advocacy then, would in some ways inspire us to either advocate around higher wages, advocate around employment or more jobs maybe in the food sector. Also advocate around affordable housing because we know that we are, food boxes, are subsidizing these things in many ways."

PAC Food Bank understands that it is a band-aid, not the solution, for food insecurity. For people interviewed at PAC Food Bank the problem was largely an economic one. The solutions for solving food insecurity, not surprisingly, revolved around more jobs and more income, and addressing rising housing prices. All their solutions supported the cultural hegemony of the exchange-value of food.

*Interviews: Local Food Community about Food Insecurity*

Some people from the local food community said the exact same things about food security as were discussed at PAC Food Bank. The Local Food Community included The Farm<sup>6</sup> (a site where students learn to grow and market produce), the Market Association (which oversees the local weekend market), Breaking Bread (a local bakery that endeavors to source all its ingredients from the local food community), Prayer Partners (a religious food aid organization), and Ray.

Ray, a self-employed man who builds parts for farm irrigation machinery, was one of my favorite interviews. I think before meeting for the interview, Ray believed I was a foaming at the mouth liberal-radical, and that he was going to be the libertarian voice of reason. He was primed for an argument, but instead we had a really long and interesting conversation about food, economics, and human rights. Ray and I do not agree on some things, but his voice is important for this research. Ray is in his thirties, a white-male, married, and has had some college. He identifies as mostly conservative. Ray, when asked about food insecurity said:

On the short-term, giving somebody a hand out can help as long as they are not going to become dependent on this [handout], as long as that handout is not forever. If the handout is going to be forever then we get into a dependency situation to where people no longer have the incentive to go, strap on their work boots, and go figure something out. It's easier to attack what won't work than figure out what will work. I can sit here and point out all the problems with the handout, the biggest problem maybe on the handout society, you end up destroying your human capital. Because you have a bunch of people who no longer have as much incentive to work so, a certain amount of those will choose not to because they can get the free stuff. Now instead of being in the workforce engaging in whatever their field is, or a field where they are exercising their skills there... There is a destruction of human capital that comes along with that as far as what

---

<sup>6</sup> The Farm is one of several food organizations that is supported by PAC Food Bank. It is a separate entity here only in terms of its specific ideological purpose.

will work, the libertarian side of me, wants to point towards the, what used to happen in this country, which was a charity system that was through voluntary giving. Which was a little more... a little more democratic I think, than just the government handouts we do, because the person who truly needs it, the guy is, I'm trying to think of a good example here. Somebody who is crippled and can't work to the same capacity, obviously can't do as much. Most people are okay. Yeah, its, I feel bad for you; I will do what I can to help you versus the person who is able bodied and chooses not to work. There is other people looking and going, "Yeah, are you really that much of a charity case?" There is a little bit of a social dynamic there that tends to, I think, limit, kind of select more for the people who really need it versus just throwing the blanket out to everybody.

Ray, although speaking from a different point of view of PAC Food Bank, has the same philosophy about the exchange-value of food. Ray was, like everyone else, noting an economic issue as the problem of food insecurity. Although he is more reserved about giving out handouts, his perception of food as a commodity is still the same. When people from distinctly different political points of view share the same basic definition of food access, then it appears to be cultural hegemony. Money and jobs are the solution to food insecurity, even when there is abundant food.

Isabelle works with schools and food education, school lunches, etc. She is single, has a four-year-degree, considers herself most liberal, and a Democrat. Isabelle, while discussing food insecurity, added a comment related to purchasing food from local farmers to help provide nutrition at school lunches:

There is that piece as well as the fact that many of those kids are from our community. They are often from our community and the economic benefits, has an impact on food security as well. So, when the schools buy food of any kind, it could be milk, meat, beans and greens, fruits and vegies, breads from farmers or food processers, food producers here in our community, the money stays here in Lane County, or in Oregon. That then builds our economy and helps to address food insecurity by raising that economic wellbeing of our state, and the residents of our state. So that, the economic development piece I think is also connected to food security the way that that can work across state boundaries is that most of the food that

were or that school districts are ordering comes from California or Mexico.

Oliva, one of the staff that helps operate the Market Association which oversees the local weekend market, sat down with me one afternoon at a coffee shop. Olivia is married, described herself as mostly liberal, Democrat, and she holds a masters degree. Olivia seemed to have a response similar to many at PAC Food Bank when it came to food insecurity answers.

One thing is just allowing people to make a living, having income and it's a big issue that I don't know all the factors that go into that. I mean what solutions we need to be made there? I think that, you know, programs like double up food bucks and other programs to help give people a hand are very important for that safety net for them. Because that would be a big solution to be able to give everyone jobs and everyone that have enough income to be able to afford all the food that they need. But for those who are having a rough time and don't have the income that they need for their family it's good to have programs like double up food bucks and SNAP and WIC to help those in need.

Double-Up food bucks is important for two reasons. One, it gives people double their money at farmers markets to help those in need. Two, it helps support the local economy by encouraging people to spend their money to help local farmers. A focus on strengthening the local economy by supporting farmers at farmers markets matches the same theme as the responses from PAC Food Bank. The same theme is that to solve food insecurity, there's something wrong with the economy, because if people had more money they could buy food. By strengthening the local economy at farmers markets, they are pouring more money into the hands of local people.

Eileen, also at the Market Association, has a four-year-degree, considers herself to be mostly liberal, a Democrat, and is single.

Craig: What do you think the best solution would be to help people get access to food?

Eileen: I know right, it's if people could... there is the increase minimum wage thing coming up. Maybe that will help people. But yeah, I think a lot of it maybe is the cost of living. I don't know what rent prices are here compared to, I don't know what the ratios are. If there is higher cost of living in terms of rent, childcare, and that sort of thing in the County than there are other places... but if people just could either maybe paid a little bit more for the work they do, or cost of living were a little bit lower, something like that. Something to sort of free up that extra money, to buy more food. Or on the other hand there could be more of these sort of social programs, like this one that the USDA did. Where, you kind of give people money for food, or creating that sort of opportunity for access to food. Maybe that's another solution. An easier solution maybe I don't know, more people with SNAP cards, more money on your SNAP card, that sort of thing.

Again someone brought up housing as a challenge for food insecurity. But she also mentioned SNAP and getting money into people's hands to help them access food.

Bree at The Farm, is single, identifies as mostly liberal, Democratic, and holds a masters degree. She had the following to say about food insecurity:

Bree: That's like a big, big discussion to have. I actually went to the United Way event earlier this year, like, envisioning a healthier county and everyone kind of voted on what the priority should be. It was like, I forget all of them, but there was a lot of focus on housing and unemployment as major issues to solve health issues which food contributes to that. What was the question again?

*Craig: What do you think is the best solution to make sure people are getting enough healthy nutritious food?*

Resp: Yeah, so, working on those more upstream issues for sure but then also related to my previous job ... I think, even with access to whatever food they want people don't always make healthy choices. Which is their decisions totally but I think part of that that we are finding is just people not necessarily knowing how to cook, or what to do with fruits and vegetables. More like a culture barrier to incorporating more healthy food in their diet, that also is more in part of the solution, is not only making sure people can afford whatever food they want, but making healthy more desirable than unhealthy foods... making sure that people know how to prepare healthy foods.

So, Bree noted income and the upstream issues, such as housing and unemployment which are income issues. But she also mentioned education as a possible



issue for food insecurity and nutrition. I will explore education in the next section of interviews with the Oregon Community Garden.

Overall, people from the local community agreed that food insecurity was an economic problem. Their answers to food insecurity varied, from putting more money into people's pockets through SNAP or double-up food bucks, to adding jobs, to lowering housing prices as a way to encourage people to work and earn money. Their answers largely matched with the answers from PAC Food Bank: food insecurity is an economic problem. Food has exchange-value which requires money to access it.

*Interviews: Oregon Community Garden about Food Insecurity*

The Oregon Community Garden is the focus of this dissertation. What do the volunteers who help guide the garden think about food insecurity? And how do their answers compare to the answers from PAC Food Bank and the local community?

Three people felt like education would help address food security issues, because if people had more education about cooking, then people could prepare more food. I have mixed feelings about education. On the one hand, some people are totally capable of cooking, but are unable to cook food because they cannot purchase ingredients on a regular basis. On the other hand, I have encountered people at the garden, and at a food pantry that I volunteered at, who could not identify many of the fresh foods and therefore did not know how to cook them.

Chris, a single, Army vet with a two-year degree, was a regular in the Oregon Community Garden kitchen. While I did my interview with him, I helped him wash dishes after lunch. Every day the garden is open there is a vegetarian lunch prepared for

volunteers, with many of the ingredients coming straight from the garden. To be honest, even with a food studies degree and a decent level of cooking skill, I did not know how to cook some of the vegetables and fruits that were grown in the garden. But Chris loved to cook.

*Craig: Okay, what do you think is the best solution to make sure people are getting enough healthy and nutritious food?*

Chris: I don't know, starting off early, I think involving public schools with places like these heavily. It is a really good start, requiring things like home economics class that they used to teach, that they have taken first stem kind of classes would be good. We are not sure it can fix the income gaps. I would say it is just education, education and hands on experience. I think if we need to decide a school exists to specialize people for the technology industries, and science industries or school exist as a way to get people ready for adulthood. If it is, then we need to be educating about food, and eating healthy, and talking food.

My interview with Karen was also in the kitchen, but on a different day, also washing dishes. Washing dishes was one of my favorite tasks at the garden, although I was slow at it. It was relaxing, and in the winter the warm water felt good on cold hands. Karen was a regular in the kitchen. Karen was married, had some college, considered herself politically moderate, and a member of the Libertarian Party.

Karen: Yeah, so it has been my experience that people are trying to be self-sufficient or they will lack preparation and are seen as these extreme sort of, how they are people, rather than being responsible and being prepared for different situations. Like, just a couple of generations ago, like a lot of grandparents, and great grand parents did. Where the dependency on the government and government programs, seen as normal, rather than how it was several generations ago. In my opinion, that is part of the food insecurity situation, people don't seem to take responsibilities for their own food security or they think, expect somebody else to do the stuff... These ideas are just my personal ideas about the food and security issue, and I don't really let that color how I treat people at work, because it's at work. How I see it, not only will that be unprofessional to let that color how I treat people but, they are here to learn how to do it. So, that's my mission, to let them take away from it anything that they can and want to take away from it. I see that is only a positive.

Karen felt like people don't have the ability to be self-sufficient, and Chris thought people needed better education about cooking. Both touched on the economy in some way, with Karen commenting on government programs, and Chris noting the income gaps. Their beliefs about food appear to match everyone else's: food is an exchange-value item.

Quincy, another kitchen regular, considers himself mostly liberal, a Democrat, has a four-year-college degree, and he was interviewed on a day while washing dishes in the kitchen.

*Craig: Why are people in Lane County, and in Oregon do you think are food insecure?*

Quincy: It has to be a money thing. People don't earn enough money to buy the food with the nutritional values that they need, yeah, money.

*Craig: Okay.*

Quincy: Ultimately work.

*Craig: What do you think is a good answer, or answers, for how to solve food insecurity?*

Quincy: Man, that's a tough one, places like Oregon Community is definitely one organization ... If people got together and had more community gardens that they could donate their produce, I think that would be a huge help and that's kind of like waving the magic wand. There's definitely people that have more that could help people that have less.

Quincy, Chris, and Karen all mentioned nutrition. Quincy mentioned people didn't have the money to buy the nutritional food that they need, while Chris and Karen seemed to suggest that people needed better education to make better food choices. Another volunteer mentioned distribution issues, and another mentioned corporations that dominate the food system for profit.

Is there a common theme for how the volunteers at the Oregon Community Garden view the challenge of food insecurity? Probably not, although four people

mentioned education, most mentioned money and the economy. What is common is that working in the garden community created at the Oregon Community Garden appeared very unique. A moderate Libertarian, an atheist liberal Democrat, and a moderate Christian work at the Oregon Community Garden... and they work together to grow food for others. They have lunch together. And they don't yell at each other. *How does this happen?* This is because they come together to grow food and community, knowing that 80-percent of the food they grow goes to help those who need it most.

The director of the Oregon Community Garden sets the agenda, and the mission, for the garden. Her name is Grace, and she has been at the garden for over seventeen years. Grace, works a lot. Like many nonprofits, Grace, Karen, and others who want to make the nonprofit continue has to work a lot of hours. At times I wondered if the garden had founder's syndrome, with Grace having such a powerful voice on all the decisions that are made at the garden. Maybe someone else's voice would help make things operate smoother. But other times, I felt like it was Grace's influence and drive which kept the garden functioning week to week. The chaotic schedule of the garden, which sometimes has surprise groups of thirty people, operating as a nonprofit, appears to only endure because people want it to endure. While many people want it to endure, Grace appeared to be a key piece to the puzzle.

Grace is nearing retirement, has a grandchild, she's married, considers herself mostly liberal, a Democrat, and has some high school education. Her answer to food insecurity was long, but also touched on the strengths of the Oregon Community Garden:

Grace: I think the strengths... is this community, it is diversity, and it is working together... And everybody having a place and their abilities and what they have to contribute valued and recognized and received. I think that honestly is the biggest thing. I think what comes of that then is

acceptance, and belonging, and meaningful contribution, and empowerment way above and beyond what people think is going to happen to them when they come in here. Whether its required community service, or a school group, or people doing community service hours for IHFs or graduation, or people just wandering in wanting to learn something. We teach people, that's for sure. Basically they are received, they are quickly helped to find a place that they can be a part that they can contribute, that they can learn, that they can accomplish, and I think that is incredibly powerful. I think people go away, probably very frequently if not all the time, feeling maybe even a bit overwhelmed but certainly tired. I think many of them sense that they really have contributed something of value and they feel good about what they've done. So, I think people may not even consciously know all the things that have happened in that experience. But again, I think it speaks to their development as a human being inside that they are capable, that they are worthwhile and that they can make a difference. And like I said, in that, it becomes healing for all of us because it is in its own way I feel a very tangible, though invisible, healing force that allows people to move forward in their lives even if they are not even consciously aware of it. And like I said, in doing that, we also create 55,000-70,000 pounds of fresh organic food and teach people how to garden, how to work together and how to be in the dirt. So, all of that happens too, but I think the most profound part is the other part.

*Craig: Okay.*

Grace: And I think that the other profound part is actually, the direct, a solution to poverty and hunger.

*Craig: Okay.*

Resp: Because when people feel good about themselves, when they feel connected, when they feel capable and when they feel that they can make a difference, then they can be stronger in their world. We help them to connect and to network and to pick up and move on from whatever point they are at. But again, without frankly telling them that's what we're doing.

For Grace, and what she tries to instill at the Oregon Community Garden, is education about food and education about food production, but also community building. The community building for her is more important than the food production. Because people who care about others will be more willing to help others. And it's easier to help others, or be helped by others, if you are part of a community. I learned this, and other lessons while I interned and volunteered for over a year at the Oregon Community Garden.

In conclusion, two of these three groups clearly identified food access problems with a lack of money, with the answer to food access being more money. The other group, the Oregon Community Garden, primarily identified food access problems with a lack of food knowledge, with the answer to food access being more education. Economic issues were also brought up at the garden. So for all three groups, broadly, their views on food insecurity appeared to be hegemonic. The Oregon Community Garden is different, however, in that they work to grow food specifically with the purpose of giving it away. They do this because regardless of their political or religious slant, the way the garden values food resonates with their food ideology: no one should be denied access to food because of an inability to pay.

### **INTERNING AT THE GARDEN**

To better understand the ups and downs of this food aid organization, I took an internship at the Oregon Community Garden from July 2016 to June 2017<sup>7</sup>. In addition, I volunteered at the Garden off and on for nearly a year before starting the internship. I interned at the Oregon Community Garden between three to four days a week, often a 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. shift. Although there was a break for lunch, I normally worked past 4 p.m. most days.

It is an organic-based garden and avoids gas and electric powered tools as much as possible. To this end, even organic pesticides are rarely used. This translates to a very physical type of gardening experience. At the end of most weeks, on Friday afternoon,

---

<sup>7</sup> The internship at the Oregon Community Garden was supported by the Julie and Rocky Dixon Graduate Student Innovation Award.

my body was very sore and I needed the weekend to recover. One day I used my hands to make 40' rows in the garden beds to plant corn, and I had very sore hands until the next morning, which then made me worry if I had arthritis. Back pain and sore legs were common for me. The stiffness and soreness I regularly experienced surprised me—I have run a marathon and two half marathons, so I thought my body would be better at handling the work.

### *More Aches and Pains*

One day I had to drive eight T-posts (a metal fence post) into the ground using a post driver. One week earlier, I drove seven T-posts into the ground to prop up a row of cucumber cages that had fallen over in the greenhouse. I did that by myself in approximately twenty minutes with no problems. However, the day I drove eight T-posts into the ground took over forty minutes and was much harder because these were tomato cages that had fallen over. It took the help of two other people to hold each tomato cage up, and guide the bottom of the T-post through the tomato cage so I would not hurt the tomato plant. Then I would try to drive the T-post into the ground. Often, I was pulling to hold the cage up with one hand, and holding the post driver with my other hand. I went home with two very sore shoulders.

One night I was at home. I'd had a hard day at the garden, but although things were stiff, nothing was necessarily in pain. I stood up off my couch, and thought I broke my right pinkie toe broke. I danced around for a moment in my living room, sat on the couch, cussing. I looked at my toe but it was not changing color or bent awkwardly. However, my pinkie toe was definitely in pain. My wife thinks I dislocated my toe, and

that it popped back into place. I actually considered not going into work the next morning, but decided to give it a shot. So I went back to the Oregon Community Garden to work and told them I was having trouble walking. I changed from work boots into marathon running shoes to feel better on my toe. The Oregon Community Garden had me do irrigation, and work in the kitchen that day, to limit my walking. Grace and Karen both checked in with me to make sure I was not overworking myself.

Grace and Karen both checking in to make sure I was not overworking myself made me think of Seth Holmes' book about immigrant farm workers (Holmes 2013). In Holmes' book, he discusses how physical the work was on him as he worked on farms picking berries with migrant workers who faced deportation and harsh working conditions. Often workers were told to meet quotas to fill buckets, or possibly be fired. My experience, although physical, did not come with the psychological stress of losing my job. In fact, the people overseeing my work wanted to make sure I was not overworking myself. This is because the food at the garden was not produced for profit, whereas the food produced in Holmes' book was produced for profit. Labor has different meanings depending on the goals. The garden, in this instance, was counter-hegemonic because food production had an irrational value of community building.

Another day, the propane tank needed closed. I was told it was still open, so I turned and turned and turned. I could not get it to close. Three other people tried to close the tank, and one of them realized the tank was already closed. I made a joke about Thor's Hammer, in reference to being strong enough to close the tank. Each time someone failed, I muttered: *You were not worthy...* Later at night, both my wrists, and my left hand and left thumb, were aching painfully. The only thing I can think of to have



caused this pain, is attempting to close the already closed propane tank. In fact, two days later my left hand and left wrist were still hurting. But right after attempting to close Thor's propane tank, my hands and wrists were not sore.

Another physical challenge was working in the sun. I wore long sleeve shirts to protect my arms, and a wide brimmed hat to protect my face and neck. Working in a garden for an hour in the sun would not have needed those types of clothes. But working from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (or later) required better sun protection apparel.

And then I had to change my wardrobe for the rainy season. I bought Boggs boots, a Viking rain jacket, and rain pants. The boots and pants kept me dry, and the jacket did well... even in the rain. I will admit it did not breathe as well as I would have hoped, but I remained mostly dry. One day, working in the cold rain, my right bicep cramped up badly while helping clean up after lunch. I believe the soreness developed while using the broad fork in the cold rain, but I did not notice it until my muscles had cooled down. Later at night, I was carrying a 23-month old boy at a restaurant, and the right bicep cramped up incredibly bad. I had to eat the first few minutes of dinner with my left hand, while keeping my right arm straight because of the cramping and the pain. This cramping pain extended into my upper shoulder. This happened on a Tuesday, and by Thursday I was able to work in the garden without any problems. I could still feel the remnants of soreness in my right shoulder, although my bicep seemed fine.

In mid-November, I often wanted to wash dishes in the open air kitchen after lunch because my hands were really cold and I wanted to put them in the warm water.

One job, possibly the worst job at the garden, is soil sifting. There is manual soil sifting, or using the soil sifting machine. Soil sifting requires taking a screen mounted on

thick wood boards, and pouring soil on it. Then you shake the screen until the small pieces or dirt fall through into a wheelbarrow, while the thick pieces are taken out. Thick pieces include large clumps of soil, pieces of wood, bits of trash, pieces of weeds, and other oddities. This process takes two people, each holding one side of the soil sifter, and the two people make a motion similar to rowing a boat as they shake the soil sifter. Using the soil sifter also requires using a screen, but the screen is mounted on a large frame with wheels, and one person can move it back and forth. Both are physically taxing on the arms and shoulders, although the manual soil sifter which requires two people is harder. Soil sifting may be one of two jobs I hated at the garden. Moving the five-hundred pound felt belts probably ranks, along with soil sifting, in the top three jobs that I disliked the most at the garden.

The physical aspect of the jobs, however, reflect the garden's food values. The productivity of the garden, and the way they grow using manual labor, cannot be accomplished with just a handful of people. It takes a successful community to continuously produce food in this manner. If I were to attempt it by myself, not only would I not be able to produce as much food because of time, my body would also be plagued by perpetual soreness and injuries. As Grace often said, "Many hands make light work." My body suggested the work, even with many hands, was not always light. However, without many hands, the style and productivity of this work would be impossible.

*Winter in the Garden, and more Aches and Pains*

December and January offered various cold weather challenges. The garden was closed a few days due to freezing rain and snow. It wasn't necessarily that the cold was an issue, but there were broken tree branches in areas of the garden that made it not safe. If the tree branches, where were broken but still in trees covered in ice, ... if they fell that could hurt someone. Another day, the ground was frozen, which meant that some wheelbarrows were frozen in the mud.

The winter months naturally brought the challenge of working in cold weather. I had purchased water proof boots, as well as a water proof jacket and pants, to deal with the wet. But good gloves for working outside were more of a challenge to find. One day, in the freezing rain, I noticed my fingertips in my wet gloves were starting to bother me. I went home thirty minutes later, because I asked the garden and they said I could. But by then it was a little late. I had frost nip! Frost nip is a very early stage of frost bite. My fingertips were warm and tingly for a couple days, and I also was sensitive to warmth. Holding a warm bowl of soup, or a coffee cup, was a challenge. My fingertips did not change colors or blister, which is a sign of frost bite, not frost nip. The frost nip effects lasted several days.

One of the hardest days, also the day I got frost nip, had to do with pushing wheelbarrows. The ground was soggy and muddy because of the freezing rain, and there was also snow on the ground. This made pushing wheelbarrows through the mud/snow very difficult. We had to load the small wheelbarrows less than halfway, because pushing a full wheelbarrow was practically impossible. But people still came out to the garden. Some did it just because they wanted to. I was stunned on some of the snowy days when

volunteers, who were not affiliated with a program or school, just showed up to help at the garden. This is different from participating in a competitive labor market, where people work not because they want to, but because they need money to pay for food or to pay the rent. Why did the garden function during cold winter conditions? Because people wanted it to function.

Our projects during the winter months typically involved leaf trenching, which is putting leaves in common walk pathways. These leaves are left there for two or more years to serve two purposes. First, the leaves decompose, which means these leaves can be dug out and piled onto the garden rows as new soil. This is an important part of the garden, because building great soil is key to great plants. When the garden first started, it was mostly clay. And just by looking at the grape arbor or a few other areas where soil has not been built, a visitor can easily see that soil has been built up three or more feet in many areas of the garden. Second, the leaves collect all the nutrient run off from the garden rows. This means all the water, all the soil amendments, and all the other soil nutrients from the garden rows gets collected in these “leaf” pathways. Over time, this adds to the decomposing leaves and becomes very healthy soil for growing.

Making the trenches for leaf trenching involved laying out ropes, and guiding teams to dig out the pathways. The old decomposed leaves were dumped onto garden beds, and then new leaves were dumped into the trenches. The trenches typically were 18 to 24 inches deep, and packed tight with leaves.

The leaves came from the city, which donated the leaves for free. The pile of leaves is possibly the second biggest feature at the garden. The only feature at the garden bigger than the leaf pile is the tool shed, although when the leaf pile has had several

dump trucks of fresh leaves added to it, it might rival the toolshed for largest feature at the garden. Not only is the leaf pile impressive with its size when it is fresh with new leaves, it is also impressive by how quickly it shrinks. Because of so many volunteers working on different days, the leaves from the giant pile are quickly distributed throughout the garden for composting and leaf trenching. As Grace says, many hands make quick work. The leaf pile is one of the most visible examples of this, as it is quickly reduced, similar to ants that work at a piece of food left outside.

For me, the garden was a fun job. But on some days, especially the physically painful ones, or the ones where I was not feeling well, the garden was more of a job than fun. I had to be mindful of my thoughts because I did not want to negatively impact the experience of others who came for education or community. For a volunteer who is there for one or two hours, they seemed to expect an experience to get outdoors and give back to the community. For me, I was exhausted some days, so the outdoor experience was somewhat muted.

My summary of the aches and pains is not to dissuade anyone from volunteering at a garden, or from volunteering at another food aid organization. The point is to describe the critical issue with food as a human right: even free food is not free. If magically all the land on the planet did not have a price tag, and water was free, and seeds and tools were free, it would still require time and labor to produce food. Adding to the issue of physical labor, one-third of food is wasted (Ackerman-Leist 2013), many times because it is not able to sell for a profit. Meanwhile, millions of people go hungry. For one-third of food, the time and physical pain that went into producing that food, the sore knees and the sore backs and various environmental illnesses from chemical usage

(Holmes 2013), is thrown away. Perhaps robots will perform this labor in the near future. For the existence of humankind, physical labor has been required to access or produce food. Working at the garden, I felt a sense of comfort knowing that my labor was being used to feed people who did not have money. It was also nice to take home tomatoes and other fruits and vegetables when they were fresh off the vine. But was it free food? Not really in my opinion.

### *Community in the Garden*

My favorite days were typically days when lots of people were there, and when they were in a positive, energetic mood. Those days typically resulted in a semi-chaotic feeling around the garden, but it was also usually fun. The energy that the large groups brought to the garden usually felt like an uplifting day. Cleaning up the mudroom after large groups was annoying sometimes, but I think I would prefer the amount of help they brought to the time it took me to clean up after they left. The mud room is where boots, gloves, and other apparel for volunteers is kept. This includes the gloves, which were sometimes thrown back into the clean glove bins, or other times dropped onto the floor in a pile.

The wheelbarrows are another important aspect of the garden. They have large and medium sized wheelbarrows at the Oregon Community Garden. In addition, they have small wheelbarrows for children. They also have small shovels, also child-sized. These serve more than one purpose. The first purpose is to have tools that children can use, therefore they can learn as well as help in the garden. But the second purpose relates to a bigger message the garden attempts to communicate: anyone who wants to help grow

food, can help grow food. Age, size, or ability does not matter. If you want to help, the Oregon Community Garden will find a way to get you involved. Blind people can learn how to weed as they get familiar with the plants, people who cannot walk very well can still chop vegetables. If you show up to help, you can help. *No one is excluded.* There is an adaptive garden near the front of the garden with raised beds that people in wheelchairs could help with if they so desired. Community is more important than profit.

As an intern at the Oregon Community Garden, I wore many *hats*. Sometimes I was the lead instructor, sometimes I was an assistant instructor, and sometimes I was the garden manager. My hardest day as a teacher in the garden happened in the fall of 2016. In one day, at the same time, the garden had a class of twenty hyper preschoolers, a class of eighty international high school students with physical and/or emotional challenges, and a class of twenty high school students. The eighty international high school students included some who were deaf, ten who were blind, and three who were in wheelchairs. And for all of them English was not their first language. Some spoke very little English. I did the best I could for everyone, and I was patient—but honestly that was a *really* hard day. However, after enduring the social stress of that day, I don't remember another day feeling challenging or stressful—even when teaching groups of over one-hundred adults.

### *Volunteer Labor Time*

There is no way the garden could function, on its scale, with only me working. This is part of Grace's expression, 'Many Hands make Light Work.' The way the garden provides free food in a commodified economic system is based on donations, as well as lots of volunteers.

The Oregon Community Garden strives to create community. The idea of community can help overcome many of the challenges of money. However, volunteers must eat too. Even though volunteers get a free lunch, and are allowed to take some of the harvest home with them, there is the issue of time. Time emerges as an issue, revealing the challenge of volunteer labor time. The money factor impacts volunteers because they need time to work jobs that pay their own bills, meaning they do not have as much time to volunteer at the Oregon Community Garden. The challenge of volunteer labor time, therefore, impacts people who even want to volunteer their time to provide free food at the garden. Volunteer labor time was, in my point of view, the biggest challenge. I had many days where I got stuck past 4 p.m. doing physical labor, and some days I was injured. More hands make light work. And some days there were many hands. But not every day. In truth, not every day had lots of work. Some days there were more volunteers than we knew what to do with. But other days, if there was heavy work, if there were not enough volunteers, then I found myself working very hard, and/or staying late.

Because the garden was so dependent on volunteers, when a volunteer group, especially large groups canceled, it really threw a wrench into the garden operations. For example, if a group of fifty people canceled, then there was no way for Grace and others to make up for that lost time. Planning projects is based on the size of scheduled groups, how long they are expected to be there, and what that group could realistically accomplish. For example, a group of thirty second graders was not going to accomplish the same amount of work as twenty healthy adults.



### *Salaries and Supplies*

Although some interns got paid, others volunteered. PAC Food Bank paid a salary for some kitchen interns, as well as the director and assistant director. According to the director of PAC Food Bank, the Oregon Community Garden is the most expensive way to provide food. As a nonprofit that gives away free food, not surprisingly, the Oregon Community Garden loses money. In addition, The Farm loses money. But because The Farm sells a lot of food at its stand, they offset at least half of their costs.

At the garden there are also monetary costs for gas used in trucks, electricity, water for irrigation, and even propane used in the cooking stoves. Donated supplies often still cost money. So this means other people made decisions about whether or not to use their money to invest in a financial opportunity, to use money for their own pleasure, or to donate that money to the Oregon Community Garden. As of 2018 the church supplied water and electricity, as well as access to land, for \$1 a year to the Oregon Community Garden. Considering the Oregon Community Garden operated on a money deficit, when they had access to land water and electricity for \$1 a year, then this process is most likely not sustainable because of the strains of exchange-value. But it is worth it to the people involved at the garden. Food at the Oregon Community Garden, when in abundance, will not be denied to someone because of a lack of money. Food at the garden is not a competitive commodity, but a necessary part of life—food’s use-value is prioritized over its exchange-value.

## *Community Building*

The garden is not financially self-sustaining, and its answer to food security is not financially sustainable. However, the garden is not designed merely as a location to learn organic or sustainable food. It is an educational hub for people to learn how to develop community building skills. The community building skills are important, because with 2.5 acres, the garden cannot grow enough food to feed everyone. But as previous chapters have made clear: there is enough food. What's lacking is community, caring, and sharing.

Prioritizing exchange-values, especially when coupled with capitalism, pits individuals against other individuals to compete for dwindling sources of money. Money is needed to access many things to stay alive, including food. But community building is not about building financial wealth or competition, but about social relationships. This is a foundational aspect of the garden. It actively teaches people to help others, and to also be willing to accept help. The lunch is one of the most important parts for the community building program of the garden. How successful they are at this will be discussed in Chapter VI. The free lunch, served every day the garden is open, is available to anyone. Even if someone came into the garden and did not volunteer, the garden would still feed that person. The lunch is a time for people to sit, and talk, and get to know each other. It links the old to the young, students to retirees, the employed and the homeless, all in one area. The lunch is vegan, and there is always more than enough food prepared to feed the volunteers... whether that be ten volunteers, or ninety volunteers. Seating may sometimes be an issue for busier days, but not enough food.

There are three lessons for the community building. First, life is tough, so do your best to help others when you can. Two, no one really knows what challenges the future

holds, so it's always important to think about helping others, because we never know when we may need help ourselves. Three, learn as much as you can, and then share that knowledge with as many people as you can. This last one is interesting because of the t-shirts the Oregon Community Garden sells. Grace likes it when people sends her pictures of where they are in the world, sharing knowledge, while wearing an Oregon Community Garden t-shirt. The community happens because people gather together to help with production, learning how to grow food, and eating food together.

### *Garden Planning*

Operating the garden is a massive undertaking. It is not a naturally occurring phenomenon, which the casual visitor most likely underestimates. The Oregon Community Garden takes a lot of thought, and planning, even during its busiest weeks when the garden may seem a chaotic mess to the casual or first-time volunteer.

The planning for when to plant in the garden involves meetings early in the year to decide when, where, and how much to plant of various crop varieties. There are three rotations that the garden has, meaning three different times throughout the year that crops are planted. Some garden beds, many of them, are actually planted, harvested, planted, harvested, planted, and harvested in one year. But to get this triple production of food requires planning on multiple dimensions, like a crazy seven-dimensional jigsaw puzzle. Considerations for space, time, and appearance are all important. As is what tastes good. Time, for example, has two aspects... when to plant, and how long it takes to grow. Space has more than one aspect... not just how much space there is in the garden, but how much space the plants require to grow. Appearance, as well as what tastes good, are also

important for building community. If people come to volunteer in the garden, and it looks like a monochromatic field similar to a farm that only grows corn, then it will be less appealing, less interesting, and may not retain the same community involvement. And taste, well, who would want to eat only one crop four months at a time? Grace picks foods based on taste, some on appearance, and some on production—in addition to space and time.

Volunteer availability is also something they consider, as well as director and assistant director vacation times, and how much room they have in the greenhouses. The greenhouses must be on the same page with the garden plan, because it is in the greenhouses that plants are grown from seeds into starts that are then transplanted into the garden.

Although the planning meeting was interesting to me, I couldn't help but wonder about the water pressure. With the addition of a new blueberry patch, and a new kiwi arbor, there is even more strain on the garden's limited water pressure. Why didn't water pressure factor into their planning? Depending on the day, and the combination of spigot, only three to five garden sections can be watered at the same time. Water did factor in for onions, because once onions are done growing they should not be watered any longer. Onions are then left in the ground so they can cure. If onions continue to be watered during this time, the onions will get bigger and split. So therefore, they want to make sure that if they plant onions, they do it in a section of the garden where irrigating other plants will not cause water to drift onto the onions.

### *Simulation of Community*

There are aspects of the garden which appears to be a simulated community, based on the work of the interns and others to create an environment in which community can happen. Prepping for various projects for a school group to enjoy can sometimes take much longer than the actual project. Some projects involve set up, planning, and then doing the project, and then clean-up after the project. Although the balance of time required is typically not horrifically unbalanced, there was a Tuesday in which we did a project called *dance of the doughnut and the mountain*. This project needed coconut fiber as well as sifted manure. Sifting the manure took four hours, with between two to four regular garden volunteers and interns working on it. Sifting the coconut fiber took one hour, with between two to three people working on it. Then, there was the other assembling of ingredients for the dance of the doughnut and the mountain, which is a learning exercise for people to learn how to make their own potting soil. All this work, for a 40-minute exercise, which then required clean-up afterward. On this particular day, the class could not stay to help fill wheelbarrows with potting soil or clean up, so that was left to myself and other interns. All in all, close to seven hours, not including the actual project, went into set-up and clean-up. This allowed the students to experience working together as a community, while not experiencing the bulk of the work that went into it.

My fingers, wrists, and elbows were sore because of the manure. It was wet manure, which meant it acted similar to thick paste, and this made “sifting” it almost impossible. Instead of sifting this manure, we had to press it through the wire mesh of the sifter with our hands. Having students or casual volunteers do the manure sifting may not have been a good way to recruit people to want to come back.

This extreme example is important, because of the pain, and tediousness of the task, which was not experienced by visitors. Interns such as myself are responsible for tasks to make the garden run, while students and other volunteers experience some of the more fun and interesting aspects of the garden to help build community. With the garden's goal of building community through the growing and sharing of food, I felt like this was sometimes a simulated community. But it also seemed like a way to teach people how to create community.

The dance of the doughnut and the mountain, an event which took a lot of work for a short community experience, involved a lot of behind the scenes work. In addition, there was other work such as sheet composting and emptying a manure truck which also needed to get done that day, but was set aside to create this simulated community experience for visitors. However, the garden routinely shifts back and forth between a community garden and an educational garden. In addition, because a garden of this size always has many a lot happening, there are always things that need to get done. It's never finished, which is an important aspect of community, because there is always something for people to do.

### *My Daughter*

Some of my favorite days at the garden were the days I brought my daughter. When I had my super-energetic daughter Maya with me, I was a volunteer instead of an intern. Instead of acting like a supervisor who helped manage multiple projects simultaneously in the garden, I just got to hang out with my daughter. Typically, we participated for about half of one of the garden projects, and then my daughter would lose

interest and focus. This meant we would have some races on the garden paths, or pick berries.

The garden provided some fun memories with my daughter. Because of a lack of volunteers, the squash did not get picked on a regular basis, which produced some overly large yellow squash. I briefly had the record for the largest squash ever harvested at the garden, weighing over twelve pounds. But two weeks later someone else picked a squash that was over thirteen-pounds. One of the best days at the garden with my daughter was the day she harvested a yellow squash that was *literally* bigger than her four-year-old arm.

## CONCLUSION

One of the issues for the English, when they were considering whether or not to give aid to the Irish during the potato famine (Zuckerman 1998), was whether or not the lazy-Irish deserved help. If they had worked harder, they wouldn't be desperate for food and money. This rational exchange-value concept of food exists today, and is reinforced by various institutions in the Pacific Northwest, and persists in the county in which the Oregon Community Garden operates.

The transition to the market society, the privatization of the commons, has made it so that people trade their labor for money, and then trade money for food. Instead of sore labor to produce food, which people readily have access to, people trade labor for money, and hope they have enough money to access food. The food crises of capitalism, however, argues that trading labor for money is never a guarantee for food access

because the prices of food are not stable. This is a problem when culture has a hegemonic standard for exchanging money for food.

How does a nonprofit garden happen in a society that commodifies water, land, electricity, and labor? The garden happens because people *want* it to happen. It's not a dream, and idea, or a theory. The garden is action. The garden exists because people want it to exist. This is why this analysis of the garden is important. Nationally, and globally, the action around food production is largely a profit driven one. The profit driven global food system, and the small nonprofit Oregon Community Garden, are both socially invented relationships with the environment—and only one of those environmental relationships denies access to food based on money.



## CHAPTER V

### FOOD AS A HUMAN RIGHT?

Anyone who attempts to convince you that GMOs, pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, growing food on Mars, aquaponics, drones, or some other invention to increase production yields is necessary to alleviate food insecurity is misrepresenting the problem of food insecurity. Yes, new machines and new food growing techniques might make food production more efficient or profitable. And some of these innovations may be necessary in the near future if climate change dramatically impacts the ability to grow food. But attempting to increase food production to meet food security needs misses one problem: there already is enough food. Technological innovation doesn't matter if people are already food insecure in a world of abundant food. If technology can't fix the problem, and growing the economy can't fix the problem, then how can food insecurity be properly addressed?

The problem is that many neighbors *aren't* helping neighbors, many friends *aren't* helping friends, and many family members *aren't* helping family members. People have become alienated from nature and from other people. Food has been rationalized to be accessed with money (see Chapter III), which means it is allowable to let someone else suffer if they fail to acquire enough money to purchase food. Capitalism has replaced community with individualism, and community property has been replaced by private property (Patel 2009). Instead of working with neighbors to survive, people are competing against neighbors for money, shelter, and food. Losing this competition either through hard work or no work leaves people food insecure. Even 'winning' in this

competition does not guarantee long-term financial stability because of the crises of capitalism, which can displace people from jobs and cause wealth to dwindle.

Chapter IV discussed how some food aid organizations prioritize food for its exchange-value. This chapter explores a different strain of the use-value versus exchange-value food debate: *the human right to food*. What message does the Oregon Community Garden deliver about the human right to food? And what do others in the local food community think about the human right to food? How do these human rights beliefs compare to thinking of food as a commodity? This chapter will explore beliefs about the human right to food, food commodities, and food community. Because there is enough food in the world, along with millions of hungry people, the Oregon Community Garden cannot solve food insecurity by growing more food. There isn't a need to grow more food. This is where the *community* of community garden comes into play to address food insecurity and the human right to food. In the course of this discussion the chapter probes a subtle conflict within the food as a human right agenda: *can food be a human right, and a commodity, at the same time?*

### **Thoughts about Food as a Commodity**

There was no disagreement about what food as a commodity meant between the local food community, the PAC Food Bank, or the Oregon Community Garden. They all had the same basic definition: food is sold for a price. There were differences about whether or not the commodification of food is problematic. These were not universal differences by organization, gender, or age.

The struggle in general to address food as a human right appears to be a struggle against the American ideology of hard work and earning your way. If you work hard enough, you can achieve success (Hedges 2009, Wright and Rogers 2011). If you have failed to gain success, then you just did not work hard enough. While this is a widely held belief in the United States, it has often been proven to be more of a myth than reality. Hard work has often left people still poor, and hungry (Engels 2009). And solving this issue, to grant access to food, actually led to answers that suggested better jobs.

*It's Problematic for Food to be a Commodity*

Sonata, one of the staff at PAC Food Bank, definitely had a problem with the commodification of food. She talked about how food should be free to anyone who needs it, “And so every time we’re driving through town and I see big patches of land, I’m always like, wouldn’t that be just a lovely food forest.” It was clearly an idea she had put a lot of thought into, smiling as she spoke about it. She mentioned she had discussed it with her partner. “And we kind of got into the politics of food and how food is so powerful and it’s just one of the easiest ways, food, to be able to control a population or a society in that matter... I think that if you limit access to food that people will go to any measure to get it.” Her statement about food, at least people going to any measure to get it, did not match with other research mentioned in Chapter III, which has pointed out that people will be more likely to suffer in hunger and deny themselves food.

And then there is Mariah, who works at The Farm. The Farm is one of the organizations that is part of PAC Food Bank. It is a five-acre urban farm, with tractors and other gas and electric powered tools, that teaches young people how to run a farm

both by growing food and by selling food. Mariah has a masters degree, described herself as mostly liberal, and single. Mariah had this to say about food as a commodity:

Mariah: I think one of the biggest problems in the world is between the haves and have nots, is income and equality. It's this mild distribution of wealth. When I think about what gives value to wealth? What gives value to money anyway on a global scale? Most of it are commodities. Most of it is food, you know. You have oil, gold. I don't think gold is a standard of monetary value at all anymore. I don't think there is a gold standard, but oil, corn, cotton, soy, wheat, coffee, that's what gives value to all money in the entire planet. And it's all food. Most of it is food related... Changing our relationship with food in some ways ... Yeah, it's just interesting. I think about it that way and in an economic sense, like political economy. So it's something taken for granted, we even call it a commodity.

Adam at PAC Food Bank also had a problem with the commodification of food:

Well, I mean it is a commodity in the literal sense, it's a resource that can move around from person to person. That I think raises the broader question of all of the things that we commodify. Is our air a commodity? Is our water a commodity? And we obviously treat them like they are. We treat people as commodities.

Adam's views on commodification of food appear to line up with the work of Marx and Engels. Commodification, the turning of natural resources into private property, is bad. But Adam also said, "it is possible to think of something as a resource or commodity and as a right. Those two things are not mutually exclusive, they are not, it's not a total binary." He spoke at length about how a basic income could allow food to be both a commodity, and a right.

The issue at hand, which is muddying the waters for something to be a commodity and a right, is the competition aspect. If something is a commodity, then its value rises and falls on the free markets because of competition for resources and labor (Polanyi 2001). If something is competed for, then acquiring it must be earned. A right, on the other hand, is unearned. Perhaps this is where basic income struggles to gain

traction on a broader scale for political adoption, because of the stickiness of commodities. Adam felt convinced that food could be both a right and a commodity.

Mariah, however, does not agree with this idea of food. “Yeah, I definitely do believe that people have a right to food. I don’t think that they’re having that, seeing it as *people have the right to purchase food* is really the same thing. I don’t find it to be the same thing at all.”

Grace at the Oregon Community Garden, although not speaking from a Marxist perspective, or a basic minimum income perspective, had a lot to say about the problems of food as a commodity.

Grace: Is that, as a commodity, that’s why it makes more sense to throw away things that are imperfect.

*Craig: Okay.*

Grace: Because if you only sold the most absolutely perfect premier piece, you can charge more for it, if you can get people used to having everything unblemished, having everything available whenever they want it. Then that means there’s a whole lot that you’re having to ship and store in certain ways, and produce in certain ways, and discard in certain ways the seconds and the offs that could’ve been feeding people. Or if it wasn’t such a commodity that you made the most of what everything is, you’d feed a whole lot more people. And the commodity not being, what the most expensive thing on the market is or the commodity being what the cheapest thing on the market fast food is instead of how to create the most and the healthiest for everybody. It’s a whole different system, whole different way of being around it. It’s kind of like if everybody spent part of their energy in an activity of their life creating their own food, their own sustenance, it would change how they orient towards their life. If they all created gardens, and they don’t even have to have their own, but they worked in a garden and then see from the garden and help others create gardens. It’s a whole different life focus. It’s when you make it a commodity people buy it, it becomes more and more removed from the actual building of the soil and planting the crop, tending it, cooking it and eating it. It becomes more and more removed, and in doing so, the nutrition, what it means to have the food, your choices about it, your health, how you see your place and nature on the planet all changes. It has become a commodity and becomes ever more a commodity. People become more and more removed from the natural cycles of life and the natural need of nourishment, they don’t get it. What tastes good is

something that could be engineered and formulated and not necessarily even healthy or sustaining well for your body. So people can face hunger issues and malnutrition and still be eating, they'll still be paying for it, but not feel the real connection to the real thing.

What Adam and Grace are touching on is how the commodification of food, and the commodification of everything, divides people. Instead of building community they believe commodification of food hurt community.

This appears to reinforce the alienation from food and nature discussed in Chapter III. Carney's work on hunger for immigrants (Carney 2015), as well as the documentary *Food Stamped (Potash and Potash 2010)* that focused on the prices of food as a barrier to eating well. Both discussed the shame and stigma that comes from using welfare as a way to access food. People who needed food denied themselves access to food, because they had rationalized in their minds that the best way to access food was to pay for it. This is a widely accepted cultural standard. What is important in this is that access to food is negotiated through a money-exchange. However, if food is a commodity, then it involves competition on free markets. If there is a competition, then there will be winner and losers. Some believe this is a problem, others do not.

#### *Food as a Commodity, It's Not a Problem*

Karen, a regular at the Oregon Community Garden, is one of the people who did not have a problem with the commodification of food.

Karen: I don't think there is anything in here that is wrong, making money off of food. Not everybody has the desire or ability to grow their own, and other people have the talent and the time and the knowledge to do it. As long as there is a fair trade of value for value, I think that's a perfectly legitimate thing. For instance... Jeannine's boyfriend and I... we decided what two pint jars of my cole slaw equals with salmon fillets... I'm fully happy with that transaction. It is a win-win both directions. I think

government subsidies and government interference really mess up the food system and exchanging value for value, and can give people a false sense of the true cost of food. I think if people really understood the effort and the cost involved in producing good food, they might reassess how they spend their money on different aspects of their lives. They may value food more, but I don't think making money on food is necessarily a bad thing.

Karen's point about value for value highlights an issue this dissertation explores about the human right to food. Food production *requires* labor. This is a good example of food as a use-value commodity, not a free market commodity where the value is determined by supply and demand, but bartering around a shared appreciation of labor. It is very different from commodities rooted in a system of exchange-value. Granting food as a right means that someone has to work to produce that food, whether it is the person who eats the food, or someone else who is eating the fruits of someone else's labor. Ray, who happens to be Karen's husband, also had no problem with the commodification of food.

For some people, the separation between humans and nature via commodification is so embedded, that thinking about interacting with nature in any other way is an irrational concept. As discussed in Chapter III, the cashier who visited a farm did not view crops in terms of plant names, but instead identified the different crops by their price look-up numbers (PLU) because the commodification of food had alienated her from food and nature. For Karen and Ray, this relationship with nature is not a problem.

### **Thoughts about the Human Right to Food**

As discussed in Chapter I and Chapter III, human rights are inalienable, guaranteed to all humans just by being human by the 1948 United Nations Declaration of

Human Rights. However, there appear to be two different types of rights: those human rights which require physical labor, and those human rights which do not require physical labor.

No one interviewed said that people should be allowed to die because of lack of money for food. If people are hungry, they should get food somehow. But the thoughts about food as a human right were nearly unanimous, with only Ray and Karen offering a diverging opinion.

Helen, a single white woman, runs a small bakery that sources its ingredients locally. She identified as mostly liberal, a member of the Green Party, and had a four-year-degree. As someone who sells food as the baker and owner of the establishment, it was interesting to hear her discuss food as a human right.

Helen: I have a hard time even wrapping my head around what do I think it means, because for me it is just a human right. I mean it's just that simple. It has to be there or we die. I mean there is a lot of grey area where we can just have only a little bit. Then we just keep on living even though we're getting what we need to actually live a good life. So, I guess that's where it comes in as where do we get to be able to get to that having a good life level. So I guess that's where I would kind of go, kind of gauge is, what do we need in the form of food to get to that [good life level]? I'm okay, I'm secure enough today. I know that tomorrow I will be able to eat something. Personally I don't go past that. Because I'm only going to fill up so much. But I would say that, just being able to know what you are eating today and what you're eating tomorrow is probably a good start.

Isabelle from the Market Association, which runs the weekend market (a for profit enterprise), had this to say:

Isabelle: [People] should have enough food, people should not have to feel hungry and not know how they are going to address their hunger because they don't have enough money. We have so much food in this country, and so much is wasted and there is just no reason. There are a lot of reasons, but there is no *good* reason that everyone doesn't have enough to eat. There is so much food waste and so everyone deserves to have food ... I just don't think that enough food stamps dollars in your account to buy a



soda and Cheetos is really meeting that basic human right. But I also don't believe that anybody should be told what to eat or how to eat.

I interviewed Louis, who works at a Catholic charity that distributes food, in the food warehouse receiving area. He identified as politically mostly moderate, and he's an Air Force vet. When it comes to food as a human right, he said "I don't think anyone should go hungry. I would say there is more than enough food in this country to go around, and there is a lot of waste right now." With all the food that gets thrown away why is even one person food insecure?

Danielle at PAC Food Bank said, "I don't believe that anybody has the ability to deny food. So, you do hear of governments that deny food to their people or the system is set up so that only a few have access to it and a majority don't. You can't deny people that necessity. It is like denying somebody water or something that is needed for life."

Sometimes I felt like Adam, at PAC Food Bank, was lecturing to me as if I was a college student. He spoke very clearly, but I sometimes wondered if he knew I taught classes about food.

Adam: You can't have people that are not made of food, so, there has to be food first and then people. There has to be enough food to feed the number of people that exist, there is no other way it can work. Short-term shortages or local areas of famines, that's a different issue, that's a change in the food supply which results in catastrophe sometimes. But it's not a question of too little food. I mean in United States that we throw away forty percent of the food we produce, at the household level twenty-five percent. I like the analogy of, if you were walking out of the grocery store with four grocery bags and just tossing one in the parking lot. Because that's how much food the average households throw away ... So it's not a question of lack of food, it's a question of lack of access to food... But also just wealth and income and equality basically. So, there is a number of ways you could potentially get food to people as a right. Guaranteed minimal income is kind of what I'm leaning towards lately for a number of reasons. Because it eliminates a lot of bureaucracy in terms of the other social service programs. You don't have to worry about things like WIC or SNAP or Oregon Health Plan, ... But a bunch of things you don't

necessarily have to worry about as much. You just give people a guaranteed income. There are several places in the world that are actually doing that right now ...So there is a number of ways you can potentially solve food being a right, but it's also just, it's a question of our consciousness and our, what we decide to do as a society. It's the decisions we make that cause food insecurity, it's not the lack of food basically. So we have just to change our decision making, change our culture.

### **What is the Human Right to Food? Is food access really a right?**

Is food a human right? For some people food is a commodity and that is a problem. And for some people, food is a commodity, and that is not a problem. For Quincy at the Oregon Community Garden, the human right to food is pretty cut and dry, "Everyone's entitled to it no matter what your income level, your ability level, your intellectual level, developmental level. Food is a human right. That's what it means to me, that everyone is entitled to it."

But it's not that cut and dry for everyone.

For some people I interviewed, thinking about food as a human right was a binary. Whereas Adam mentioned that a food can be a right and a commodity at the same time, other people weren't so sure. Take Pattie at PAC Food Bank for example:

*Craig: What does it mean for food to be a human right?*

Pattie: It's funny, someone just called me today and said it was constitutional right for people to have access to food. I get a little confused about human rights, social justice. I'm not sure how to answer this one.

*Craig: Okay.*

Pattie: I don't know if anyone has ever said food is a human right.

Obviously, every single human needs fuel and food to survive and so our goal is to make sure that happens. But I'm not sure that everybody in our country agrees that food is a human right. Some people feel like you need to earn it, it shouldn't just be given to you, and so that's another challenge of food banking is some people who are sort of bootstrap people, pull yourself up by the bootstrap and get a job and don't ask for a handout. Other people say while they are looking for their job let's feed them, however we can, so they can get back on their feet and not struggle

anymore. I personally don't get very involved in human rights, food justice. I sort of avoid that whole controversy ... we want to feed people, we don't want anybody hungry. No one should be hungry and we're going to give them the healthiest food we can find without any judgment. I know everybody around here, about one-hundred percent of the people would agree with that, that we don't care what decisions people made, or why, I mean we care, but it's not going to influence what we give them, how much we give them, what it looks like. The whole goal is to make sure people have the food they need to live the life they want to live.

Wynn, who volunteers at the Oregon Community Garden, and also volunteers at other places in town, spoke with me at a mall dining area during one of her free hours. She takes classes, teaches classes, volunteers at the garden, volunteers other places, and she is retired. Wynn has a PhD, identified as mostly liberal, and a Democrat. She didn't like rich corporations, but wasn't sure about how to solve food insecurity, or how she felt about food as a human right.

Wynn: The distribution isn't fair.

*Craig: Okay, how would you see a fair way to share food?*

Resp: I don't know how to fix the problem. It's too complicated. We can't just walk around the street giving food away, obviously that won't last long.

Bree works at The Farm, has a masters degree, identifies as liberal and a democrat. I interviewed her at the Farm, during a windy day at a picnic table in late afternoon when her shift was winding down.

*Craig: Okay, what does it mean for food to be a human right?*

Bree: I mean that just reminds of the definition of food security, that all people have access to culturally appropriate foods that they desire at all times. I guess I don't know, I mean I would say I agree it's a human right, and I think in a discussion about that, its important to define or at least have a discussion about what the definition of food is. I think that would be an important part of a discussion about that. Can people survive on crackers for their entire lives, or highly processed food, or how nutritious this food has to be, or does food have to be organic or does it have to be local for it be food, and that's all debatable. I don't have a solid answer on what people should think about that. I think it differs for everyone and that's okay.

I agree that the definition for the human right to food does differ from person to person. In fact, whether or not food should be a human right seems to differ. But is it okay for the human right to food, as a definition/concept, to differ for everyone? How can something so fundamentally important, such as a human's ability and right to access food, not have a concrete answer? How can any policy or action guide people if the human right to food does not have a concrete definition? I wondered if there was perhaps cognitive dissonance going on with people trying to reconcile food as a commodity with food as a human right. There was no clear pattern for the range of answers I heard about food as a human right.

I asked Ray, the Libertarian, what he thought about the human right to food:

Ray: That's a deep one there... I think a person can go pretty deep down the rabbit hole. I think in our society today we have, we are getting to where we are conflating what right really means. So, I would say as a human who exists on this earth I would have the right to pursue and attempt to obtain the resources it takes to sustain my life. Whether that means working in a factory and making money and buying what I need, or that means I put my effort directly towards growing the food. There is a number of different forms that can take. I have a hard time seeing how resources as right, if we come at traditionally what is considered rights; we can look at examples. The right to free speech means in Oregon, I can speak my mind, it doesn't mean anybody is forced to listen to me but I can speak my mind. I can put up a website, I can buy my server space or make my own server and put up a website that says what I think. Even if nobody agrees with me I still have the right to say, "Hi, here is what I think." That's a right to be free from being censored by other people. ... To say that food is a human right, I can't help but question where does that food come from, and if you have a right to it who, if you can't make your own food, you can't obtain your own food, you can't create the resources to obtain your own food, where does that food that you have a right to come from? Intellectually, just looking at that, I don't see where we don't get situations where we have to take a resource from someone else and redistribute it to somebody who has a supposed right to it. Because food is a resource, it has to be produced, it doesn't just fall from the sky. If somebody said I have a right to breathe then, well yeah, its air, its everywhere, we don't have to take air from somebody. ... I think this food

as a human right is a little, little bit of a treacherous path to walk down because if food as a resource is a right, where does it come from?

Ray points out the issues of food as a commodity, and food as a human right.

Whereas Ray sees food as a commodity and food as a right as mutually exclusive, Adam did not. Pattie, who said she thinks the commodification of food is a leading reason for food insecurity, had difficulty calling food a human right. And it is this conflict about food which causes many people stigma, or dignity, about the food they eat. People know, overall, that food is a commodity. It travels through the free market, with prices that rise and fall. Therefore, granting access to food also appears to require an exchange of either money or labor to reduce feelings of stigma.

It also signifies effort and therefore is embedded in concepts and ideologies of who does and does not deserve. This becomes coupled to power relations and possession. It is about who wins the competition, who worked hard enough, who was not lazy. Calling food a human right means you do not have to work for it, or compete for it, because a right is “unearned.” This was the sticking point that people appeared to grapple with, for the ones who did not clearly say yes food is a human right, or no food is not a human right. To grant food as a human right still requires labor—from somebody. Therefore, receiving food for free through a charity becomes problematic for some because of how they think about food exchange values. In their minds, food is still a protected commodity. And that is the focus of Chapter VI: Food with Dignity.

## CHAPTER VI

### FOOD WITH DIGNITY

“Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are.” - Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

If you know what someone eats, you can know a lot about what they are. Food is thought out, representative of history. Food communicates a wide-range of societal symbols such as gender, social occasion, and other social symbols (Barthes 2013). Food can be representative of socioeconomic class, power, and distinction (Bourdieu 2012). Caviar might represent wealth, whereas a fast food dinner might represent poverty. For Alice B. Toklas, the ability to grow and cook her own food, as well as show off her knowledge of French cuisine and culinary techniques, was a way to display her high-level of social class (Toklas 1984). By telling someone what you eat, you convey a wide-range of knowledge.

*Is a person eating free food?* If someone is eating free food, they are most likely displaying their socioeconomic class, i.e. poor. This carries an additional stigma of being a drain on the welfare system, instead of being a good citizen by working and being economically self-sufficient (Carney 2015). A good citizen pays their own way, a bad citizen accepts welfare food. If someone wants food with dignity, *can that food be free?*

Pattie at PAC Food Bank, while describing what the food bank does, said “our job is to supply the donated food to our county with equity and dignity so that everyone in our county has access to healthy food.” This chapter explores whether or not free food can also be dignified. *What does it mean to have food, an exchange-value commodity, with dignity?* Do people who accept food from the Oregon Community Garden feel

shame, stigma, or dignity? First, interviewees share personal experiences with food stigma and food insecurity. Second, interviewees attempt to describe what it means to have food with dignity. Third, comparisons to data in previous chapters are compared to how people spoke about food with dignity.

### **Food with Stigma**

Food with stigma means that people feel shame about the way they access food. This could be shame about standing in a food box line, using food stamps/EBT cards, or consuming food that is of lower quality and status. As discussed in Chapter III, people will even deny themselves access to available food because of stigma. People self-police themselves, knowing that earning food is the American way, while accepting a handout is shameful. To be a good citizen means to not be on government welfare, but instead working and earning your way in the world. Foucault discussed how people self-police themselves, feeling they are being watched. Was this true for people I spoke with? Did they self-police themselves? Could someone have free food with dignity?

Of the twenty-three people in this research, fourteen reported that at some time in their life they had been food insecure. Here are some of their thoughts on food insecurity and food with stigma.

Pierce, who at one point in the interview said he had never been food insecure, and another point in the interview said that he had been on food stamps, said “Oh, yeah, some people are embarrassed to be on food stamps you know. So, I guess they consider that being undignified to have to apply to a government program just to be able to eat. So, they probably don’t like to go to the soup kitchen.” He was not the only person to say he

had never been food insecure, but later in the interview describe conditions of food insecurity such as extreme poverty, food stamps, or some other welfare service.<sup>8</sup>

Mariah at PAC Food Bank, who currently owns her home without a mortgage and holds a masters degree, was once food insecure.

Mariah: I was always embarrassed as a student, when I went to the grocery stores I would like ... I would hide the wagon on it, the covered wagon because it's the Oregon Trail card here in Oregon. So, I would hide that and I would just wipe the blue side so people wouldn't see it. Just because of the stigma, stigmatization, I don't ever find it, I wouldn't find it to be stigmatizing now that I know so much and understand so much and know how many individuals actually do receive food assistance here. It's quite alarming, but it's not people's fault. I think people take it on themselves as it being their fault or that they're unsuccessful, or not doing the right thing. But honestly when you look at the number of family wage jobs and the number of people without those jobs, then the number of people, most people that come and get a food box are employed or they're retired, or they have a disability, isn't that interesting? So, their disability payments aren't enough for them to be able to subsist. Or the retired, they're not making it, the retirement is definitely not enough to be able to subsist, to live. Then if you're working at a lower wage job, or I think if you earn less than what 10 or \$12 an hour, you would qualify for a food box. So that's quite a lot of people. You're not alone. Once I realized that I was not alone and it was like, quite a large number of people in our community I didn't feel so bad...

What it boils down to, is that free food, or cheap food, has stigma. Being poor has stigma. Hiding one's poverty is preferable to admitting it, so Mariah concealed the wagon on the Oregon Trail card. Whether society was watching, or perhaps Mariah was simply policing herself, she knew that accepting free food came with stigma.

And then there was Faith, who focused on food stigma issues with populations that can't afford nutritious food:

Faith: In the lobby we have a poem written, or a partial poem, from Pablo Neruda. It's all about the justice of eating, and that—that becomes our



mission statement really. Is that to deny people food, especially nutritious food, is criminal and a sin I think. To stigmatize overweight people who are probably in that situation because the food they eat is considered throw away food and not nutritious food. We are talking about cheap pasta, chips, and the sodas. That's what they can afford and maybe that's the only food they have access to. Maybe the mile to save fries to get fresh produce is too much, they can't get there but they have a 7-11 across the street from where they live. That's what they have access to. It's really unfair to stigmatize people as being fat and lazy when they are doing the best they can with what they have.

For Faith, she was touching on how one's poverty may be revealed by body size. Overweight people who are probably overweight because of their limited access to food options, are embodying poverty through their experience of malnutrition. Similar to Raj Patel's *Stuffed and Starved*, and Krieger's work on embodying poverty, Faith is discussing how being overweight is a physical manifestation of a socially constructed problem. Stigma comes with being overweight, so embodying the malnutrition that often accompanies the consumption of poverty-level foods is not dignified.

And then Grace shared about her personally very difficult time with food insecurity growing up. She came from a large family, and poverty was a struggle. She touched on the stigma, as well as social status, that comes with food insecurity:

*Grace:* For me it's very hard to separate out food insecurity and that stigma versus poverty and the effect of poverty, and the stigma of that. And whether or not you're good enough, or accepted, or all the ways other people not even being aware of how cruel and harmful they can be ... there are a lot of people that have, and the have-nots. And even the have-nots can be cruel to each other. It's like a pecking order thing.

Quincy, one of the kitchen people at the Oregon Community Garden, had this to say about food stigma and dignity.

*Craig:* Okay, what does it mean to have food with dignity?

Quincy: To me food with dignity is like, not having McDonald's every night or fast food every night.

*Craig:* Okay.

Quincy: Being able to be proud of what's on the table for you and your family, not always having to stress about the nutritional value of your food, because you know that it's good.

When talking about food with stigma and food with dignity, four different people mentioned McDonald's in some way as food with stigma. McDonald's may have been the first restaurant to come to people's minds because of its global recognition, but they were not making the argument that other fast food restaurants were somehow dignified. Fast food, in general, was considered undignified among my interviewees.<sup>9</sup>

### **Food with Dignity**

Food with dignity, on the other hand, involves being proud about how people access food.

Chris, who had never experienced food insecurity, had this to say about dignity and food.

*Craig: What does it mean to have food with dignity?*

Chris: I have no idea, I have never had that before. I would think that, it would mean that if you can't provide for yourself, you wouldn't be forced to un-dignify yourself in order to get food, which would be probably things like they came through trash, or waiting in an embarrassing line, or being treated poorly at kitchens or stuff like that probably. Never heard the expression before that [food with dignity].

*Craig: What kind of line would be embarrassing do you think?*

Chris: I don't think waiting in line for food is necessarily embarrassing. But there might be a social stigma if everybody that needed food had to pick it up from the same place. People knew that was the place to pick up food because we are poor. I guess it would be kind of the same stigma that somebody, upper class, might have of getting seen getting clothes out of Goodwill instead of a designer cloth store.... It makes perfect sense to

---

<sup>9</sup> Based on time I spent in China and Philippines, I would add that McDonald's and other "American" fast-food style restaurants may have stigma in the USA. But in other countries, being seen eating at an "American" fast-food style restaurant appeared to be a status symbol.

me, I feel something about the idea of going and doing government assistance. I'm sure a lot of people feel that way, and I can see how that would be increased if you needed it and you ride on it.

*Craig: What do you feel about government assistance, would that be a problem for you to do?*

Chris: To do it if I needed it, I don't think so. I have considered a lot of times, I was never really able bring myself to do it. But I mean, I think part of that has to do with the fact that I know that I don't actually need it, but it just helps. But I can see how that would be very hard for somebody. Okay, it could be a matter of pride, and I think it has to do with a stigma against the dependency in America. We have a lot of independent rhetoric and beliefs.

*Craig: Do you think those are good or bad?*

Chris: I think they are probably a lot of both. I don't think it is inherently good or bad, I think being independent from bureaucracies and government, is probably not a bad thing. I think that forcing independence as a movement away from community is. So, I don't think being dependent on other people is bad at all, but I don't think that being in a situation which you are dependent on a government is good. Now the fact that people are in need and do need that assistance is different.

There also appeared to be two different techniques of accessing food with dignity: choices, and earning it. Both display a form of socioeconomic class, and control, over food access.

### *Food with Dignity: Choices*

Bree, at The Farm, when thinking about food with dignity, was one of the people to consider that food with dignity revolves around choice.

Resp: I think that involves having a lot of choice in food that one has. I actually think about that a lot when I'm sorting food. You might have seen me sorting peppers over there, and I think about that a lot in what we send to the food bank. What, I mean it's a funny position of deciding what food with dignity is for people and like, some decisions are really obvious like, there is just like a little speck and it's a beautiful pepper or something, don't have to force anyone who want that pepper, people will pay for that pepper still, but we want really nice peppers to sell. So, that [pepper with just a speck] goes to the food bank, but there is this funny, grey area where I'm unsure sometimes if people are going to feel dignity in shopping at the food pantry and finding a piece of food that has a big ugly spot on it or

something. I, I just, I wonder about that. I think about that a lot and I don't know the answer to it. I think it's probably different for everyone but, it's definitely like a level of quality that I imagine that people want in their food they are getting, whether they are paying for it or whether it's free.

Bree and I actually talked for a few minutes about the quality of food we send to pantries. I had the same issue about harvesting food at the Oregon Community Garden. I did not want people who were picking up the food at a food pantry, who may have been excited to get fresh food, to feel stigmatized because they were given bad looking food. The ugly food movement is important when it comes to food waste in the United States (Ackerman-Leist 2013), because throwing ugly food away when it could be eaten is terrible when there are hungry people. But for people who have few choices and must get some of their food from a food pantry, Bree and I both shared the same hesitancy about sending less than perfect food. We wanted the best looking foods to go to pantries, and we knew that volunteers, or the garden's kitchen, could take the uglier looking foods and still cook with them. I could take a green pepper home that has a bad spot, cut out the bad spot, and cook it just fine. Or if I grew my own green peppers, I would have no problem cutting out the bad spot. But if I went to the grocery store, bought a green pepper, and later discovered it had a bad spot, I would feel irritated because I had *paid* for a pepper. If the pepper is located in an ugly food section that would be different. But a pepper that people pay for is a commodity, and commodities are held to higher standards than free food. Bree and I both know this, and we did not want people at food pantries to feel like they were getting *free food*—you know, the castoffs that could not be sold. We wanted people to feel like they were getting great food.

Nicole, who helps oversee the gardens as part of her work at the Oregon Community Garden, has had some history with food insecurity:

*Craig: Have you ever experienced food insecurity?*

Nicole: Not to that degree, so, when I was six my dad was diagnosed with cancer and he struggled with it for sixteen years and, lost his job. My mom wasn't working at the time. So there was a period of a few years there where my family was pretty tight on resources. You know, I qualified for free lunch, that sort of thing. But I never ever felt like meals were cut back or that I didn't have access to, no, I didn't always get the food that I wanted but there was always plenty of food, so, yeah.

*Craig: Okay, were you fine, how about you not getting food that you wanted?*

Nicole: Probably like a child doesn't always get what they want, I think, I mean I feel like my daughter doesn't get all the food that she wants, but it's not an economic issue because I don't want her eating sugar or food coloring. My mom's plans would be like, sorry, it's too expensive, you know, and it was just part of our family's life like, you know, other things were too expensive too.

*Craig: Okay, what does it mean to have food with dignity?*

Nicole: Accessing that food in a way that empowers you rather than diminishes you or, you know. I think Food for Lane County has made huge strides in that area since I started working here. We are no longer just handing people boxes at pantries. They get to shop and choose what's appropriate for them.... Yeah, that they get to make, but that people who need access to food also have a choice in what they're eating. That they, choice is a big part of it I mean I think it's, what's the difference of me being that little kid with a ticket in my hand and having everybody see. That I needed to get free lunch versus just being another kid in line who gets my food. You know, it's just, not separating people out in that shameful way, I think as in, so, if you were going through a pantry, it feels more like a grocery store experience and I hand out, it's going to feel more dignified I think. You feel so, it's a lot like, you know, feel lack of some tolerance, you're not going to get a bunch of dairy or if you were, I mean you get to choose primarily. Sort of a way really, if you do want to survive and raise your kids ... prepare choices for yourself and your family. Just dignity involved in that.

### *Food with Dignity: Earned*

The other form of food with dignity that came up in the interviews was food which is earned. It isn't free, it is earned. Joe, at the Farm, gave a good example of what the *earned* food with dignity concept looks like.

*Craig: What does it mean to have food with dignity?*

Joe: I think to have food with dignity means that it's offered and received with respect. So, whether it is sold to somebody that can afford to buy it, or if it is given out to somebody that is asking for a handout because they need the support to help them out in their lives. Not that I see all the food that leaves this place and how it is distributed to people. But I like to think the vast majority is offered with dignity. Very little I would say it is not, so I think it's offering it to people with no strings attached necessarily. Especially if it is offered for free ... this is a gift to help you out. It's actually rewarding when people who are in need and are sort of capable physically of helping in this work, come and support this work to help grow the food, and then receive some food as well. I think that creates an extra appreciation from people who are maybe food insecure or lower income. Unfortunately, we don't see a lot of that. I think there is various reasons probably why we don't see that, but when I started the position I expected we would have a lot more volunteers and people involved who are lower income. We have a number certainly who are youths, some of them are volunteers, but surprisingly how few are say receiving food in their food banks shelf in their pantries that don't come and volunteer at these sites. They can, dare I say, earn it with more dignity than taking a handout.

If food with dignity is either about choices or earning it, in an exchange-value society, then food with dignity may require having a job, or having access to land to grow your own food. The ability to make choices appears to be intertwined with socioeconomic status, which again often requires earning choices through getting money. Bourdieu wrote about distinction, and that this was based on the types of food people choose to eat. The ability to display one's refinement, Bourdieu notes, comes with the disappearance of economic constraints.

### **Can Free Food Have Dignity in an Exchange-Value Society?**

Some of the people at PAC Food Bank, when discussing food with dignity, mentioned the Banquet Hall. The Banquet Hall is a place where people in need can come, and be served a restaurant quality meal, complete with a server that takes the food order. It has a limited hours of operation, but it is a unique dining experience which attempts to

give dignity to people who cannot afford a restaurant quality meal on their own. The motto is ‘dining with dignity.’

As people spoke about the Banquet Hall, it made me think about the Oregon Community Garden. One of the primary features of the Oregon Community Garden is its lunch. It is a free lunch served every day the garden is open. How do people at the Oregon Community Garden feel about a free lunch? Do they feel dignity, stigma, pride, embarrassment? As discussed briefly in Chapter IV, the lunch is prepared by volunteers every day the garden is open. It is vegetarian, and depending on the day may serve ten people to over one-hundred people.

When asked whether people need to volunteer to eat lunch, Karen said “We don’t have a minimum time limit that people need to work in order to get lunch, or be able to take produce home, something like that.” Grace, the garden director, echoed that point. In fact, one of the days I was helping wash dishes in the kitchen, a homeless man walked up and asked for money. Instead of money, he was given a large bowl of warm soup to eat right there on the spot, and then a large bag of food was given for him take with him. In my time at the garden, no one was ever denied food. In addition, no one I spoke with at the Oregon Community Garden could remember anyone ever being denied food at the garden. The only exception to that is carrots, which were being kept in the ground for a special harvest day called *Carrot Harvest Day*. Other than carrots, food denial did not happen. It’s free food.

But how did people at the Oregon Community Garden feel about free food?

Wynn, who grew up in Japan outside of Tokyo, had seen a lot of food insecurity. Her family was in a farming community, so they were better off than many others who had to struggle to find enough food to eat.

*Craig: Have you ever taken part in the free lunch... If so, did you just show up or did you work in the garden first?*

Wynn: I always work at the garden.

*Craig: Okay, the first time that you had lunch at the garden, how did you feel about accepting lunch? Was it comfortable, did you feel like you had to work first before you got some other lunch?*

Wynn: Not before necessarily, but I always feel like I need to contribute with work. I've never gone there and just eaten lunch and not do anything. So, I think that is a fair trade that I should contribute.

Toni, who grew up on a cattle farm, knows about the commodification of food. She grew up watching her family work hard.

*Craig: Okay, if you had just wandered in and never volunteered at the garden, would you feel comfortable eating there if somebody invited you without volunteering?*

Toni: Initially the first time I was there, I did not. And I have heard friends say the same thing. They felt that, they were there to work and that eating wasn't part of the process so, I tried to speak to them. Grace really wants to encourage the sense of community, eating is okay, and it's actually encouraged. I have one girlfriend that still probably hasn't, she has been there time to time but I don't think she has eaten lunch because she feels guilty. Because like I'm here to work, that food is not for me, I can go home and have lunch. It did not matter, even after I had explained to her. I think Grace is very open, "Oh! Stay for lunch, it's for everybody." It's just, I guess the perception that we are growing food for those who necessarily don't have access to the food. So, maybe this food is not meant to be for the volunteers although she certainly encourages that.

*Craig: Okay, what finally got you, I guess, over the bridge so that you felt eating was okay.*

Toni: Well I had showed up when they had that big party so, it was a big party and people were very, how many that, I don't know how many people, they were forty or fifty, it was a lot of people. All very encouraging to, "No have lunch." Then it was a party atmosphere ... Then I just, over time realized that Grace is very serious, she is not just saying this. This is really important to her, to have people sit down and eat together.



Making sure people knew about lunch, and that it was free and available to all volunteers, was part of the many things I had to tell volunteers as an intern. It was interesting that some volunteers left for lunch, some would bring their own lunch even when they were told ahead of time that the garden provided free lunch to volunteers, or other volunteers would work through lunch. Although some of the volunteers never gave a reason, some said that the food grown at the garden was for people who really needed it. And I would tell them it was for volunteers too, for free. But some days it still felt like pulling teeth to get new volunteers to eat the free lunch.

### **Changing the Narrative about Food with Dignity**

Why did the new volunteers say no to free food? For some of them, I don't know. At the time, saying no to the garden's free lunch wasn't a focus of my research, and there was no way for me to remember all the volunteers who had said no to free lunch. All the same, why did volunteers say no to free food? Perhaps the narrative about food needs to change. Adam, who had never experienced food insecurity and believed it should be a human right, said:

Is food a right or is food something, is food a privilege? If you look at it as a right, that stigma of kind of that need for charity kind of evaporates. But I think education is a really important part of that too. People don't like to feel like they are on the door and people also don't like it when they think that's happening with other people. But it's just kind of a forced dichotomy, it's like kind of, we are all interdependent on each other. So, getting food with dignity, I think education really is kind of the most important part about it. Understanding, compassion, empathy I think, and the ability to get food when you need it.

Education, understanding, compassion. Will that change how people think about food? If people have a change in how they view food, perhaps as a human right, maybe accepting free food... or even lunch from the garden, might be

different. But as discussed in Chapter V, people I interviewed got stuck a little thinking about food as a human right. A human right is not earned, you just have it because you are human. However, food requires labor, and labor means earning it. In fact, having food with dignity appears to require *earning* it.

The free lunch at the garden is designed for all volunteers, but anyone who just wandered in would also be welcome according to people who worked there. But if it's hard for new volunteers to accept the free lunch, I cannot imagine people will just wander in off the street. The reluctance to have free lunch for everyone at the garden even had resistance from PAC Food Bank. But Grace, who has experienced food insecurity and bullying, had a more nuanced insight into free lunch than people at PAC Food Bank.

Grace: There was even a period where... it was seriously an issue "could people take food with them?" I fought for that one. I wasn't going to let that go away and do people have to declare their incomes in order to be able to take it. And I opposed that one. Because if people have to declare their income and only the lowest income people could have it, those that really need it wouldn't take it because they would be singled out. And they feel stigmatized and they already are feeling stigmatized. They are already feeling less than deserving and I didn't want it to turn into the have-nots and the haves. I wanted it all to be one, so we fought the issue for a while. Administratively, and I think we've kind of gotten the concept across that the whole thing is a learning opportunity and experience and that by doing it this way, there's more than enough. There's lots to learn, lots to do, lots available, lots produced. It works and so I think it has really become the Garden's philosophy.

*Craig: Okay.*

Grace: And it's kind of like if there's something Grace is going to fight for, it's to keep that philosophy alive.

You see, if people had to declare their incomes to qualify for the free lunch, some people aren't going to do that. They will avoid the stigma of being poor, and deny themselves access to free food. By making the lunch open to everyone, poor people,

middle-class people, and upper-class people, then everyone can eat lunch together. High school dropouts and medical doctors, college professors and fast food laborers, Christians and Atheists, Libertarians and Democrats. By taking income out of the dining equation, it was another step toward building community at the garden. But dining with dignity, food with dignity, it is all about income. But why was income a big deal? Chapter VII offers a possible insight into the problems of recognizing the cultural hegemony of food as a commodity, which has made accepting free lunch uncomfortable for many.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

The primary question explored by *Food Values and the Human Right to Food: A Sociological Analysis of Food Insecurity in Oregon* is what causal mechanisms of the capitalist food system prevent food from being a human right? I have shown how amidst widespread hunger and abundant food, the unaddressed problem in the room is how people protect food as a commodity, which leaves people hungry even during times of abundant food. Given the instabilities of the free market, and the inequalities generated by capitalism, the capitalist food system nurtures a persistent food insecurity for millions of people. This is like an elephant in the room, an open secret that everyone knows about but no one wants to talk about (Zerubavel 2006). Policymakers who wish to deliver Zero Hunger to the world must address the elephant in the room, which is that the gatekeeping of food created by exchange-value perpetuates modern food insecurity.

Chasing profit has led other farmers to increase meat production, even though meat production has been shown to produce less calories and be less environmentally efficient (Pollan 2006, Zaraska 2016). Profit drives production choices. If food were a free resource, a human right to everyone, would current production levels falter? Current production levels could fall substantially, and still produce enough calories to sustain everyone. Unless something changes with the current system of food production and food access, then food insecurity will remain. Addressing this elephant, however, will require society to address how they feel about food as a human right.

As discussed in Chapter II and Chapter III, food is a protected commodity. This means that people become alienated from food, even when they grow it themselves as

farmers, because the food is produced for its commodity-exchange value instead of its immediate use-value.

My experience as an intern often involved painful labor, but I was producing food for its use-value. I knew that the food grown as for my consumption for the lunches, or to be consumed by people at food pantries who could not afford access to nutritious food. But my experiences do not appear to mirror what people in the interviews expressed. Time and time again, people I interviewed protected food as a commodity. Volunteers, even when told about the free lunch, would often find other ways to feed themselves because they had an issue accepting free food. While I did not experience alienation from the food I grew in the garden, many other volunteers apparently did.

Throughout the interviews, Ray was one of the most refreshing voices, regardless of whether or not I agreed with him, because he was direct about the problematic declaration of food as a human right. Some people I interviewed had never thought of food as a commodity, and others struggled momentarily to describe it before eventually coming to the same conclusion of others: food has an exchange-value represented by a monetary price. To attempt to end food insecurity and create a world with Zero Hunger does not appear possible without fully embracing the issues created by food as a commodity. First, a commodity is something that requires money or something else of value to exchange for it. Second, getting something of value to exchange for a commodity requires labor. If something is a right, it is guaranteed to a person, without labor to exchange something for it. Examples of human rights that do not require labor include freedom from slavery, freedom from torture or inhumane treatment, freedom of thought/conscience/and religion, and freedom of opinion and expression (UN 1948). The

human right to food is *not* a right granted just by being human. Food security is, instead, a privilege reserved for those with something to exchange. Food is a right only for those who have earned it.

This work draws heavily on Marx and Engels, partly because of their theoretical focus on the inherent instabilities of capitalism, and the physical and mental impacts that capitalism has on the working poor. In *The Conditions of the Working Class*, Engels wrote:

“True, there are, within the working class, numbers too moral to steal even when reduced to the utmost extremity, and these starve or commit suicide. For suicide, formerly the enviable privilege of the upper classes, has become fashionable among the English workers, and numbers of the poor kill themselves to avoid the misery from which they see no other means of escape.

But far more demoralizing than his poverty in its influence upon the English working man is the insecurity of his position, the necessity of living upon wages from hand to mouth, that in short which makes a proletarian of him” (Engels 2009:126-127).

Hunger and starvation are not new. Capitalism’s food crises are relatively new in consideration of the entirety of human history, and yet it is the conditions of hunger and sickness created by capitalism that Marx and Engels were writing about over a century ago. The same problems exist today. In concluding this chapter, I will address the major findings of this dissertation and address some of its broader political, economic, and theoretical implications as it relates to the elephant in the room: attaining food security within the persistently insecure capitalist food system.

## Uncertain Answers to Food Insecurity

There is nothing inherently wrong with many of the proposed answers to food insecurity, especially when they recognize that money is a problem for food access. But any answer to modern food insecurity that attempts to address free market issues with free market answers, while noble, may be ignoring the elephant in the room. The answers often rely on the ability of some to outcompete other people for the *right* to food. This has consistently left some people hungry, and in extreme instances this has left people starving to death (Ó Gráda 2009). Capitalism's food crisis has created malnutrition among abundant food supplies.

### *Vegetarianism*

Switching to a diet that consumes less meat, or no meat, is more than a respect for living animals. Some have said this is a way to feed more people, because the energy that goes into raising livestock is less efficient than just eating vegetarian (Pollan 2006). When people eat corn, the solar energy absorbed by that corn goes directly into the human body. But when people eat meat, which has been fed corn, much of the solar energy is lost to fur, bones, as well as energy lost to the process of raising the animal up to butchering age. Eating meat is high on the food chain, and eating vegetables is eating low on the food chain (Pollan 2006). What this means is that more calories can be available to more people if people simply ate vegetarian, and less solar energy would be lost.

Climate change may put pressure on crops, stressing crops with heat and floods, causing greater crop failures. This climate stress will also put pressure on meat

production, which is already facing pressure from growing global demand for meat and a growing population (Klein 2014a). Switching to a vegetarian diet may be better for the climate because of the reduction of crops grown for meat consumption. But, this does not answer the basic problem of modern food insecurity. In the future, there actually may not be enough food to feed everyone. But currently, the planet produces more than enough food to feed every person on earth, and yet millions of people are hungry. Switching to a vegetarian diet does nothing to address the reason people are currently food insecure. People are not food insecure because of a lack of meat, or vegetables, or a lack of water. Current food insecurity is about a lack of money.

True, with climate change, a vegetarian lifestyle may be the safest for the environment. Especially with the water challenges the planet is facing. Grace regularly spoke to groups about various challenges for food production now, and in the future. One of the things she mentioned regularly was a major aquifer that is drying up in the United States which is a primary source of fresh water for industrial agriculture. What is going to happen with the water supply in the future? It's hard to predict exactly how crops will be impacted, although coffee and chocolate, as well as beer, are all on the climate change endangered crops list! (site source). During Grace's talk about the fresh water issues, she mentions that the last time the aquifers were 'filled' was the last ice age.

Switching to a vegetarian lifestyle, and growing less crops which puts less strain on the planet's water and energy supply due to the vegetarian lifestyle. This could produce more food, less environmental damage, etc. But a vegetarian diet, or vegan diet, does not address the free market issue. Vegetables are food, and therefore vegetables are a commodity. In a global vegetopia, meaning every living human ate only vegetables, if



vegetables are a commodity there will probably still be food insecure people because of the instability of prices on free markets. Vegetarianism in a capitalist economy does not address the elephant in the room, which is that people will still be denied access to food, or deny themselves access to food, because of their inability to exchange money for food.

### *Basic Minimum Income versus Philanthrocapitalists*

An answer to the poverty issue, and perhaps the Capitalist Food Sovereignty issue, is the concept of universal basic income. The universal basic income is a proposal for monthly payments made by the government to every citizen, rich and poor, which will be enough to pay the minimum monthly needs to survive above the poverty line (Wright and Rogers 2011). It is paid to retired people, working people, and children... although parents would be the custodians of income for children. Basic income would replace payments made by the welfare state such as SNAP, unemployment insurance, and social security. It would be paid for out of income taxes. For high earning people, their taxes would be more than the basic income, so high earning people would be net contributors (Wright and Rogers 2011). The attractiveness of basic income is that it addresses aspects of Capitalist Food Sovereignty, in that there would be enough money for people to attain a healthy level of food each month, and there would be no stigma when purchasing food. People could purchase food with dignity at the grocery store, or the farmers market, or from a CSA.

The challenge with basic income is the ability to tax income to fund the program, as *The Paradise Papers* declared in 2017 (Forsythe 2017). The Paradise Papers emphatically revealed that people with higher incomes have better accountants, some of

whom can find offshore accounts and other tax loopholes to avoid paying taxes (Rieff 2015).

Some people may argue that the philanthrop capitalists who give millions (or billions) of dollars to charities to address health, education, and food issues would be limited in their ability to help if their taxes were increased (Rieff 2015). The basic minimum income does not rely on the charitable actions of individuals who accumulated their mass-wealth through the aggressive, exploitive tendencies of capitalism.

Philanthrop capitalists can do good. But the concentration of wealth, and power, that is focused in the hands of an elite few may be better distributed through a universal basic income. This then would position philanthrop capitalists to pursue other charitable endeavors which can still be important and meaningful, instead of a universal health problem of food insecurity which is directly linked to the global economy, which allowed the philanthrop capitalists to accumulate enough money to become *philanthrop capitalists!* How does one solve hunger if one is not willing to address the economic injustice which caused the hunger and inequality? Even if the rich are taxed at higher rates, they are still rich, perhaps paying others to endure the unhealthy or physically taxing work that they can avoid. Working in the garden was physically demanding work.

A basic minimum income has shown potential in test markets. Of these two options, philanthrop capitalists vs universal basic income operating in an economic system prone to crises, a basic minimum income is the better bad idea. During the regular flow of the economy, a basic minimum income will meet both the physical, and mental, needs for people to pay housing and food bills... until there is another market crises, in which time people may be left priced out of the market while surrounded by abundant food.

### *Raise the Minimum Wage*

Raising the minimum wage faces a similar challenge as basic income. Not just there is tax needed to support raising the minimum wage, but the fact that food is a commodity which trades on fluid markets, meaning that along with supply and demand—prices will rise and fall, job markets will expand and contract. For every possible answer, if you simply start by asking if it addresses the elephant in the room, you see the weakness in the answer.

### *Housing*

A few interviews revealed that housing was strongly linked with local food insecurity. Higher housing and apartment rental prices may cause people to make tough decisions between shelter or food. And if people choose between healthier food, or paying the rent, they pay the rent and buy a lower quality of food.

It was not the focus of this research project, but I was wondering *why was housing an issue?* This is perhaps a problem with individuality/independence? While not everyone has a solid relationship with their parents, the push to own a house, or to live alone in an apartment, helps the housing market by driving up home and rental prices—while simultaneously hurting food security. *Perhaps limitations imposed by rental contracts impact how many people can live together.* Individuality, and how it impacts food insecurity, was not the focus of this particular research project. Future research, however, may want to give serious consideration to how—at least in the United States—American ideals of individuality have contributed to food insecurity. Owning a car instead of sharing the car with others, or living alone instead of with a group of people,

puts a strain on income that could otherwise be devoted to food. A poverty-level income may be enough to buy food, and pay the rent, if more people live in a home together. In addition, more people living in a home, or an apartment, will simultaneously take stress off of the push for “more farm land” as housing areas encroach upon the best and most fertile farm lands.

### *GMOs, Food Waste, and Technology*

I am not entering into the GMO debate about climate change, environmental pollution, or health issues. If world food production doubles based on efficiency created by GMOs, and food remains a commodity, then food insecurity will remain. If GMO developed foods stay ‘fresh’ for three years, or five years, it will not matter if foods are still accessed with money. Exchange-value will still be the primary barrier to food, even for food that requires less water, less sun, and stays fresh longer.

Furthermore, globally one-third of all food is wasted (Ackerman-Leist 2013; Worland 2015). This is terrible, and recovering this food could mean lower food prices, as well as more food to give away through food banks. Eliminating food waste would still not address food insecurity, because if food waste could somehow be reduced to zero, that could mean that food markets would only produce enough food to feed people with money. Zero food waste, when thought of in market terms, could take a dystopic Malthusian approach.

Some of the food aid organizations often had work requirements, or proof of low-income, as a prerequisite to getting food access. This is because food, even rescued food that otherwise would have gone to a landfill, is still a commodity in the minds of most

people. Some people have conflicted feelings about giving food away for free, perhaps because they embrace food as a commodity and simultaneously a human right—and for those same reasons, some people feel conflicted about accepting free food. Until food is *really* considered a human right, instead of a commodity, food waste will most likely endure. Capitalist food sovereignty is ever-present. People may morally deny themselves food, even free food, if they have not exchanged-money to access it. For zero food waste to be effective, the entire mentality around humanity's modern relationship with food needs to change.

Drone farmworkers, potentially, could work around the clock and never be paid an hourly wage. If technology displaces people from work, maybe this is a good thing, because then food could be grown and given away for free. But, just like food waste, the relationship with food will need to change if people are going to accept *free food* grown by drones. First it will need public control of food production. Second, it will need people to really accept food as a human right instead of a commodified privilege.

Drone farmworkers and AI may present a challenge in the near future. In a rational economic system that puts a price on everything, it is difficult to access food without competing in the labor market. But the competition for jobs may become more complicated as advances in technological efficiency impact the labor market (Ford 2015). Through the adoption of drones, AI, and robotics, wage-labor may greatly diminish or become obsolete. In developed countries, middle-class jobs such as lawyers, medical laborers, soldiers, farmers, retailers, teachers, and other occupations may experience dramatic reductions in labor hours (Ford 2015). As this transition may be harder for some than others, social safety nets are often suggested to help people who become

unemployed or underemployed by technological displacement (Mokyr, Vickers and Ziebarth 2015). The ability to earn money to exchange for food may not be a reality for many people in the future, adding to the millions of people already struggling to access food. Creating humane answers for access to everyday necessities must address the pitfalls of economic competition and technological displacement.

### *Nutritionism*

Nutritionism is the process of reducing a meal, or drink, to its most basic use-values of providing the daily caloric needs, vitamins, and minerals for the human body (Graham et al. 2016). Opponents of nutritionism, notably Michael Pollan, believe reducing food to a base use-value of calories and nutrients ignores food's other use-values such as building community and culture (McKibben 2007; Pollan 2006). In addition, nutritionists tend to believe that food insecurity is a lack of education in making sound food choices, which ignores the elephant in the room when it comes to addressing food insecurity.

As Rebecca Graham et al. point out, "This nutritionistic approach reduces food to macronutrients and calorie counts, overlooking wider sociocultural aspects of meal provision and communal eating. There is often an underlying assumption in food-related research that people are mostly able to access necessary food items. Scarcity due to food poverty is rarely acknowledged" (Graham et. al 2016: 2). Nutritionists may also believe a lack of education is the problem for food insecure people. "Arguments for nutritional education programs indicate the disconnection between health researchers and the day-to-day realities of people living with food insecurity" (Graham et. al 2016: 2).

First, and the point that Pollan and other foodies are most likely concerned about, is the impact on culture and community. Food has a unique way of establishing community. Cooking and eating together is a unifying experience. Downing a nutritionist shake might be like meeting someone for coffee, which means culture could be lost, but perhaps not community. Or maybe a new culture is created!

Second, in a science-fiction inspired future, nutritionists may envision superfoods that come in a shake that people can drink once or twice a day to fulfill all their nutrient and caloric needs. But if it's like meeting someone for a cup of coffee then it will cost money. Nutritionism does not address food as a commodity. It doesn't matter how exact the science is—if free markets are involved then the food will not be free. This potentially will leave the poor vulnerable to food insecurity. The commodification impact may, in addition, lead to a differentiation between social classes. Would the food replacement nutritionist shake be something for everyone, or only something for the poor? Would the food replacement have different levels of taste, with the best tasting costing the most, and therefore being the most dignified?

Third, packaging and distribution may be an issue for a large-scale government food supplement program, or a large-scale corporate food product. Either one of these would require a place to assemble the nutritionist food supplement, package it, then distribute it. This will cost money, requiring either a higher price for customers, or higher taxes if this is a government program. The commodification of food, like all of the other answers, makes nutritionism an uncertain answer to food insecurity at the present time.

## Answers to Food Insecurity

In the Garden of Eden there was more than enough food for Adam to eat. Modern readers do not criticize Adam for not whipping out money, gold, or a credit card to pay God for food. Adam did not feel guilty about accepting free food. A commodified relationship with nature did not exist. Whether you are religious or not, understanding that the modern commodified relationship with nature is a socially created human invention should lead to the next understanding—human inventions can be undone or re-invented.

Capitalism, for all its merits of making some people rich, leaves many hard-working people struggling to pay the bills (Stiglitz 2012, 2002). Real answers to food insecurity will require addressing the elephant in the room: the capitalist food system. But there are many people who participate in the free market economy, meaning hundreds of millions of bystanders and enablers who remain silent while surrounded by social injustice. Eviatar Zerubavel wrote in *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life*:

“Yet the one structural factor that most dramatically affects the likelihood of participating in conspiracies of silence is the actual number of conspirators involved. In marked contrast to ordinary secrets, the value of which is a direct function of their exclusivity (that is, of the paucity of people who share them), open secrets actually become more tightly guarded as more, rather than fewer, people are “in the know.” Indeed, the larger the number of participants in the conspiracy, the “heavier” and more “resounding” the silence” (Zerubavel 2006: 54-55).

Competition has created a food system that produces abundant food as well as creates barriers to food access. Food value in this food system is prioritized for exchange-value over use-value. Capitalism’s food crisis, therefore, socially invents hunger and malnutrition. This is an important concept to remember. If the planet can already produce enough food to feed everyone, but doesn’t, then technologies that produce even more



food may not matter in the future because there would still be people left hungry due to competition. The ideology of needing to *earn* food access may leave millions of people malnourished no matter how much food is produced.

If food is valued as a money-exchange commodity, instead of for its use value, then food becomes a prize won through successfully competing on labor markets instead of a human right. First, this food value framework created by capitalism has alienated people from food. In the hegemonic food system that emphasizes exchange-value, even in times of abundant food, people may be left hungry or even die of starvation because exchange-value was prioritized over use-value. This denial of abundant food because of money acts like a bureaucratic process (Weber 1946), in which poverty functions like rational shackles keeping hungry people from accessing abundant food. If this is a problem during times of abundant food, how much greater will the challenge be when food supply decreases? Future food value research should consider how environmental challenges may impact food production capabilities due to increased droughts, increased temperatures, floods, wildfires, and rising ocean levels (Klein 2014b, Parenti 2011). Climate refugees with the least amount of money will be vulnerable in a competitive exchange-value food system.

Second, it's an exchange-value world, and we're all just living in it. Future food value research should consider how age, race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion impact the prioritization of use-value versus exchange-value. Exchange-value pits neighbors competing against neighbors, and friends versus friends, to find enough money to exchange for food. The issues of food access and food values embrace theories of class conflict (Marx et al. 1978, Patel 2009), bureaucracy (Weber 1946), efficiency (Ritzer

2015), and status (Bourdieu and Nice 1984). The conflict between use-value and exchange-value is an enduring challenge for food security because it is a struggle of individual private property versus community property.

Third, it is my hope that the concept of food value serves as a theoretical bridge between food insecurity, food retail, the human right to food, and food justice.

Understanding the framework of food value can guide activists, policymakers, and food aid organizations to create answers to food insecurity that are nutritionally sound, dignified, and can strengthen communities.

People at the PAC Food Bank acknowledged that they are a Band-Aid for bigger problems that exist in society. But they are also dependent on corporate and private donations. Anything *too radical*, such as trying to acknowledge the elephant in the room, may be a bitter pill for deep pocket philanthropists to swallow, which may cause many donations to dry up for the PAC Food Bank. But addressing society's economic structural issues is exactly what needs to happen if a sustainable, secure, and just food system is to ever emerge.

For the Oregon Community Garden, building community was more important than growing food. If you teach people to work together, instead of competing against each other, you are helping develop a community that can meet life's challenges with grit and determination. This food aid organization that grows food to give it away for free is like a fish swimming against the capitalist current of rational economics. The Oregon Community Garden, which has been in existence for over twenty-five years, requires the support of the community to plant food, harvest food, teach gardening, and deliver food to the local food bank for free. It requires volunteer labor time, donated materials,

donated land, and the skills of garden directors who understand the specific challenges of the local climate. *The garden is a socially-created human invention.*

Hunger and poverty are intimately linked—which is why the Oregon Community Garden puts no price on the food it gives away. But the Oregon Community Garden, in its attempts to build community and distribute food for free, faces the relentless pressures of existing in a surplus-value society. Surplus-value, and exchange-value, both dictate that in order to use land, water, and other materials... money must exchange hands. This puts the sustainability and future of the Oregon Community Garden in a constant state of uncertainty. Although people can be replaced, even Grace can be replaced, it is the land which is the key ingredient for this garden to exist. The land is currently leased from the church for \$1 per year. But if the church disappears there is no guarantee that the garden will continue to exist. If land and water are commodities sold on competitive markets, then there is no way to perpetually guarantee the existence of the Oregon Community Garden. This dissertation is not about moral judgements, but instead, it is an analysis of food value and the human right to food. As long as the ingredients for food production, such as land, water and labor, are commodities sold on competitive markets, then food cannot be a guaranteed human right.

The United States has taken a lot of flack in the past for refusing to guarantee the human right to food. However, if our relationship to the environment is one based on free markets, then there does not appear a way to guarantee access to food. It is not the availability of food, but the competition for the necessary ingredients involved with food production, which makes the human right to food such a challenge. By growing food to give away for free in a society that overwhelmingly embraces the exchange-value of

food, the Oregon Community Garden is an irrational actor surrounded by an ocean of rationalized hegemonic-silence.

There is *more* than enough food to feed everyone in the world and yet thousands starve every day. Addressing the elephant in the room may require a simple lesson learned in elementary school, and learned at the Oregon Community Garden—sharing is caring.

## REFERENCES CITED

2010. "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act." in *42 U.S.C. § 18001 et seq., 111th Congress*.
2014. "The Agricultural Act of 2014." in *H.R. 2642, 113th Congress*.
- Abel, Jaison R. and Richard Deitz. 2014. "Do the Benefits of a College Education Still Outweigh the Costs?" Vol. 20. [newyorkfed.org](http://newyorkfed.org): Federal Reserve Bank of New York.
- Ackerman-Leist, Philip. 2013. *Rebuilding the Foodshed : How to Create Local, Sustainable, and Secure Food Systems*. Santa Rosa, CA: Chelsea Green Pub.
- Adair, Vivyan C. 2002. "Branded with Infamy: Inscriptions of Poverty and Class in the United States." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 27(2):451. doi: 10.1086/495693.
- Ali, Laila. 2016, "In Mogadishu, Wfp Is Supporting the Most Vulnerable People with Cash-Based Transfers", [wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org): World Food Programme. Retrieved Oct. 12th, 2016 (<http://www.wfp.org/stories/mogadishu-wfp-supporting-most-vulnerable-people-cash-based-transfers>).
- Alkon, Alison Hope and Julian Agyeman. 2011. *Cultivating Food Justice : Race, Class, and Sustainability*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Almaguer, Tomás. 1994. *Racial Fault Lines : The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Amadeo, Kimberly. 2017, "Dow Highest Closing Records: Compare to Dow Jones Closing History: Top Highs, Lows since 1929", [thebalance.com](http://thebalance.com): Dotdash. Retrieved December 23rd, 2017 (<https://www.thebalance.com/dow-jones-closing-history-top-highs-and-lows-since-1929-3306174>).
- America, Feeding. 2016a. "Map the Meal Gap 2016: A Report on County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2014." Vol. [feedingamerica.org](http://feedingamerica.org).
- America, Feeding. 2016b, "What Is a Food Bank?", [FeedingAmerica.org](http://FeedingAmerica.org): Feeding America. Retrieved October 9th, 2016 (<http://www.feedingamerica.org/about-us/how-we-work/food-bank-network/what-is-a-food-bank.html>).
- Anderson, Kat. 2005. *Tending the Wild : Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Bank, World. 2013. "World Bank Group Agriculture Action Plan 2013-2015." Vol. Washington D.C.: The World Bank.
- Barndt, Deborah. 2001a. "On the Move for Food: Three Women Behind the Tomato's Journey." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 29(1/2):131-43.
- Barndt, Deborah. 2001b. "On the Move for Food: Three Women Behind the Tomato's Journey." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 29(1/2):131-43.
- Barthes, Roland. 2013. "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption." in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by C. Counihan and P. Van Esterik. New York: New York: Routledge.
- Bassett, Tom and Alex Winter-Nelson. 2010. *The Atlas of World Hunger*. Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Blaine, Thomas W., Parwinder S. Grewal, Ashley Dawes and Darrin Snider. 2010, "Profiling Community Gardens", *joe.org: Extension Journal*. Retrieved November 15th, 2016 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160505184513/http://www.joe.org/joe/2010december/a6.php>).
- Block, Karl and Margaret R. Somers. 2014. *The Power of Market Fundamentalism: Karl Polanyi's Critique*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Richard Nice. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge: Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2012. "A Social Distinction of the Judgement of Taste." in *Food and Culture a Reader*, edited by C. Counihan and P. Van Esterik. Hoboken: Hoboken : Taylor and Francis.
- Broad, Garrett M. 2016. *More Than Just Food - Food Justice and Community Change*: Oakland, California: University of California Press.
- Brown, Phil, Rachel Morello-Frosch, Stephen Zavestoski and the Contested Illness Research Group. 2012. *Contested Illnesses: Citizens, Science, and Health Social Movements*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Bullard, Robert D., Glenn S. Johnson and Angel O. Torres. 2005. "Addressing Global Poverty, Pollution, and Human Rights." Pp. 279-97 in *The Quest for Environmental Justice : Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution*, edited by R. D. Bullard. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Burkett, Paul. 2009. *Marxism and Ecological Economics : Toward a Red and Green Political Economy*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.

- Carney, Megan A. 2015. *The Unending Hunger: Tracing Women and Food Insecurity across Borders*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Chilton, Mariana and Donald Rose. 2009. "A Rights-Based Approach to Food Insecurity in the United States." *American Journal of Public Health* 99(7):1203-11.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1999. *Profit over People : Neoliberalism and Global Order*. New York: Seven Stories Press.
- Cohen, Marc and James Garrett. 2010. "The Food Price Crisis and Urban Food (in)Security." *Environment and Urbanization* 22(2):467-82.
- Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Christian Gregory and Anita Singh. 2016. "Household Food Security in the United States 2015." Vol. ERR-215.
- Covert, Bryce. 2017. "The Trojan Horse in the Tax Bill." in *The New York Times*. New York: The New York Times Company.
- Dockstader, Sue. 2012. "Thesis: Engendering the Metabolic Rift: A Feminist Political Ecology of Agrofuels." Environmental Studies, University of Oregon. Retrieved from /z-wcorg/ , <http://hdl.handle.net/1794/12444>.
- Domhoff, G. William. 2013. *Who Rules America? : The Triumph of the Corporate Rich*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Dubick, James, Brandon Mathews and Clare Cady. 2016. "Hunger on Campus: The Challenge of Food Insecurity for College Students." Vol. <http://studentsagainsthunger.org>.
- Engels, Friedrich. 2009. *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Escobar, Arturo. 1995. *Encountering Development : The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Fanon, Frantz and Richard Philcox. 2004. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- FAO. 2011, "Famine in Somalia", [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org): Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Retrieved Oct. 12th, 2016 (<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/82387/icode/>).

- FAO. 2016a, "Right to Food: About Right to Food", FAO.org: FAO. Retrieved September 20th, 2016 (<http://www.fao.org/righttofood/about-right-to-food/en/>).
- FAO. 2016b, "Somalia: Programmes in Somalia": Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Retrieved Oct. 12th, 2016 (<http://www.fao.org/somalia/programmes-and-projects/en/>).
- Farmer, Paul. 2005. *Pathologies of Power : Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor : With a New Preface by the Author*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- FNB. 2017, "Food Not Bombs: Faq", foodnotbombs.net: Food Not Bombs. Retrieved July 27th, 2017 ([http://foodnotbombs.net/new\\_site/faq.php](http://foodnotbombs.net/new_site/faq.php)).
- Food Bank, Oregon and Spencer Masterson. 2013. "The State of Our Community Food System: A Summary of Community Food Assessments in Rural Oregon." Vol. Portland, OR: Oregon Food Bank.
- Food Bank, Oregon. 2016. "Hunger Factors 2015: Hunger and Poverty in Oregon and Clark County, Wa - Executive Summary." Vol. oregonfoodbank.org: Oregon Food Bank.
- Food Bank, Oregon. 2017, "Statewide Network", oregonfoodbank.org: Oregon Food Bank. Retrieved August 3rd, 2017 (<https://www.oregonfoodbank.org/our-work/partnerships/statewide-network/>).
- Foods, Whole. 2017a, "Whole Foods: Investor Relations", wholefoodsmarket.com: Whole Foods Market. Retrieved August 3rd, 2017 (<http://investor.wholefoodsmarket.com/investors/stock-information/stock-quote-and-chart/default.aspx>).
- Foods, Whole. 2017b, "We Create Wealth through Profits and Growth", wholefoodsmarket.com: Whole Foods Market. Retrieved July 29th, 2017 (<http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/mission-values/core-values/we-create-wealth-through-profits-growth>).
- Foods, Whole. 2017c, "Whole Foods: Our Core Values", wholefoodsmarket.com: Whole Foods Market. Retrieved July 29th, 2017 (<http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/mission-values/core-values>).
- Ford, Martin. 2015. *Rise of the Robots: Technology and the Threat of a Jobless Future*. New York: Basic Books.
- Forest, Beacon Food. 2017a, "Beacon Food Forest - Home Page", beaconfoodforest.org: Beacon Food Forest. Retrieved July 25th, 2017 (<http://www.beaconfoodforest.org/>).



- Forest, Beacon Food. 2017b, "Beacon Food Forest: Faq", Beaconfoodforest.org. Retrieved July 24th, 2017 (<http://www.beaconfoodforest.org/faq/>).
- Foster, John Bellamy, Brett Clark and Richard York. 2010. *The Ecological Rift : Capitalism's War on the Earth*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Foster, John Bellamy. 2016, "Marx as a Food Theorist", monthlyreview.org: Monthly Review Press. Retrieved 7, 68 (<https://monthlyreview.org/2016/12/01/marx-as-a-food-theorist/>).
- Foucault, Michel. 1979. *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 1994. *The Birth of the Clinic : An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. New York: New York : Vintage Books.
- Galeano, Eduardo. 1997. *Open Veins of Latin America : Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Galtung, Johan. 1969. "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research." *Journal of Peace Research* 6(3).
- Gloyd, Steve. 2004. "Sapping the Poor: The Impact of Structural Adjustment Programs." Pp. 43-54 in *Sickness and Wealth: The Corporate Assault on Global Health*, edited by M. Fort, M. A. Mercer and Ó. Gish. Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press.
- Goodkind, Daniel and Loraine West. 2001. "The North Korean Famine and Its Demographic Impact." *Population and Development Review* 27(2):219-38. doi: 10.1111/j.1728-4457.2001.00219.x.
- Gould, Kenneth Alan and Tammy L. Lewis. 2009. *Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Greider, Thomas and Lorraine Garkovich. 1994. "Landscapes: The Social Construction of Nature and the Environment." *Rural Sociology* 59(1).
- Guptil, Amy E., Denise A. Copelton and Betsy Lucal. 2013. *Food & Society: Principles and Paradoxes*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Haan, Arjan de. 2009. *How the Aid Industry Works : An Introduction to International Development*. Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press.
- Hall, Keith. 2017. *Letter to Steny H. Hoyer* Congress. Retrieved December 23rd, 2017 (<https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/costestimate/hr1hoyerletter.pdf>).

- Harvey, David. 2007. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: New York : Oxford University Press.
- Hedges, Chris. 2009. *Empire of Illusion : The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*. New York: Nation Books.
- Herd, Robert. 2004. "Food Shortages and International Agricultural Programs." *Critical Reviews in Plant Sciences* 23(6):505-17.
- Holmes, Seth M. 2013. *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies : Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Holt-Giménez, Eric. 2011. "Food Movements Unite!: Strategies to Transform Our Food Systems." in *Food Movements Unite!: Strategies to Transform Our Food Systems*, edited by E. Holt-Giménez. Oakland, CA: Food First Books.
- Kirimli, Hakan. 2003. "The Famine of 1921-22 in the Crimea and the Volga Basin and the Relief from Turkey." *Middle Eastern Studies* 39(1):37-88.
- Klein, Naomi. 2014a. *This Changes Everything : Capitalism Vs. The Climate*. New York: New York : Simon & Schuster.
- Klein, Naomi. 2014b. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs. The Climate*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Krieger, N. 1999. "Embodying Inequality: A Review of Concepts, Measures, and Methods for Studying Health Consequences of Discrimination." *International journal of health services : planning, administration, evaluation* 29(2):295-352.
- Krieger, N. 2005. "Embodiment: A Conceptual Glossary for Epidemiology." *Journal of epidemiology and community health* 59(5):350-5.
- Lasker, Judith. 2016. *Hoping to Help: The Promises and Pitfalls of Global Health Volunteering*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.
- Leachman, Michael. 1999. "How Many Hungry Oregonians? Measuring Food Insecurity and Hunger." Vol. Silverton, OR: Oregon Center for Public Policy.
- Lewis, Tammy L. 2009. "Environmental Movements in the Global South." Pp. 244-54 in *Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology*, edited by K. A. Gould and T. L. Lewis. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Luchette, Claire. 2017, "Is Capitalism a Barrier to Food Justice", *Civileats.com: Civil Eats*. Retrieved December 8th, 2017 (<https://civileats.com/2017/12/08/capitalism-is-a-barrier-to-food-justice/>).

- Luker, Kristin. 2010. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Magdoff, Fred and John Bellamy Foster. 2011. *What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism : A Citizen's Guide to Capitalism and the Environment*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Magdoff, Fred. 2012. "Food as a Commodity." 63(8).
- Majid, N. and S. McDowell. 2012. "Hidden Dimensions of the Somalia Famine." *Global Food Security*. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2012.07.003>.
- Malthus, T. R. 1926. *First Essay on Population, 1798*. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd.
- Manning, Rob. 2014, "Grass from Oregon Seed Grows on World Cup Soccer Fields", opb.org: Oregon Public Broadcasting. Retrieved October 24th, 2016 (<http://www.opb.org/news/article/grass-from-oregon-seed-covers-world-cup-soccer-fields/>).
- Market, Portland Farmers. 2015, "Portland Farmers Market: Strategic Plan", portlandfarmersmarket.org: Portland Farmers Market. Retrieved July 25th, 2017 (<http://www.portlandfarmersmarket.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/PFM-Strategic-Plan-2015-2018-For-Web.pdf>).
- Market, Portland Farmers. 2017a, "Portland Farmers Market: Double-up Food Bucks for Snap Recipients", portlandfarmersmarket.org: Portland Farmers Market. Retrieved August 3rd, 2017 (<http://www.portlandfarmersmarket.org/programs-events/double-up-food-bucks/>).
- Market, Portland Farmers. 2017b, "Portland Farmers Market: Mission and Strategy", portlandfarmersmarket.org: Portland Farmers Market. Retrieved July 25th, 2017 (<http://www.portlandfarmersmarket.org/about-us/mission-strategy/>).
- Martlew, Nick. 2009. "Band Aids and Beyond: Tackling Disasters in Ethiopia 25 Years after the Famine." Vol. oxfam.org: Oxfam International.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Edited by R. C. Tucker. New York: Norton.
- Marx, Karl, Friedrich Engels and Robert C. Tucker. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: Norton.
- Marx, Karl. 1992. *Capital. Volume 1*. New York: Penguin Classics.

- McDonald's. 2016, "McDonald's: Our History and Timeline", mcdonalds.com: McDonald's. Retrieved July 31, 2017 (<https://www.mcdonalds.com/us/en-us/about-us/our-history.html>).
- McDonald's. 2017, "McDonald's History", mcdonalds.com: McDonald's. Retrieved July 31st, 2017 ([http://corporate.mcdonalds.com/mcd/our\\_company/mcdonalds-history.html](http://corporate.mcdonalds.com/mcd/our_company/mcdonalds-history.html)).
- McKibben, Bill. 2007a. *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*. New York: New York : Times Books.
- McKibben, Bill. 2007b. *Deep Economy : The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*. New York: New York : Times Books.
- McMichael, Philip. 2009. "A Food Regime Analysis of the 'World Food Crisis'." *Agriculture and Human Values* 26(4):281-95.
- McMichael, Philip. 2010a. "The World Food Crisis in Historical Perspective." in *Agriculture and Food in Crisis : Conflict, Resistance, and Renewal*, edited by F. Magdoff and B. Tokar. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- McMichael, Philip. 2010b. "Agrofuels in the Food Regime." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 37(4):609-29.
- McMichael, Philip. 2010c. "The World Food Crisis in Historical Perspective." in *Agriculture and Food in Crisis: Conflict, Resistance, and Renewal*, edited by F. Magdoff and B. Tokar. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- McMichael, Philip. 2012. *Development and Social Change : A Global Perspective*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- McMichael, Philip. 2013. "Land Grabbing as Security Mercantilism in International Relations." *Globalizations* 10(1):47-64.
- Meng, Xin, Nancy Qian and Pierre Yared. 2015. "The Institutional Causes of China's Great Famine, 1959-1961." *Review of economic studies* 82(4):1568-68.
- Mészáros, István. 2005. *Marx's Theory of Alienation*. London: The Merlin Press, Ltd.
- Mills, C. Wright. 1956. *The Power Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Moeller, D. W. 2011. *Environmental Health*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

- Mokyr, Joel, Chris Vickers and Nicolas Ziebarth. 2015. "The History of Technological Anxiety and the Future of Economic Growth: Is This Time Different?". *Journal of economic perspectives* 29(3):31-50.
- Morales, Alfonso. 2011. "Growing Food and Justice: Dismantling Racism through Sustainable Food Systems." in *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*, edited by A. H. Alkon and J. Agyeman. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Mészáros, István. 2017. "Capital's Historic Circle Is Closing: The Challenge to Secure Exit." *Monthly Review* 69(7):4-5.
- Nearing, Helen and Scott Nearing. 1989. *The Good Life : Helen and Scott Nearing's Sixty Years of Self-Sufficient Living*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Nestle, Marion. 2007. *Food Politics How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Norgaard, Karie Marie, Ron Reed and Carolina Van Horn. 2011. "A Continuing Legacy: Institutional Racism, Hunger, and Nutritional Justice on the Klamath." in *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*, edited by A. H. Alkon and J. Agyeman. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- OHCHR. 2016, "What Are Human Rights?", ohchr.org: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Retrieved October 31st, 2016 (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx>).
- OMB. 2017. *Omb Report to the Congress on the Joint Committee Reductions for Fiscal Year 2018* Congress. Retrieved December 23rd, 2017 ([https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/sequestration\\_reports/2018\\_jc\\_sequestration\\_report\\_may2017\\_potus.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/sequestration_reports/2018_jc_sequestration_report_may2017_potus.pdf)).
- Opitz, Florian ed. 2006. *The Big Sellout*. San Francisco, Calif.: California Newsreel.
- Oregon, Partners for a Hunger Free. 2016, "Farmers Markets Matching Snap", Oregonhunger.org: Partners for a Hunger Free Oregon. Retrieved Oct. 16th, 2016 (<https://oregonhunger.org/farmers-markets-snap>).
- Paarlberg, Robert L. 2013. *Food Politics : What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Parenti, Christian. 2011. *Tropic of Chaos : Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence*. New York: Nation Books.
- Park, Lisa Sun-Hee and David N. Pellow. 2011. *The Slums of Aspen : Immigrants Vs. The Environment in America's Eden*. New York: New York University Press.

- Patel, Raj. 2009. *The Value of Nothing: How to Reshape Market Society and Redefine Democracy*. New York: Picador.
- Patel, Raj. 2012. *Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power and the Hidden Battle for the World Food System*. Brooklyn, NY: Melville House Publishing.
- Patton-López, Megan M., Daniel F. López-Cevallos, Doris I. Cancel-Tirado and Leticia Vazquez. 2014. "Prevalence and Correlates of Food Insecurity among Students Attending a Midsize Rural University in Oregon." *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* 46(3):209-14.
- Polanyi, Karl. 2001. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Pollan, Michael. 2006. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: New York : Penguin Press.
- Poppendieck, Janet. 2000. "Want among Plenty." in *Hungry for Profit: The Agribusiness Threat to Farmers, Food, and the Environment*, edited by F. Magdoff, J. B. Foster and F. H. Buttel. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.
- Potash, Shira and Yoav Potash [Director]. Year. *Food Stamped*.
- Powell, Jane. 2017. "Joining the Dots of the Welsh Food System: Jane Powell on the Meaning of Food." Food Ethics Council. *Food Ethics Council - Power Blog*. Retrieved 2017 (<http://www.foodethicscouncil.org/blog/149/19/Joining-the-dots-of-the-Welsh-food-system/>).
- Prashad, Vijay. 2007. *The Darker Nations : A People's History of the Third World*. New York: New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton.
- Reader, John. 2009. *Potato : A History of the Propitious Esculent*, Edited by J. Reader. New Haven: New Haven : Yale University Press.
- Rieff, David. 2015. *The Reproach of Hunger : Food, Justice, and Money in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: New York : Simon & Schuster.
- Ritzer, George. 2015. "Prosumer Capitalism." *Sociological Quarterly* 56(3):413-45.
- Roberts, J. Timmons. 2009. "Climate Change: Why the Old Approaches Aren't Working." Pp. 191-208 in *Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology*, edited by K. A. Gould and T. L. Lewis. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Said, Edward W. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Sanders, Barry. 2009. *The Green Zone : The Environmental Costs of Militarism*. Oakland, CA: AK Press.

- Sarfaty, Galit A. 2012. *Values in Translation : Human Rights and the Culture of the World Bank*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Sayers, Sean. 2009, "Marxism and the Crisis Of capitalism", mronline.org: Monthly Review. Retrieved December 21st, 2017 (<https://mronline.org/2009/03/20/marxism-and-the-crisis-of-capitalism/>).
- Sen, Amartya. 1981. *Poverty and Famines : An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Shiva, Vandana. 2002. *Water Wars : Privatization, Pollution and Profit*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Singleton, Royce and Bruce C. Straits. 2009. *Approaches to Social Research*: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, Andrea. 2005. *Conquest : Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Stiglitz, Joseph E. 2002. *Globalization and Its Discontents*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Stiglitz, Joseph E. 2012. *The Price of Inequality : [How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future]*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Stédile, João Pedro and Horácio Martins de Carvalho. 2011. "People Need Food Sovereignty." in *Food Movements Unite! : Strategies to Transform Our Food Systems*, edited by E. Holt-Giménez. Oakland, CA: Food First Books.
- Sullivan, Eileen and Michael Tackett. 2017. "In Signing Sweeping Tax Bill, Trump Questions Whether He Is Getting Enough Credit." in *The New York Times*. New York: The New York Times Company.
- Szasz, Andrew. 2007. *Shopping Our Way to Safety : How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Tucker, Robert C., Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: New York : Norton.
- UN. 1948. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* Congress. Retrieved September 20th, 2016 (<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>).
- UN. 2016, "Dangerous Funding Gap' May Lead to More Cuts in Food Rations for Refugees in Kenya", un.org: United Nations. Retrieved April 15th, 2017 (<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55739#.WFWRZrGZPVo>).

- UNICEF. 2016, "Syrian Children under Siege", Unicefusa.org: UNICEF USA. Retrieved October 23rd, 2016 (<https://www.unicefusa.org/mission/emergencies/child-refugees/syria-crisis?>).
- USDA. 2016a, "Definitions of Farmers Markets, Direct Marketing Farmers, and Other Related Terms", usda.gov: United States Department of Agriculture: Food and Nutrition Service. Retrieved Oct. 9th, 2016 (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ebt/definitions-farmers-markets-direct-marketing-farmers-and-other-related-terms>).
- USDA. 2016b, "Agricultural Act of 2014: Highlights and Implications", usda.gov: United States Department of Agriculture: Economic Research Service. Retrieved Oct. 16th, 2016 (<http://www.ers.usda.gov/agricultural-act-of-2014-highlights-and-implications.aspx>).
- USDA. 2016c, "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Snap): Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (Abawds)", USDA.GOV: Unit. Retrieved December 7th, 2016 (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/able-bodied-adults-without-dependents-abawds>).
- USDA. 2017a, "Snap Retailer Locator", usda.gov: USDA. Retrieved August 3rd, 2017 (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailerlocator>).
- USDA. 2017b, "Snap: Eligible Food Items", usda.gov: USDA. Retrieved August 3rd, 2017 (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items>).
- USDA. 2017c, "Women, Infants, and Children (Wic)", usda.gov: USDA. Retrieved July 31st, 2017 (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/frequently-asked-questions-about-wic>).
- Velazquez, Elaine [Director] B. Bernstein and E. Velazquez [Producer]. Year. *Gaining Ground*.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1984. *The Politics of the World-Economy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Weber, Max. 1946. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Edited by H. Gerth and C. W. Mills. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, Max and Stephen Kalberg. 2008. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- WFP. 2016, "Syrian Arab Republic: Current Issues and What the World Food Programme Is Doing": United Nations World Food Programme. Retrieved Oct. 12th, 2016 (<https://www.wfp.org/countries/syria>).



- WFP. 2017, "Zero Hunger": World Food Programme. Retrieved July 7th, 2017 (<http://www1.wfp.org/zero-hunger>).
- Willette, Miranda, Kari Norgaard, Ron Reed and Karuk Tribe. 2015. "You Got to Have Fish: Families, Environmental Decline and Cultural Reproduction." *Families, Relationships, and Societies* 5(3):375-92. doi: 10.1332/204674316X14758424912055.
- WinCo. 2017a, "Winco Foods: Frequently Asked Questions", wincofoods.com: WinCo Foods. Retrieved July 24th, 2017 (<https://www.wincofoods.com/customer-service/faqs/>).
- WinCo. 2017b, "Winco Foods: About", wincofoods.com: WinCo Foods. Retrieved July 24th, 2017 (<https://www.wincofoods.com/about>).
- Worland, Justin. 2015. "U.S. Aims to Cut Food Waste in Half by 2030." *Time*.
- Wright, Erik Olin and Joel Rogers. 2011. *American Society: How It Really Works*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Wynn-Jones, Sophie and Food Values Project. 2015, "Food Values: Policy Evaluation", <http://www.organiccentrewales.org.uk/>: Organic Center Wales. Retrieved December 29th, 2017 ([http://www.organiccentrewales.org.uk/uploads/food\\_values\\_policy\\_evaluation.pdf](http://www.organiccentrewales.org.uk/uploads/food_values_policy_evaluation.pdf)).
- Wynne-Jones, Sophie, Jane Powel, Sam Packer and Rosa Robinson. 2017. "Rethinking Food in Wales: Reconnecting through Values." Food Values Blog. *Food Values*. Retrieved 2017 (<https://foodvaluesblog.wordpress.com/2017/08/11/rethinking-food-in-wales-reconnecting-through-values/>).
- Zaraska, Marta. 2016. *Meathooked : The History and Science of Our 2.5-Million-Year Obsession with Meat*. New York: New York : Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group.
- Zavestoski, Stephen, Sabrina McCormick and Phil Brown. 2004. "Gender, Embodiment, and Disease: Environmental Breast Cancer Activists' Challenges to Science, the Biomedical Model, and Policy." *Science as Culture* 13(4).
- Zuckerman, Larry. 1998. *The Potato : How the Humble Spud Rescued the Western World*. Boston: Boston : Faber and Faber.
- Ó Gráda, Cormac. 2009. *Famine : A Short History*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.