“BEEF. IT’S WHAT’S FOR DINNER:” AN ANALYSIS OF BEEF-DRIVEN POWERLESSNESS AS IT RELATES TO FOOD INSECURITY, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND ADVERTISING IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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This thesis explores power and powerlessness with regard to food insecurity, food deserts and food swamps, climate change and methane production, and advertising as they relate to beef and the beef industry. This thesis employs Steven Lukes' three-dimensional view of power to base its theoretical framework. Using this model in application to my case study, the "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" advertising campaign, I argue that the National Cattlemen's Beef Board has shaped consciousness surrounding consumer understanding of beef and their own interests. Applying concepts of structural powerlessness, attitudinal powerlessness, ideological hegemony, and conscientization, this thesis seeks to expose beef-induced institutional inequities, reveal the efforts of the beef industry to shape consciousness, and suggest avenues for reclamation of power.

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Table of Contents

Section I. Introduction

America is a society obsessed with meat. We eat more meat than practically any other country in the world, and specifically, we eat more beef than any other meat product (Barclay 2012, 1). We plan festivals around meat, write songs about it, and nearly base the American identity off it. Meat is such an integral aspect of Americanism that to eat meat is practically a patriotic act. Eating meat, and beef in particular, doesn't come without cost, though; heart disease, influenced by diets high in saturated fats and cholesterol, is the number-one cause of death in America (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2021, 1). To add insult to injury, raising livestock for food contributes significantly to the greenhouse gas effect, worsening the planet's risk of climate disaster. This begs the question: If meat is so unhealthy and climate-adverse, why do we keep eating it?

The answer lies in advertising. "Beef: It's What's for Dinner" and other meat-endorsing slogans like this permeate our culture in the U.S., peppered in the commercial lull between television breaks, coloring the pages of a magazine, or interrupting our favorite Spotify playlists. Descriptive language like "juicy all-American beef" or crisp imagery of fat burgers piled high with artisan cheese, crunchy lettuce, and ruby red tomato accompany these famous sayings, eliciting a mouthwatering sensation and the seductive urge to pull through the McDonald's drive-through after work. Advertising like this would have you believe that this desire is instinctual, an uncontrollable neanderthal craving you have no choice but succumb to. In reality, this lust for beef is not visceral, but rather a manufactured desire created by the meat industry to sell hamburgers. Manipulative advertising is just one piece of the puzzle.

The beef industry works to influence consumer interests and choices in various ways. Advertising is one of the most effective methods the industry uses to control the agenda for consumer diet. Low-income people of color are often the target audience of these schemes, as they are most likely to find advertising helpful in selecting products and are most vulnerable to experiencing powerlessness (Freeman 2007, 2236). Advertising initiatives to promote beef have proved especially successful through compulsory participation in the federal beef checkoff program, in which the United States Department of Agriculture and Cattlemen's Beef Board collects $1 from every head of cattle sold domestically or imported to the U.S. and uses those funds for beef advertising. The beef industry has also sought out even more nefarious opportunities to actively control consumer choices, most notably through influencing U.S. dietary guidelines and scientific standards for industry (Nestle 2013). There is even evidence to prove the beef industry manipulates policy and climate litigation, suggesting that the industry may not only be aware of the environmental impact of beef, but that they may be taking precautions to pre-emptively influence consumer knowledge about methane and carbon dioxide emissions (Zaraska 2016).

Needless to say, eating meat is not always a choice we make consciously. To eat meat is to participate in a societal norm and American ideal that is propelled by the beef industry for the purpose of making big bucks. The danger of Americans' obsession with meat isn't just a concern of nutrition and climate. Profiteering off meat makes significant contributions to the very institution of power and powerlessness in America and creates a system of manipulation, disenfranchisement, and ultimately, dispossession of Americans' basic rights to autonomy and freedom of choice.

This thesis explores topics of manipulation and the exercise of power in shaping consciousness with regard to food and nutrition, as well as climate. It contextualizes these issues within the political sphere by interrogating topics of beef production and consumption in the U.S., the environmental impact of beef, access to nutrition and healthy foods, and the effects of beef advertising in America. Using Steven Lukes' three-dimensional view of power as my theoretical framework, my thesis also assesses power and powerlessness in relation to beef advertising. This model will be introduced in the subsequent section, titled *Theoretical Framework, Powerlessness, and Reclamation of Power.*

This analysis necessarily involves the discussion of food access in the U.S., especially in relation to powerlessness. To do so, I contextualize food insecurity in America with special regard to food deserts and food swamps. In investigating food insecurity, this analysis also requires a conceptualization of powerlessness, especially as it applies to vulnerable groups. Low-income folks and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are the regular targets of ideological hegemony by way of predatory advertising tactics, so exploring these themes through an intersectional lens is absolutely imperative to conceptualizing the problem as a whole. My theoretical conceptualization of power and powerlessness, as well as their connections to food insecurity, climate, and ideological hegemony, will also be outlined in the following section, *Theoretical Framework, Powerlessness, and Reclamation of Power.*

Ultimately, this thesis is an analysis on the state of beef in America; it attempts to explain how our obsession with meat isn't actually a choice. In addition to Lukes' model, my thesis borrows perspectives from environmental studies, political science,

sociology, food studies and other disciplines to argue that the beef lobby, aided by the U.S. government, has intentionally manipulated consumer understanding of our own interests for the purpose of selling hamburgers. To do so, my thesis illuminates the role of beef and beef advertising in creating structural and attitudinal powerlessness (these terms will be defined in the succeeding section, *Theoretical Framework, Powerlessness, and Reclamation of Power*). It demonstrates how poor health, food insecurity, and climate vulnerability entrap marginalized individuals within a caste system of social and economic immobility and quiescence. Finally, it highlights how the powerful capitalize off societal marginalization and perpetuate a cycle of powerlessness for the purpose of generating profit, revealing a frightening truth: Our obsession with meat is no accident.

Theoretical Framework, Powerlessness, and Reclamation of Power

As a theoretical framework, my thesis employs Steven Lukes' three-dimensional view of power to assess power and powerlessness with regard to my case study. The three-dimensional model was pioneered by Lukes in the 1970s as a theoretical critique of the first and second dimensional views of power (Lukes 1974). Like the other two dimensional models, the third view attempts to empirically assess exercise of power from one party onto another. However, unlike the other models, the three-dimensional view of power defines conflict as not only direct, but also latent (Lukes 1974). Through this classification, Lukes critiques the first and second views for their focus on exclusively observable conflict and subjective interests. To assess exercise of power through this view, Lukes employs the use of objective, or "real" interests. He contextualizes this within his model through his concept of false consciousness — a

state where the real interests of the powerless are concealed from them by the powerful (Lukes 1974). Lukes defines the third-dimensional view of power within the context of ideological hegemony, which consolidates these concepts as such: The powerful exercise power over the powerless by shaping consciousness, such that they reflect the interests of the powerful, rather than the real interests of the powerless (Lukes 1974).

John Gaventa's *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* provides basis for my thesis's conceptualization of structural and attitudinal powerlessness. As Gaventa describes, powerlessness is created in the formation of élite and non-élite groups by way of ideological hegemony (Gaventa 1982). These individuals become dependent on the powerful as a result of their loss of agency, perpetuating a cycle of disenfranchisement and predation (Gaventa 1982). I argue that powerlessness occurs both structurally and attitudinally. Structural powerlessness describes the state of powerlessness created by way of structural and institutional bias. Lukes addresses this within his concept of collective action, which he describes as a policy or action enacted not by individuals, but rather sustained by the system itself (Lukes 1974). He writes, "The bias of the system is not sustained simply by a series of individually chosen acts, but also, most importantly, by the socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups, and practices of institutions, which may indeed be manifested by individuals' inaction" (Lukes 1974, 26). Attitudinal powerlessness describes a more traditional sense of ideological hegemony, where power is exercised over the powerless by way of false consciousness. Both structural and attitudinal lenses contribute to powerlessness in unique ways: Where attitudinal powerlessness shapes the consciousness of individuals such that they are not aware of

their own real interests, structural powerlessness maintains a system of political disenfranchisement, which entraps the powerless in a cycle of social and economic immobility.

As is described in Section II. Structural Powerlessness and Section III. Attitudinal Powerlessness, my thesis examines the ramifications of these systems with relation to beef. I advocate in Section II that food insecurity created by beef maintains a system of structural powerlessness and exposes vulnerability upon which the powerful beef lobby capitalizes to boost profits. Section II also describes systems of beef-induced powerlessness with regard to climate and reveals the beef industry's efforts to minimize public awareness of climate change and the role of beef in producing methane. Specifically, this section examines the systemic climate vulnerability induced by beef. Section III investigates ideological hegemony with reference to my case study, the federally sanctioned beef checkoff. This section argues that the beef industry has exercised power over consumers through manipulative advertising and lawsuits. Using the three-dimensional model, my thesis interrogates the Cattlemen's Beef Board and the federal beef checkoff program with respect to its "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" advertising campaign. Although power and consciousness can be ambiguous in that they take many forms in different fields of social science, Lukes' theoretical approach provides my source definition and mechanisms of study for power, ideological hegemony, and false consciousness.

Finally, my thesis considers avenues for reclaiming power. It proposes solutions to beef production and consumption via lifestyle changes, expansion of government programs, and technological advances in methane capture that can make the process of

eating meat more sustainable as a whole. Theoretically, my thesis borrows from Paulo Freire's concept of conscientization as a foundational solution for escaping attitudinal powerlessness and ideological hegemony. This concept is defined by Freire as "the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence" (2018, 81). Plainly stated, it is an awakening which allows the powerless to escape ideological hegemony and think for themselves. I advocate that reclaiming power must take place as a process of conscientization and unlearning paired with structural transformation. In effect, conscientization restores autonomous thinking while structural change restores agency and opportunity for social, political, and economic mobility to dually reclaim power.

Research Questions

In analyzing my case study through a three-dimensional view of power, my thesis focuses analytical research following these questions of inquiry:

Structural Powerlessness

1. How does the accessibility of food affect powerlessness, diet, and beef consumption in the United States?

Attitudinal Powerlessness

2. How has advertising contributed to how we perceive beef as well as our own nutrition in the United States?

3. Does the beef lobby, and specifically the beef checkoff, exercise power over consumers through its "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" campaign? If so, is this exercise of power effective in shaping consciousness surrounding beef consumption, nutrition, and climate awareness in consumers?

Thesis Overview

My thesis is categorized into four main parts:

> Section I. Introduction

> Section II. Structural Powerlessness

> Section III. Attitudinal Powerlessness

> Section IV. Conscientization and Reclamation of Power

Section I introduces the project and theory and provides background for its justification. Section II is categorized into two chapters, one of which explores beef in relation to food insecurity, health, and obesity, and the other of which investigates the relationship between beef and climate. Both chapters consider the impacts of structural powerlessness as it relates to their core topics. Section III outlines the history and prominence of the federal beef checkoff program and uses the three-dimensional view of power to investigate the impacts of the notorious National Cattlemen's Beef Association's "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" advertising campaign. Finally, Section IV proposes solutions to powerlessness within beef-related food insecurity and climate risk through reclamation of power and conscientization.

"Beef: It's What's For Dinner" Case Study

I chose to follow the "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" campaign because the idea of a national beef checkoff program shocked and appalled me, especially as I learned more about the litigation behind it. Further, in investigating the Beef Board's core initiatives and the origin story of the beef checkoff, I found what I hypothesized could be a strong case for promoting powerlessness and manipulation among consumers. The level of involvement from the U.S. government is also unique compared to other advertising campaigns, which usually exist as privately funded third-party initiatives. Exploring the jurisdiction the USDA holds over the checkoff program adds a level of complexity to this issue because it implicates the government in this course of action and introduces the possibility for propagandizing beef sales. The "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" campaign is also an intriguing case study because of its cultural prominence and marketing success; the slogan has become so prominent that it isn't just relevant to the advertising campaign anymore — it has become a common turn of phrase and cultural icon.

Why Beef?

After first learning about the environmental footprint and degradation of health caused by beef during my senior year of high school, I felt compelled to eliminate red meat from my diet to align my values with my lifestyle. This began as a social experiment, and upon telling my family, I had no idea how long it would last. The prospect of giving up burger nights with my family or pepperoni on my pizza

intimidated me, not only because eating is a social activity which is often centered around meat, but also because eating meat was so normalized within my own life.

The transition was difficult, requiring me to take charge of my own diet as a teenager, become the nuisance or picky eater at parties and catered events, and battle my own cravings, resisting the temptation to give it all up for a trip to In-N-Out. Today, the struggle persists when eating out due to a lack of vegetarian options in restaurants, although as a native Portlander, I am grateful to be surrounded by many choices.

Now, four years later, I have permanently cycled red meat out of my diet. I don't crave hamburgers or bacon anymore; in fact, the thought of eating red meat is of no interest to me. Nevertheless, this experience has changed my life and my conception of diet infinitely. A reformed meat eater, I understand the power of meat cravings. As a result, I feel that I have an objective view of the manipulation contributed by beef advertising and nutritional guidelines. Because I have experienced the challenges and social stigma of not eating beef, I also have a personal understanding of the normalization of meat — and especially beef — in society, and the ramifications this presents for reformed eating.

The beef industry is also an interesting arena to study power and powerlessness because it isn't obvious, and at first glance, beef and power don't appear to be related. Eating, however mundane it may seem, is actually one of the most sacred and important acts we participate in every day, and it plays a significant role in identifying us culturally and physically. Despite how prevalent eating is to our daily lives, many of us take access to a stable food supply for granted. Part of what I hope to accomplish with this thesis is to illuminate the disparities in access to food across different groups and to

illustrate how beef both bolsters that food insecurity and exacerbates the effects of its powerlessness. In doing so, I hope to give a voice to vulnerable individuals who suffer from food insecurity and poor health at the hands of the beef industry and draw attention to their struggle and disenfranchisement in accessing the basic human right of a healthy and stable food supply. Further, in exploring the role of beef advertising as it relates to power, I hope to empower consumers to take charge of their diets independent of the beef industry's influence.

This social experiment-turned lifestyle has enlightened me to the understanding that consumer choices are often influenced by powerful figures, and that conscientization is a necessary step towards an equitable and sustainable future, as well as reclaimed health for individuals. With this thesis, I hope to make the first step in that change, enlightening a future of healthy eating and reclamation of power in lifestyle and diet for all.

Section II. Structural Powerlessness

Chapter I. Food Oppression and Powerlessness

Access to a stable food supply is one of the most essential aspects of daily life. Despite food's integral relationship with survival, food security is often treated as a privilege in America, rather than the right it should be. This is evidenced by the fact that annually, over 10 percent of U.S. households are considered "food insecure," representing approximately 13.7 million people (USDA 2020, 1). This, paralleled with the U.S.'s gross mismanagement of food distribution and food waste comprising 30-40 percent of the U.S. food supply at the producer and consumer levels, suggests that food insecurity is more than just an accident or mismanagement; it represents a system of institutional powerlessness (USDA 2020, 1).

To explain the relationship between food insecurity, food oppression, and powerlessness, this section will examine food deserts and food swamps, as well as the correlation between them; interrogate representation within food insecure groups and analyze the physical costs borne by these groups as a result of their poor access to healthy and nutritious food; and finally, illuminate how food insecurity creates a hierarchical system of powerlessness in which food insecure groups fall victim to predatory advertising and become socially and economically immobilized by a system that disenfranchises them of their right to eat.

Explaining Food Deserts

At the most basic level, food deserts can be defined as "areas of relative exclusion where people experience physical and economic barriers to accessing healthy food" (Shaw 2006, 231). Often, individuals living in food deserts suffer from lack of access to a supermarket within walking distance of their place of residence. This is especially critical if they do not have access to a vehicle or public transportation. However, distance can still be a barrier to some, even if they are capable of accessing some form of transportation. In classifying food deserts, specifications for distance from a supermarket differ regionally, but most food desert classifications are defined as living one mile or more from a supermarket without access to a vehicle (Ver Ploeg 2009, iii). In the U.S. alone, 2.3 million households meet that standard, comprising about 13.7 million people, 5.3 million of which are children (Ver Ploeg 2009, iii; USDA 2019, 1). Based on 2000 Census data and other 2006 data reports, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) also identified over 6,500 unique food desert tracts across the U.S. (Dutko et al. 2012, i). Clearly, geographic barriers present a significant threat to food security for many. It is important to note, however, that the concept of a "food desert" is not exclusively dependent on proximity to a supermarket, and that the classification of food deserts can also encompass many other pressures to food security.

Food deserts can be classified within one or more of three overarching categories, defined here as *ability*, *assets,* and *attitude* (Shaw 2006, 241). Ability is measured by the physical barriers an individual may encounter when accessing food, such as geographic access to supermarkets by way of foot or vehicle, as well as able-bodiedness to physically access grocery locales, even if they may be within reasonable

reach for most (Shaw 2006, 241). Assets are defined as the lack of resources needed to access or store food, such as financial barriers to affording food, or even the lack of access to a refrigeration unit which can keep food fresh (Shaw 2006, 241). This demonstrates how the effects of food deserts can be felt by those without access to adequate financial resources, even if they are geographically within range of a supermarket. Finally, attitude describes the barrier some individuals face in education on food preparation or nutrition, as well as the cultural prejudice or lack of familiarity some individuals may have with locally available foods (Shaw 2006, 242). This term can also include the pressures some individuals experience in lack of access to culturally significant foods, paired with lack of education on how one can integrate locally available foods into the diet nutritiously. The FDA food pyramid's guidelines also demonstrate this by failing to suggest healthy foods that are also ethnically important (Freeman 2007, 2244). Lack of assets, impaired ability to access supermarkets, and attitudinal barriers all contribute to food insecurity and inform our understanding of powerlessness as it relates to diet and nutrition.

Although stability of a food supply for an individual or a family can change day-to-day and may seem like a temporary problem which can be solved through government hunger relief initiatives, the effects of food deserts are often felt long term. Because less "healthy" diets are generally more energy-dense and cheaper than fruits and vegetables, food insecure families are more likely to eat processed-food diets, which are high in fat, salt, and sugar (Shaw 2006, 233). Where fruits and vegetables protect against cancer, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, diets consisting of processed foods are more likely to cause obesity and other related health problems

(Shaw 2006, 231). Poor health in particular contributes to structural powerlessness and can pose long-term effects: “Health is fundamental to every aspect of life: Without health, a student cannot do well in school; a worker cannot hold a job, much less excel at one; a family member cannot be an effective parent or spouse. Health crises and the staggering costs they impose are critical underlying causes of poverty, homelessness, and bankruptcy” (Freeman 2007, 2222).

The common turn of phrase “health is wealth” is no false idiom; good health can 1) elevate one’s life expectancy, making success easier, 2) improve social and economic mobility, and 3) increase one’s quality of life. Health *is* wealth, and access to healthy and nutritious food, as well as nutrition education, correlate strongly with success. Although a “healthy diet” can be subjective and variable depending on an individual’s unique health history, age, cultural needs and influences, and other factors, nutritionists have consistently found that health benefits can be obtained from diets rich in fruits and vegetables with limited intake of foods derived from animal origin (Nestle 2013, 6). Diets that “best promote health derive most energy from plant foods, considerably less from foods of animal origin (meat, dairy, eggs), and even less from foods high in animal fats and sugars” (Nestle 2013, 27). Further, the longest-lived populations on earth primarily eat plant-based diets, lending to the theory that diets heavy in animal products can reduce life expectancy (Nestle 2013, 6). This suggests that food deserts, which promote strong reliance on meat products, processed meals, and foods high in concentrations of fats, sugars, and sodium are not conducive to a healthy lifestyle.

Health experts estimate that as many as 400,000 to 2,000,000 deaths yearly can be attributed to a culmination of poor diet, excessive alcohol consumption, and

sedentary lifestyle (Nestle 2013, 7). This is particularly correlated with diets heavy in animal products, which contain high levels of saturated fats (Nestle 2013, 7). Some experts even estimate that just a 1 percent reduction across the U.S. in saturated fats would save over $1 billion in healthcare costs annually and prevent over 30,000 cases of coronary heart disease (Nestle 2013, 7). Poor nutrition in children has been linked with diabetes, hypertension, poor academic achievement, behavioral problems, and developmental delays, all of which contribute to a child's overall health and success as an adult (Odoms-Young 2018, 1). Poor health overall, regardless of age, is correlated with lower life expectancy and degraded quality of life, fostering "the creation of an underclass people who become progressively more marginalized and powerless as a result of economic and health crises" (Freeman 2007, 2222). Food insecurity bolsters a system of powerlessness and disenfranchisement, entrenching individuals in a continuous cycle of food insecurity, poverty, and structural racism.

Food deserts don't affect everyone at equal rates. Specifically, low-income people of color are most at risk of facing geographic, financial, and educational barriers to healthy eating (Freeman 2007, 2222). Statistically, low-income individuals must commute greater distances and spend more time traveling to supermarkets than the national average (Ver Ploeg 2009, iii). Fruits and vegetables are also more expensive, require more resources and knowledge to keep fresh, and are less available in rural regions than are processed foods, which alternatively are easier to store, cheaper, more profitable, and last longer than fresh foods. The disappearance of the American farmland also serves to explain why fresh fruits and vegetables continue to rise in cost; because these foods must be distributed farther to reach supermarkets, leading to

elongated transportation and extended refrigeration expenditures, as well as the threat of expiration, the price of obtaining fresh food rises as well (Freeman 2007, 2239). Even food donation centers, which are government-run resource facilities designed specifically to support low-income individuals who cannot access stable food supplies on their own, cannot adequately provide fresh and healthy foods to those in need. Without capacity or resources to store, refrigerate, and distribute fresh foods, food banks are increasingly reliant on processed food donations, further lending to poor diets among low-income Americans (Freeman 2007, 2245).

People living in food deserts, who are typically already financially disadvantaged, also rely more heavily on small grocery stores or convenience stores because of their lack of access to large supermarkets within range of their place of residence (Ver Ploeg 2009, iv). Because small grocery stores and convenience stores have higher prices than large supermarkets do—which are typically more prominent in urban areas—those living in food deserts also statistically spend more on groceries than those living in food secure regions (Ver Ploeg 2009, 4). Households earning incomes of $8,000 per year or less statistically pay between 1.3 percent and 5 percent more for groceries (Ver Ploeg 2009, iv). This demonstrates precisely how harmful food insecurity can be for low-income individuals; if people who are already financially disadvantaged cannot afford to pay for healthy foods at the rates that the average consumer pays, they certainly cannot afford to pay up to 5 percent more to eat nutritiously. Food deserts transform the act of accessing a healthy diet from a choice to a privilege. This again evidences how food deserts contribute to a system of powerlessness, where low-income individuals cannot access supermarkets or afford to

pay the price for a healthy diet. In turn, this contributes to poor overall health and systemic oppression, both of which limit life expectancy, stunt social and economic mobility, and further entrench marginalized individuals into a cycle of poverty.

Statistically, Black and Latinx Americans face the highest rates of food-related death and disease, some of which can be linked back to structural racism and food oppression (Freeman 2007, 2222). Food oppression is defined as "institutional, systemic, food-related action or policy that physically debilitates a socially subordinated group" (Freeman 2013, 1253). It is a structural process, meaning that marginalized individuals are disenfranchised not necessarily through individual acts of discrimination, but rather through a system which promotes a cycle of poverty and powerlessness and is reinforced by government influences (Freeman 2007, 2222). For instance, poor Black neighborhoods in the U.S. are statistically farther on average from supermarkets than are poor white neighborhoods, demonstrating that race plays a significant role in food accessibility (Shaw 2006, 233). Low-income areas of the U.S. also have fewer large supermarkets, more liquor and convenience stores, and higher proportions of Black Americans than high-income areas do (Morland et al. 2002). Further, many individuals living in food deserts, especially low-income people of color, do not have adequate access to healthcare and education, which can compound the effects of food deserts for those individuals in particular (Freeman 2007, 2222).

Society would have us believe that diet exists exclusively within a realm of choice, and that unhealthy people, especially people of color, are unhealthy because they choose not to eat well. In fact, because food deserts are correlated with disenfranchisement and structural racism, "these arguments are part of a new color-

blind rhetoric that refuses to acknowledge the role of race in the challenges faced by communities of color" (Freeman 2007, 2223). Society seeks to stigmatize health and blame weight issues within communities of color as individual moral and cultural failures (Freeman 2007, 2223). This stigmatization refuses to conceptualize the system of powerlessness that plagues food insecurity especially affecting communities of color, and further bolsters harmful rhetoric that perpetuates powerlessness and food oppression itself.

Food deserts are not random areas of inequity driven by a system that fails to produce enough food; they are purposeful regions of neglect that the U.S. government could aid but chooses not to. The U.S. produces more than enough food to feed all its residents adequately, and yet 1 in 10 people still go hungry every day (USDA 2020, 1). In fact, the U.S. food supply produces so much food that even after all its exports, it could feed everyone in the U.S. twice over (Nestle 2013, 1). So, if the U.S. produces enough food to feasibly feed everyone, why is it that millions of families subsist on such meager food rations? Clearly, food production itself is not the key perpetrator in creating food deserts in America; food deserts are a symptom of the U.S.'s failure to distribute foods adequately. Distribution failures are largely a result of food waste, which is rampant in the U.S. Comprising 133 billion pounds and amounting to $161 billion in net worth losses annually, food waste accounts for 30-40 percent of the U.S. food supply (USDA 2020, 1). This large-scale waste occurs unnecessarily at both the producer and consumer levels. At the producer level, superficial consequences lead to food loss. Often, producers toss perfectly edible and quality produce if it's misshapen, blemished, or "ugly," due to potential loss in sales. Often, nothing is wrong with the

food itself; it is wasted purely because it isn't profitable. At the consumer level, food waste results from overindulgence: Consumers are encouraged to "buy more" than they need, often wasting the excess (Nestle 2013, 1). The exorbitant amount of food waste in the U.S. is representative of a system that prioritizes market value and profitability over feeding people, and demonstrates how food deserts are ultimately no accident, but a true gross misuse of power.

Explaining Food Swamps

At best, food deserts and food swamps indicate the government's failure to bolster healthy eating programs. At worst, they reflect the U.S.'s strong reliance on private industry to feed Americans and ultimately dominate the food market. It is no random coincidence that food deserts and food swamps occur concurrently across the U.S. This relationship is emblematic of the food oppression that plagues America's relationship with food. Food deserts create a system of powerlessness and food oppression, and through their parasitic relationship with food swamps, together, they capitalize on food insecurity to truly prey on the powerless.

Food swamps are defined as "areas with a high-density of establishments selling high-calorie fast food and junk food, relative to healthier food options" (Cooksey-Stowey et al. 2017, 1). Specifically, fast food restaurants strategically colonize and monopolize food desert areas, forming food swamps within food deserts (Freeman 2007, 2234). The fast food industry intentionally concentrates their restaurants in low-income neighborhoods with poor access to healthy and nutritious options *because* the individuals living there are food insecure, strategically capitalizing on their

vulnerability to maximize profitability. These affordable and convenient meals become a primary food source in particular for individuals who lack financial resources to access healthy foods. In fact, research shows that fast food is the major source of nutrition for low-income, urban neighborhoods (Freeman 2007, 2221). The fast food industry also works to monopolize these areas and act as the exclusive food provider for individuals living in food swamps. Even in areas where there are supermarkets, the fast food industry drives market choices for these businesses, influencing product availability and food quality (Freeman 2007, 2223). Research also shows that fast food restaurants are concentrated in low-income areas, with nearly double the number of fast food locales in Black neighborhoods than in white neighborhoods in some cities (Freeman 2007, 2234). This demonstrates how the fast food industry seeks to monopolize food deserts by creating food swamps within them, capitalizing on vulnerable and food insecure individuals to deepen their own pockets. The relationship between food insecurity and food swamps reveals an alarming reality: Powerlessness is profitable.

Perhaps the most compelling confirmation of the fast food industry's contributions to this phenomenon of powerlessness and predation is evidenced by the abundance of marketing campaigns behind it. The fast food industry spends $4.2 billion on advertising every year (The Week 2011, 1). Of that sum, fast food companies spend millions in advertising to specifically target Black and Latinx consumers (Freeman 2007, 2233). Advertising aimed at Black Americans in particular is more likely to promote low-cost, low-nutrition food items and is less likely to contain health messaging (Freeman 2007, 2238). Further, McDonald's regularly features Venus and

Serena Williams and Enrique Iglesias, as well as other popular "cultural superheroes" in TV commercials and other advertising initiatives to attract Black and Latinx consumers (Freeman 2007, 2238). These efforts are not in vain, either; a California study found that McDonald's was the top choice restaurant for American Latinos (Freeman 2007, 2238).

Whether Americans like to believe it or not, fast food advertising is not in consumers' best interest. The primary concern of the fast food industry is to sell products, not to advance nutrition. Advertising is a great example of this: "Food companies are not health or social service agencies, and nutrition becomes a factor in corporate thinking only when it can help sell food" (Nestle 2013, 24). In the end, advertising of this caliber is not educational. It is intentionally manipulative, and the fast food industry's primary objective is to sell unhealthy products and create loyal customers among those too powerless to choose another alternative. "Most of us believe that we choose foods for reasons of personal taste, convenience, and cost; we deny that we can be manipulated by advertising or other marketing practices," despite this being our very reality (Nestle 2013, 23).

Beef advertising is of particular concern because of its contributions to creating powerlessness through poor health. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association spends billions on lobbying and promotion every year to drive up consumer demand for beef. McDonald's, the largest beef buyer in the U.S., spent $1.37 billion on advertising in 2011 (Zaraska 2016, 93). Research has confirmed that these efforts are largely successful; both generic and branded advertising increase beef consumption in the U.S. (Cranfield and Goddard 1998, 1). Although beef advertising has increased recently, its

popularity is not a new phenomenon (Cranfield and Goddard 1998). In 1992, the beef industry spent $42 million on just one slogan: “Beef: It’s What’s For Dinner” (Zaraska 2016, 91). The campaign was so successful that it rivals even McDonald’s “I’m Loving It,” and Wendy’s “Where’s the Beef,” both of which have pervasively influenced pop culture. As some scholars have suggested, “Increasing meat consumption around the globe, the U.S. included, is not demand driven but supply driven: It’s pushed more by the actions of the meat industry and not so much by the desires of our taste buds” (Zaraska 2016, 90).

Although fast food and beef advertising have a profound impact over perpetuating powerlessness in food deserts and food swamps, the fast food and beef industries haven’t accomplished such predation over the vulnerable without help. In fact, one of the great contributors to cultivating and preserving this cycle of powerlessness is the U.S. government itself.

Annually, beef and poultry contribute $864.2 billion to the U.S. economy, comprising 6 percent of the overall GDP (Zaraska 2016, 90). Through the beef checkoff program licensed by the USDA, large producers are even able to collect a percentage from all beef sales to be recycled in meat advertising efforts (Genoways 2016, 1). Research has shown that without the beef checkoff program, Americans would be eating 11.3 percent less beef per year, demonstrating truly how influential the checkoff program is to overall beef consumption (Zaraska 2016, 92). The fast food industry relies strongly on government subsidies like the checkoff to increase sales and keep the prices of animal feed, sugar, and fats low to in turn keep their profit margins high (Freeman 2007, 2242). Subsidies aren’t purely government or politician sponsorships either;

between 1995 and 2012, the government spent $4.1 billion in taxpayer money towards livestock subsidies (Zaraska 2016, 94).

The fast food and beef industries' close relationship with politicians also allows them to pass favorable policy and cut corners to increase profitability. The government helps the fast food and beef industries by authorizing special tax breaks, subsidizing wheat and milk, licensing hormones and antibiotics to rapidly produce meat, and even intentionally and unethically ignoring the industries' predatory exploitation of undocumented immigrant labor in producing their products (Freeman 2007, 2242). In return, the industry maintains high profits and boosts the U.S. economy, as well as makes contributions to political candidates to line their pockets (Zaraska 2016, 94). In 2013 alone, the beef industry contributed $17.5 million to federal candidates (Zaraska 2016, 94). Endorsements from politicians like former President George W. Bush are another tactic the fast food and beef industries have capitalized on to increase profitability (Freeman 2007, 2245). Ironically, in 2006, President George W. Bush announced the new national healthcare plan from outside Wendy's Headquarters to promote fast food on national television (Freeman 2007, 2245).

Relationships with corrupt politicians aren't the only attempt the fast food and beef industries have made in setting the menu for what's for dinner – they have also influenced the FDA food pyramid guidelines. Despite dietary recommendations for limited intake of animal products, the FDA food pyramid places emphasis on meat and dairy products (Freeman 2007, 2244). This is not just objectively unhealthy; it's downright dangerous. These guidelines set the standard both for nutrition and nutrition education, yet advocate heavy emphasis on products which promote obesity,

hypertension, diabetes, and even cancer (Freeman 2007, 2244). These guidelines further promote disenfranchisement of people of color by failing to suggest ethnically important healthy foods like tortillas, okra, and cornbread (Freeman 2007, 2244). As scholar Marion Nestle, author of *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health* writes, "Dietary guidelines are political compromises between what science tells us about nutrition and what is good for the food industry" (Zaraska 2016, 96). In 1986 while working on the *Surgeon General's Report on Nutrition and Health*, Nestle, who worked in the food industry for decades before becoming an academic, was instructed that "no matter what the research indicated, the report could not recommend 'eat less meat' as a way to reduce intake of saturated fat, nor could it suggest restrictions on intake of any other category of food" (Nestle 2013, 24). This is no random coincidence, either; federal health officials have always battled congressional influence in their dietary recommendations (Nestle 2013, 24). This corruption demonstrates truly how broad the food industry's sphere of influence is in manipulating health standards for American citizens. The very foundation of the American conceptualization of diet and nutrition education is a lie promoted by our own government to help the fast food industry sell hamburgers.

The beef industry has also infiltrated the National School Lunch Program, which feeds many children their most substantial meal of the day — especially low-income children (Freeman 2007, 2230). Due to pressures from industry, the National School Lunch Program spends 90 percent of their budget on ground beef, ground pork, eggs, and whole milk cheeses (Freeman 2007, 2244). This is not just detrimental to the health

of children currently in school; it establishes habits for eating that carry into adulthood and sponsor a lifetime of poor health, obesity, and economic and social immobility.

With the combined efforts of relentless fast food advertising tactics, corrupt dietary guidelines, government failures to adequately address food insecurity, policy initiatives to exonerate company responsibility and boost profitability in the food industry, and even the sullying of children's nutritional education and the National School Lunch Program, it's no wonder why America has such an obesity epidemic. In the U.S., 35 percent of all adults are classified as obese (Cooksey-Stowey et al. 2017, 1). Although this problem is often framed within a myth of choice, research shows that obesity is much more complicated than people choosing to be fat. Those who live in food deserts have a higher risk of obesity than those living in food secure areas, and even further, food swamps are some of the strongest predictors for obesity in America (Cooksey-Stowey et al. 2017, 1). It's important to note that hunger and obesity also often occur concurrently, and that they are not mutually exclusive; hungry people are often obese and obese people are often hungry. Both can be and often are the result of poverty and food insecurity and are often also associated with limited resources, poor access to healthcare, and general disenfranchisement by society (Center for Science in the Public Interest 2020, 1). America's obesity epidemic "can be traced to the food industry's imperative to encourage people to *eat more* in order to generate sales and increase income in a highly competitive marketplace" (Nestle 2013, 25). Obesity also does not impact all Americans equally; Black Americans are more at risk of obesity, which, considering that they are also more likely to live in food swamps than are white people, is ultimately unsurprising (Henderson and Kelly 2005, 191). Low-income folks

are the most at risk for obesity of any group, though obesity affects all marginalized groups at greater rates (Center for Science in the Public Interest 2020, 1).

This susceptibility to obesity, especially among marginalized groups, is a problem not just because obesity contributes to poor health, shortened life expectancy, disposition for cardiovascular disease, and other ailments, all of which contribute to powerlessness for obese individuals. It's also a problem because of the stigmatization of obesity in society, which can promote powerlessness through social and economic immobility. A 2019 Harvard University study found that 42 percent of obese adults reported unfair treatment related to weight (Puhl 2019, 1). Although the study found that weight stigma has declined in recent years (although very insignificantly), the report also determined that implicit bias is actually getting worse (Puhl 2019, 1). Weight discrimination is also not protected under federal law, yet research shows that obese individuals are less likely to be promoted in the workplace and are more likely to earn lower wages than their thinner counterparts (Gassam-Asare 2019, 1). Social stigma goes even farther as to assume that obese individuals are less competent, lack discipline, are lazy, and are even emotionally unstable, limiting the social mobility of obese individuals within society (Gassam-Asare 2019, 1). Poor health and social stigmatization contribute equally to obese and overweight individuals' powerlessness, lack of social and economic mobility, and overall disenfranchisement within society.

Food insecurity bolstered by food deserts, food swamps, corrupt government, and predatory advertising illuminate the insurmountable system of powerlessness and disenfranchisement food oppressed individuals face every day. In the true spirit of structural powerlessness, food oppression is inextricably interwoven into the very

system that supplies our right to eat as Americans. It intentionally creates a hierarchy of privilege according to food access, granting food secure individuals rights to success, the American dream, and even life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. On the polar end, lack of access injures food insecure individuals' rights to all those things and more, like security, longevity of life, good health, social and economic mobility, and ultimately, the power to create their own futures. Companies which prioritize profitability over equity continue to prey on these vulnerable individuals, entrapping and entangling them within a system of powerlessness, in which they are dispossessed of their own rights to the basic necessity of healthy food. Food oppression isn't just deplorable; it's unjust.

Chapter II. Climate and Powerlessness

Climate change is arguably the most important issue of our time. Created by human-caused environmental degradation, resource abuse, and our insatiable demand for meat, the greenhouse gas effect has ignited the most ominous existential threat to humankind in modern history. Media would have us believe that the fossil fuel industry is exclusively at fault for this grave environmental imbalance, and although they do share blame for their contributions to the exponential acceleration of the greenhouse gas effect, crimes against our earth are also shared by a rather less-obvious perpetrator: Cows raised for human consumption.

To explain and analyze the full weight of beef-induced structural powerlessness in America, it is imperative to examine the contributions of methane and carbon dioxide to the creation of a hierarchy of power. In recognizing this system of power and powerlessness, we begin to understand how it influences consumers such that they unknowingly act against their own real interests in relation to climate change by enabling the beef market. To accomplish this aim and illuminate the state of structural powerlessness in relation to beef, this section reviews beef consumption in the U.S.; analyzes the comparative effects of methane and carbon dioxide in contributing to the greenhouse gas effect; investigates the contributions of the beef industry in influencing climate policy and research; and evaluates the role of climate change in perpetuating institutional inequity and contributing to a cycle of powerlessness in which individuals are dispossessed of their own real interests.

The State of Beef and Climate

Cows are the number one agricultural contributor of greenhouse gases worldwide (Quinton 2019, 1). Cows are excellent at creating methane (CH_4) and are responsible for 73 percent of methane produced by livestock globally every year (Johnson and Johnson 1995, 2484). There are currently 1.4 billion cattle in the world, and that number is growing rapidly to meet the equally expanding demand for beef and dairy among consumers (Borunda 2019, 1). As cow products become more popular and normalized in the American diet, the beef industry capitalizes on the opportunity to artificially drive demand for beef higher to maximize profitability within a multi-billion-dollar industry. This revenue is not without consequence, though; it comes at the great cost of bolstering methane emissions, and ultimately, accelerating climate change.

The U.S. is the world's largest producer of beef (Gustin 2019, 1). Americans consume more meat, especially in beef, than practically any other country, eating an average of 270.7 pounds of meat per person per year, over 2.5 times the world average (Barclay 2012, 1). Total meat consumption in the U.S. has skyrocketed over the past century, comprising an increase of over 40 billion pounds per year from 1909 to 2012 (Barclay 2012, 1). Americans also eat more beef than any other meat product, suggesting that meat consumption in the U.S. is largely driven by the beef industry (Barclay 2012, 1). In 2019, commercial beef production in the U.S. amounted to 27.2 billion pounds (Davis 2021, 1). With population on the rise and pressures from the beef industry increasing, these rates are only expected to grow (Capper 2011, 4249).

Cows produce methane through the process of breaking down their cud while grazing (Borunda 2019, 1). Microbes, which live in a cow's stomach, break down and

absorb the nutrients from the cow's diet (Borunda 2019, 1). These microbes produce methane inside of the cow as a byproduct, which the cows then must release through belching and farting (Borunda 2019, 1). This process is called enteric fermentation (Goodland and Anhang 2009, 12). On average, a single cow belches 220 pounds of methane every year (Quinton 2019, 1). Cattle manure also acts as a host for microbes to break down and absorb nutrients, so methane is released from manure as well as cow belches (Borunda 2019, 1). Levels of methane-release differ cow-to-cow, depending on each animal's dietary circumstances and level of feed intake (Johnson and Johnson 1995, 2484). Ruminant livestock can produce anywhere from 250 to 500 L of methane per day (Johnson and Johnson 1995, 2484). Corn and soy make cows especially gassy, causing them to produce more methane (Singh 2014, 1). Unfortunately, corn and soy are a popular choice of many cattle farmers to supplement grass-fed diets across the U.S., exacerbating the greenhouse gas effect (Lardy 2018, 1).

Although methane emissions are difficult to quantify precisely, some scholars estimate that the life cycle and supply chain of animals raised for food could account for at least half — if not more than half — of human-caused greenhouse gases (Goodland and Anhang 2009, 11). Yearly, livestock accounts for 103 million tons of methane emissions through manure and belching worldwide (Goodland and Anhang 2009, 13). Because methane is remarkably good at trapping heat, even small volumes can produce a big effect in the atmosphere (Borunda 2019, 1). Experts estimate that 60 percent of the methane in the atmosphere comes from human-caused sources, including cows, which account for 37 percent of all human-induced methane (Borunda 2019, 1; Goodland and Anhang 2009, 13).

Cows also contribute to carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions, though not at as great a rate as they do methane. For every gram of beef produced, 221 grams of carbon dioxide is emitted (Gustin 2019, 1). The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) attributes up to 7,516 million tons of CO_2 to livestock yearly across the globe (Goodland and Anhang 2009, 11). In addition to methane, the industry of meat production produces a lot of CO_2 as a direct result of creating beef for human consumption. Beef-related carbon dioxide emissions can therefore be attributed to the production of meat itself as a result of transporting and processing meat products and clearing land to grow feed and graze livestock (Goodland and Anhang 2009, 11).

The production of both methane and carbon dioxide lead to exorbitant greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to the acceleration of the greenhouse gas effect. However, each has unique consequences and environmental impacts. Because of the shape of CH_4 and its heat-prone nature, methane is 28 times more potent than carbon dioxide in warming the atmosphere (Quinton 2019, 1). Conversely, carbon dioxide is more long-lasting; where methane's half-life is eight years, carbon dioxide's half-life is 100 years (Goodland and Anhang 2009, 13). However, because methane has a shorter lifespan than carbon dioxide, reducing methane emissions has a much more immediate impact than reducing CO_2 emissions, making it an optimal choice to slow the speed of the greenhouse gas effect at a more proactive rate (Goodland and Anhang 2009, 13).

Beef production and consumption also contribute to climate change in various other ways. Overgrazing can injure biodiversity and degrade soil health, both of which contribute to environmental imbalance (Quinton 2019, 1). The resources needed to

produce just one quarter-pound hamburger perfectly illuminate beef's role in creating environmental harm. The creation of a single hamburger patty requires: 6.7 pounds of feed; 74.5 square feet of land to graze the cow and grow feed crops; 52.8 gallons of water, accounting for both drinking water for the cow and irrigation for the cow's feed crops; and 1,036 btus for feed production and transport — enough energy to power a standard microwave for 18 minutes (Barclay 2012, 1).

The cows may do the belching, but they are not the actors responsible for this pervasive threat to the environment — the true perpetrators are the people who raise cattle for the sole purpose of constructing a system which prioritizes profitability over equity and health. Through such significant contributions to methane and carbon dioxide production, land degradation, and resource misuse, beef poses a significant threat to the integrity of our planet and the state of the future of our world.

The Beef Industry and Climate Policy

Perhaps the most alarming threat of beef-caused climate change isn't the greenhouse gas effect at all — perhaps it is the disconcerting lengths the beef industry has taken to shut down beef-related climate policy and thereby safeguard chronic greenhouse gas emissions.

In California, beef lobbyists successfully thwarted the California Climate-Friendly Food Program bill by posing strong opposition to the bill's legal use of the word "climate" in relation to food (Gustin 2019, 1). The bill's goal — to promote plant-based foods in schools and shrink greenhouse gases related to livestock — was subverted under the pressure of beef lobbyists. Although the bill eventually passed, it

had to change its title to “California School Plant-Based Food and Beverage Program” and nix all climate change language to pacify beef lobbyists (Gustin 2019, 1).

In Maryland, the state Green Purchasing Committee created a Carbon-Intensive Foods Subcommittee to research the carbon food footprint and reduce state purchasing of heavy violators (Gustin 2019, 1). The Maryland Cattlemen’s Beef Association strongly opposed the committee’s creation, calling it a “hit list of foods” (Gustin 2019, 1). Reaching out to gain support from the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, the lobbyists’ national office sent a letter to Maryland State Governor, Larry Hogan (R - MD) in an attempt to disband the committee. Their effort was successful, and the committee was dissolved (Gustin 2019, 1). Changes like these, writes Kyle Ash, director of government affairs with the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, aren’t “about the substance. It’s about whether they look bad or not because the bill adds legitimacy to the fact that animal-based diets are higher in carbon emissions” (Gustin 2019, 1).

Currently, the beef industry is fighting plant-based meat’s legal use of the terms “steak” and “burger” in courts across at least 24 states throughout the U.S. (Gustin 2019, 1). Beef lobbyists seek to limit those terms exclusively to animal products, likely to once again undermine clean-meat alternatives (Gustin 2019, 1). “It is astounding, the level of fear and pushback from the meat industry on our efforts to address the very real, substantial climate impacts of meat production,” said Friends of Earth deputy director, Kari Hamerschlag (Gustin 2019, 1).

The excessive measures taken by the beef industry to censor beef-related climate research and repudiate plant-based meats are strongly indicative of their corruption and

dominance over meat education, diet, and climate. These attempts solidify their intentionality in creating and maintaining systems of powerlessness through censorship of information, manipulation of consumer interests, and contributions to climate-induced vulnerability.

Climate change poses an existential threat to humanity by way of life-altering forces, and yet the greenhouse gas effect, which is in part perpetrated by the beef industry's significant investment in selling hamburgers and calculated attempts to disillusion consumers, is not in the power of the people to change. This kind of climate change corruption represents the epitome of powerlessness in America because those most affected didn't create it and are dually powerless to stop it. The beef industry's actions are intentionally exploitative: They drive a demand for beef through manipulative advertising and alteration of dietary guidelines, perpetuate the greenhouse gas effect and accelerate climate change, and manipulate climate policy to maintain their power structures. Their actions are not crimeless; they are intentional abuses of power to maintain hierarchies and maximize profitability by entrapping people within a system of structural powerlessness.

To the beef industry, climate change is no apocalypse. It's a minor inconvenience in their journey to the top.

Section III. Attitudinal Powerlessness

Chapter III. The Beef Checkoff, "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" and the Three-Dimensional View of Power

> "Is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things…?" (Lukes 1974, 28).

Structural powerlessness, achieved through the purposeful disenfranchisement of marginalized groups by way of food insecurity, degraded health, and climate vulnerability comprises some of the most heinous crimes against the powerless committed by the U.S. government and the beef lobby. However, the creation and maintenance of structural inequity is not the only manifestation of powerlessness contributed by the beef industry, nor is it the worst. The beef checkoff, sponsored and propagated by the U.S. government, operates in the business of shaping consumers' thinking. It intentionally manipulates consumers, thereby jeopardizing their health and livelihood and undermining their personal and individual autonomy and power of choice; all for the purpose of supporting economic growth for the beef industry.

Using Steven Lukes' three-dimensional view of power as its supporting framework, this section explores attitudinal powerlessness and the role of the beef checkoff in creating a system which bolsters ideological hegemony and false consciousness. Through investigating the history and purpose of the beef checkoff and its affiliated and notorious "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" advertising campaign, this section aims to prove how the government and beef lobby have colluded to bring about

attitudinal powerlessness among consumers and ultimately dispossess them of their personal agency and freedom of choice for the purpose of generating profits.

Explaining the Beef Checkoff

The beef checkoff is a national marketing program which collects funds from the sale of domestic and imported cattle to advertise beef to consumers (Beef Board 2020, "What is the Beef Checkoff?"). For every head of beef sold in the U.S., producers and beef importers must pay $1 to the Qualified State Beef Councils (SBCs) (Beef Board 2020, "What is the Beef Checkoff?"). Each state's SBC retains $.50 per dollar for use in that state, and the remaining $.50 per dollar is paid to the Beef Board to use towards the checkoff (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 153). The National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a branch of the Beef Board which oversees the infamous "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" advertising campaign, is the largest recipient of marketing money under a beef-related federally sanctioned program (Neuman 2010, 1). This program is compulsory for all U.S. beef producers selling beef domestically and international beef producers who import beef to the U.S. (Nestle 2013, 150). It's also highly effective at generating funds; in the first five years after its debut, the program collected $520.285 million (Ward 1995, 9). Since then, the checkoff has collected around $40 million annually (Hanes 2019, 1).

The beef checkoff is primarily managed by the Cattlemen's Beef Board (CBB), which oversees the program, collection of funds, and budgeting projects with assistance from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (Beef Board 2020, "What is the Beef Checkoff?"). Representing geographically diverse regions of the U.S., the 106

members of the Beef Board are appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 152). The Secretary of Agriculture must also approve all the Beef Board's budgets, contracts, plans, and programs prior to their release, demonstrating the close relationship between the Beef Board and the U.S. government in maintaining the checkoff (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 161). The checkoff also works closely with food bloggers and influencers, educators, restaurants, dietitians, medical personnel, and key opinion leaders to promote its aims (Beef Board 2020, "Consumer Information"). The checkoff even sends funds to restaurants to encourage their sale of beef products (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 154).

The beef checkoff is not the only program in the U.S. which collects funds under federal law to promote consumption of goods. The infamous "Got Milk" and "The Incredible, Edible Egg" campaigns are also part of U.S. checkoff programs to promote sale of goods (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 150). The U.S. government boasts checkoff programs for numerous food and agricultural products, including but not limited to peanuts, eggs, dairy and fluid milk, corn, pork, potatoes, soybeans, lamb, and cotton (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 150). The purpose of the checkoff is not to promote a specific product; in fact, since the checkoff collects federal funds, this would be unlawful (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 154). The purpose of any checkoff program is to boost the market and demand for that good (Williams Zwagerman, 151). The beef checkoff is no different. According to the Beef Board itself, the checkoff program was designed to increase consumer desire for beef and drive beef sales (Beef Board 2020, "About the Checkoff"). Today, their mission remains the same: "The beef checkoff program increases profit opportunities for producers by keeping beef top-of-mind with

consumers" (Beef Board 2020, "About the Checkoff"). Put simply, the checkoff's primary purpose is to increase profits.

The checkoff, established as a compulsory program in 1988, was born out of an interest to drive beef sales, not a motivation to produce more ethically sourced beef or preserve consumer health. In 1979, beef comprised 51 percent of total meat consumption (Ward 1995, 8). By 1993, this had dropped to 38.6 percent (Ward 1995, 8). With demand for beef waning while leaner meats like chicken and pork grew in appeal, the beef lobby sought to artificially drive up beef sales to maintain beef's reign as king of the meats (Lazarus 1992, 1). Prior to its inception in 1985, the beef checkoff existed in various iterations across numerous states, although participation was voluntary (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 152). Due to declining beef consumption, beef lobbyists appealed to the U.S. government to create a compulsory checkoff to support the beef industry and promote sales (Nestle 2013, 150). In 1985, the Beef Act was established as a national checkoff program, and participation became mandatory through a national referendum in 1988 (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 152).

Checkoff Litigation

The beef lobby and U.S. government have long shared a close relationship. Until 1996, the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board, the proprietor of the government checkoff program, even shared an office space with the National Cattlemen's Association, a private lobbying organization (Nestle 2013, 150). These groups later consolidated in 1996 to form the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) (Nestle 2013, 150). As Marion Nestle, author of *Food Politics: How the Food*

Industry Influences Nutrition and Health writes, "Although the check-off legislation expressly prohibits use of the funds for lobbying, the distinction between promoting a product to consumers and promoting it to lawmakers can be subtle" (2013, 150). Despite that it is illegal to use federal funds to influence government policy, the Beef Board boasts a long track record of violating the law and misusing checkoff funds (Neuman 2010). In 2010, an audit found that the Beef Board was guilty of misusing tens of thousands of dollars in checkoff funds over a 30-month period (Neuman 2010, 1). The audit revealed that $90,000 of funding was used in questionable or poorly documented transactions, including unauthorized use of spending for travel costs for board members and their spouses, and most notably, covering administration costs for the Beef Board's lobbying division (Neuman 2010, 1). This illegal and continuing misuse of funds for the purpose of lobbying illuminates just how far the Beef Board is willing to go to abuse their power and exploit consumers to make a buck.

Illegal use of funds towards lobbying is just one of the many ways the Beef Board has demonstrated their willingness to beg, borrow, and steal their way to the top. The compulsory and exploitative nature of the checkoff has been the cause for numerous lawsuits in the past, challenging whether the checkoff is even constitutional. In the 1990s, Montana beef producers Jeanne and Steve Charter sued the USDA over mandatory beef checkoff fees, arguing that obligatory membership and fees to the checkoff were a violation of the First Amendment (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 160). Earlier, in *United States v. Frame*, the court had ruled that the checkoff was constitutional — but not government — speech; they concluded that the checkoff was to be considered constitutional commercial speech (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 160).

After the court ruled in favor of the defendant in *Charter v. USDA*, the Charters appealed to have the decision overturned, arguing that the checkoff "constitute[d] compelled speech and compelled association, both in violation of the First Amendment" (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 160). Although the appellate court again ruled in favor of the USDA, it overturned *United States v. Frame*, ruling that the checkoff was in fact government speech (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 161). The court also noted that "the extent of control Congress and the USDA exercise over the beef checkoff is excessive," demonstrating the convoluted nature of the relationship between the USDA and the Beef Board in overseeing the beef checkoff (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 161).

The ambiguous classification of the checkoff doesn't end there. In ruling that the checkoff qualified as government speech, the court cited the numerous examples of the government's role in shaping the checkoff: the Secretary of Agriculture removes and appoints members from the Beef Board; the Beef Board is required to submit audits for the fiscal year of activities as well as notice of meetings to the USDA; and the Secretary must approve all Beef Board ventures, including budgets, plans, contracts, and programs prior to their institution (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 161). Further, the court established via *Charter v. USDA* that "when the Beef Board [speaks], it [does] so on behalf of the Secretary of Agriculture and the government of the United States" (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 161). Yet, the court also held that "the Beef Board and the Qualified Beef Councils are groups of private speakers the government utilizes to transmit a specific government message… [and] the beef checkoff funded advertising is attributable to Congress and the USDA" (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 161).

Livestock Marketing Association v. USDA argued again in 2001 that the Beef Act was unconstitutional, advocating that the checkoff violated beef producers' rights to equal protection under the law and due process (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 163). The LMA asserted that not all beef is equal in quality, healthfulness, and safety, and that the generic advertising subsidized by the checkoff and its legally obligated sponsors hindered producers' and consumers' ability to differentiate between different qualities of beef (Cain 2006, 167). In an unprecedented turn of events, the court overturned the Beef Act, ruling that it was neither government speech nor permissible commercial speech, and was therefore unconstitutional (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 164). The USDA appealed, but the Eighth Circuit court affirmed the lower court's decision, arguing that the U.S. government did not possess "sufficiently substantial" interest in "protecting the welfare of the beef industry to infringe on beef producers' and importers' free speech rights by compelling them to 'pay for generic beef advertising'" (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 164). This decision prohibited further collection of checkoff funds — until 2005, that is (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 164). Making its way up to the Supreme Court, *Johanns v. Livestock Marketing Association* overturned *Livestock Marketing Association v. USDA,* reinstating the Beef Act and ruling that the beef checkoff was protected government speech once and for all (Williams Zwagerman 2009, 165).

Eighteen percent of cattle ranchers oppose the checkoff, yet these individuals still must pay $1 out of pocket for every cow they sell in the U.S. (Cain 2006, 168). In classifying the checkoff as government speech, the courts ruled that checkoff messaging comes from the government and not individual producers. Doing so affirms the

government as the sponsor of the message and therefore asserts that producers are not legally associated with the checkoff (Cain 2006, 169). Because the checkoff is "government speech," producers don't have a say in the kind of messaging they have to pay into. This effectively erases beef producers' voices in checkoff messaging yet maintains their obligatory participation in the chekoff. Put simply, beef producers must pay into a system of generalized beef advertising that many neither believe in, nor directly benefit from. This ruling intentionally absolves the government from their responsibility in propagandizing beef and forcing compulsory speech at the harm of beef producers and consumers. Above all, it indicates the government's willingness to deny beef producers' rights and autonomy for the purpose of driving beef sales.

Beef Checkoff Initiatives

The Beef Board uses checkoff funds to sponsor many initiatives, including foreign marketing campaigns, producer communications, and administrative costs (Beef Board 2020, "Beef Checkoff Program Areas"). Its most notable campaigns, however, are its initiatives to shape consumer understanding of beef and scientific standards for industry. The Beef Board accomplishes this through a three-pronged approach — initiatives which it calls research, consumer information, and promotion (Beef Board 2020). These sectors also draw the most funding from the beef checkoff (Beef Board 2020).

Every year, the Beef Board spends $8,250,764 on research funding (Beef Board 2020, "Research"). The NCBA project claims to research beef's role in a healthy diet and improve the taste profile of beef products (Beef Board 2020, "Research"). Notably,

one of their key research initiatives is to "showcase safety research content to influence the industry's adoption of new scientific evidence" (Beef Board 2020, "Research"). Their employment of the phrase "to influence" rather than "to inform" demonstrates intent to manipulate rather than to educate, and further suggests that the research conducted by the beef checkoff may be used to alter scientific standards for industry in a way that is favorable to them, rather than conduct research to better industry practice. Further, it bolsters the opportunity for the Beef Board to promote private interests as science and potentially endanger consumer health in the process. On the Beef Board's website, they use their research to minimize the prevalence of beef in creating the greenhouse gas effect, writing, "Contrary to some of the misconceptions about beef's role in greenhouse gas emissions, cattle-generated gases are completely natural, are very different from the types of gasses stemming from fossil fuel emissions, and are on the decline" (Beef Board 2020, "Beef's Role in Greenhouse Gas Emissions"). If the Beef Board's primary goal is to drive beef sales, minimizing negative consumer outlook on the role of beef in the greenhouse gas effect is also in the Beef Board's primary interest. This explains their exorbitant use of funds on "research" operations: By creating their own research, they can justify their false claims under the name of "science" for the purpose of manipulating consumer interests.

The Beef Board's consumer information division funds are also delegated among three separate committees, with the NCBA again the highest funded committee at $6,163,221 for 2021 (Beef Board 2020, "Consumer Information"). This funding has a high return rate as well; from 1987 to 1993, 28 percent of all total economic gains from the checkoff could be traced back to the consumer information program (Ward 1995,

14). According to the Beef Board's website, the NCBA program "develops nutritional data and other information that will assist consumers and others in forming opinions and making decisions regarding the purchase, preparation and consumption of beef and beef products" (2020, "Consumer Information"). Its specific initiatives within the NCBA division include consumer education projects, communications with food service professionals, and correspondence with health and medical personnel (Beef Board 2020, "Consumer Information"). Most notably, the NCBA lists its primary goal as that of building "relationships with key opinion leaders, food-focused culinarians and bloggers that consumers trust to execute influencer campaigns" (Beef Board 2020, "Consumer Information"). Nutritionally, the beef checkoff does not promote healthy products; it promotes beef, which is high in cholesterol and saturated fat (Nestle 2013, 151). Further, funds are not used to educate consumers, as the Beef Board claims: "Funds are used to influence food and nutrition policies favorable to industry" (Nestle 2013, 151). Reading between the lines, it is clear that this initiative intends to capitalize off politicians' and influencers' duplicity to exploit consumer trust.

The Beef Board's promotion division budget is the largest by far, coming in at over $9 million for 2021 alone (Beef Board 2020, "Promotion"). Its funding is divided between two separate contractors: the North American Meat Institute (NAMI) / New York Beef Council (NYBC), which is apportioned $298,220 yearly, and the NCBA, which is annually allotted $8,946,611 (Beef Board 2020, "Promotion"). The NCBA works with the USDA and Dietary Guidelines for Americans to "connect directly with consumers in meaningful ways so they can feel confident purchasing the beef and veal products they enjoy" (Beef Board 2020, "Promotion"). The NCBA's primary initiative

is to “position beef as the number one protein” through advertising initiatives and consumer relations, as well as working to “remind consumers of the unbeatable pleasure that beef brings to meals” (Beef Board 2020, “Promotion”). In its own words, the NCBA promotion division also aims to:

> > Communicate to consumers that real beef’s great taste and nutrition can’t be replicated through digital marketing campaigns.
>
> > Address and correct the myths around beef and beef production to various audiences through digital campaigns and traditional media outreach.
>
> > Support and grow favorable awareness of the “Beef. It’s What’s For Dinner.” brand through paid advertising, social media, earned media and influencer outreach. (Beef Board 2020, “Promotion”).

These goals demonstrate a strong intention to manipulate available information, shape consumer interests, and dissuade consumers from choosing alternatives. These goals also communicate the NCBA’s intentions to drive beef sales at the cost of consumer health, education, and agency.

The NCBA’s most notorious and long-lasting initiative has been its “Beef: It’s What’s For Dinner” campaign, which debuted in 1992 to drive beef sales (Lazarus 1992). The campaign was almost called “Beef. Real Food For Real People.” lending to its manipulative intentionality as an advertising initiative (Lazarus 1992, 1). The slogan, “Beef: It’s What’s For Dinner” was carefully selected to promote eating beef at dinner, since beef sales were on the decline and studies showed that 80 percent of beef consumption took place at dinner time (Lazarus 1992, 1). The initial advertising campaign was supposed to take place over a 17-month period, beginning in May 1992 and ending in September 1993 (Lazarus 1992, 1). The campaign was initially allotted

$42 million, comprising 86.07 percent of overall checkoff funds (Lazarus 1992, 1; Ward 1995, 10). “Beef: It’s What’s For Dinner” primarily aired on network, daytime, prime-time, and cable television initially, with commercials accounting for 69.19 percent of overall promotion efforts (Lazarus 1992, 1; Ward 1995, 10). The campaign became a permanent fixture of the NCBA’s advertising initiative after it proved to be so successful in driving beef sales. By 1993, the checkoff had collected $520.285 million in fees from cattle ranchers and had turned that money into $3.328 billion in revenue from promotion efforts (Ward 1995, 9-10).

The Three-Dimensional View of Power

To truly analyze the effects the “Beef: It’s What’s For Dinner” campaign has had on the creation of attitudinal powerlessness, this section will draw on and apply Steven Lukes’ three-dimensional view of power to the NCBA advertising campaign. After thoroughly excavating and evaluating numerous “Beef: It’s What’s For Dinner” ads through a three-dimensional lens, this section will demonstrate how power has been exercised by the Beef Board and the USDA upon consumers.

The three-dimensional view of power was created by Steven Lukes, a political and social theorist, in the 1970s in response to the first and second dimensional views of power. The three-dimensional model critiques its predecessors on a number of accounts, but also builds off these views of power to base its substantiation.

The first-dimensional view of power was propagated by Robert Dahl prior to the debut of Lukes’ model and is acclaimed as the first empirical method for classifying power relations. Often dubbed the “pluralist view of power,” the one-dimensional

model theorizes that exercise of power can be determined by way of observable actions, in which one party can get another party to do something he would not otherwise do (Lukes 1974, 16).

The two-dimensional view of power, publicized by Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, is a critique of Dahl's model, arguing that the first view fails to acknowledge exercise of power when issues are organized out of politics — a term Bachrach and Baratz call "mobilization of bias" (Lukes 1974, 20).

The third view is the most intricate of the dimensional models for power, both because it builds upon some aspects of the first two models and because it defines conflict as latent (Lukes 1974). Where the first two models evaluate exercise of power based solely upon subjective interests, Lukes argues that in addition to this, power is exercised by way of something rather different and specific: objective interests, which he calls, "real" interests (Lukes 1974, Ch. 3). He contextualizes this through his concept of false consciousness, which he defines as a state of being when the real interests of those without power are concealed from them by the powerful (Lukes 1974, Ch. 3). Further, Lukes argues that although conflict can be direct as the first and second dimensional models reason, it can also be latent, and therefore, not observable (Lukes 1974). The foundation of the three-dimensional model rests on power as ideological hegemony, which consolidates these concepts as such: The powerful shape the interests of the powerless such that they reflect the interests of the powerful, rather than the real interests of the powerless (Lukes, 1974). Although the determination of an individual's objective interests can be problematic, Lukes holds that the identification of these

interests “ultimately always rests on empirically supportable and refutable hypotheses” (Lukes 1974, 29).

In critiquing the two-dimensional view of power, Lukes also reveals that “the bias of the system is not sustained simply by a series of individually chosen acts, but also, most importantly, by the socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups, and practices of institutions, which may indeed be manifested by individuals’ inaction” (Lukes 1974, 26). He elaborates that collective action and systemic or organizational effects both contribute to exercise of power separately, something Lukes critiques Bachrach and Baratz of identifying too ambiguously (Lukes 1974, 26). Lukes defines collective action as the policy or action of a collective group that is manifested but does not result as the cause of an individual’s behaviors or decisions (Lukes 1974, 26). Systemic and organizational effects take the shape of a more traditional mobilization of bias, where issues are collectively organized out of politics by an organization which cannot possess individual behaviors or wills, as it is, indeed, a collective (Lukes 1974, 26). Since the “Beef: It’s What’s For Dinner” case study considers the role of government and private industry in organizing issues out of politics and manipulating consumers such that they undergo a state of false consciousness, this is an important distinction, especially in relation to structural powerlessness.

John Gaventa, who borrows Lukes’ model for his book, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*, shares how powerlessness engenders the creation of an élite and a non-élite (Gaventa 1982). Writes Gaventa, “In situations of inequality, the political response of the deprived group or

class may be seen as a function of power relationships, such that power serves for the development and maintenance of the quiescence of the non-élite" (1982, 4). The powerless are inherently dependent on the powerful because they have been robbed of their agency and are "prevented from self-determined action or reflection upon their actions" (Gaventa 1982, 18). This in turn can create a "culture of silence," as well as a sense of apathy, fatalism, and even self-deprecation among those without power (Gaventa 1982, 17). Further, powerlessness breeds powerlessness; those who are already socially subordinated become vulnerable to further predation *because of* their vulnerability (Gaventa 1982).

"Beef: It's What's For Dinner:" A Case Study

It has always been the primary interest of the checkoff to create demand for beef and drive beef sales (Beef Board 2020, "About the Checkoff"). The beef checkoff was not created to educate consumers on healthy eating or ethically manage the effects of beef production on the environment. The beef checkoff was created to artificially stimulate beef sales, and today, profit is still their singular interest (Beef Board 2020, "About the Checkoff").

The interests of the beef lobby are inherently in conflict with consumer interests, which objectively are *not* to drive private industry beef sales or bolster the U.S. economy. Instead, I argue that real interests of consumers are in maintaining their health and protecting their futures from the risk of potentially disastrous or life-altering consequences, like climate change.

As established in Section II. Structural Powerlessness, eating beef is not conducive to a healthy lifestyle, as it is high in saturated fats and cholesterol, which put consumers at risk of developing heart disease, cancer, and other physical ailments (Shaw 2006, 231). Therefore, eating beef is not in consumers' real interests with regard to health. Further, cows are the number one agricultural contributor worldwide to the greenhouse gas effect through the production of methane and carbon dioxide, which contributes significantly to the rapid increase in risk for climate disaster (Quinton 2019, 1). Therefore, increasing beef sales is not in consumers' real interests, because it jeopardizes the environmental stability of our planet, and thus, the security of their future.

"Beef: It's What's For Dinner" advertisements intentionally manipulate and shape consumer desires against their own real interests, creating a sense of false consciousness and ideological hegemony among consumers. For example, the Beef Board, through its "Real Facts" series on YouTube, intentionally manipulates consumer understanding of their own interests. The advertisement entitled "Real Facts About Real Beef: Red Meat and Health" is a perfect case-in-point. The 25-second advertisement aired on March 6, 2020 on the official "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" YouTube channel. On screen, the advertisement reads: "Beef myth: Red meat is bad for your health." The narrator, Kiah Twisselman, titled on-screen as a Life Coach and Rancher, dispels this "myth," commenting, "You know, I think it can get really confusing with all this mixed-messaging we see on the internet about certain foods being good or bad, but ultimately I think what matters is that we're eating a well-balanced diet that includes nutrient-dense foods just like lean-beef" (National Cattlemen's Beef Association 2020,

"Real Facts About Real Beef: Red Meat and Health"). In fact, red meat *is* bad for health, and by calling this a "myth," the Beef Board intentionally shapes consumer understanding against their own interests through direct deceit. Further, the advertisement encourages consumers to eat beef by describing it as "nutrient-dense" and part of a "well-balanced diet," characterizing beef as being not only healthy, but essential to eating well.

Another "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" YouTube ad, "Lean Beef: Smart for the Heart, Easy on the Eyes" characterizes beef as healthful, despite growing evidence that red meat is not healthy. The 15-second advertisement aired on the "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" official YouTube channel on March 2, 2020 and has garnered 2.5 million views to date. The advertisement features a sizzling cut of beef atop a grill, with text reading across the screen, "Nicely done, beef. Your lean cuts are smart for the heart and easy on the eyes" (National Cattlemen's Beef Association" 2020, "Lean Beef: Smart for the Heart, Easy on the Eyes"). This mischaracterizes beef as a healthy choice in diet for consumers, even going as far as calling it heart healthy. Indeed, beef has the opposite effect on health, putting beef-eaters at higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease than those who do not eat beef (Shaw 2006, 231). Again, this advertisement intentionally conceals real interests from consumers through blatant lies, creating a cycle of false consciousness.

"Pack in the Nutrients" is another "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" advertisement that aired on YouTube and falsely promotes beef as a healthy choice for consumers. The 30-second advertisement debuted on YouTube on January 21, 2021 and has already generated 2.7 million views in the short timeframe it has been available. The

advertisement features a series of clips of babies eating beef. The clips are juxtaposed by text across the screen reading, “The first bites your baby takes are important. The American Academy of Pediatrics recognizes the importance of key nutrients in beef for growing bodies and minds. Every beefy bite packed with protein, zinc, iron, choline” (National Cattlemen’s Beef Association 2020, “Pack in the Nutrients”). Narration by an unnamed parent accompanies the clips: “I think it’s exciting honestly that some of the science is coming out and saying that you can feed beef earlier to kids” (National Cattlemen’s Beef Association 2020, “Pack in the Nutrients”). This advertisement encourages parents not only to feed their children beef, but to start beef-eating habits even earlier. It justifies this claim as a recent scientific development, which is ambiguous and remains uncited. Further, it stakes this recommendation on the basis of nutrition, advocating that beef is nutrient-dense and essential to “growing bodies and minds.” Objectively, the purpose of this advertisement is to drive up beef sales by artificially creating the next generation of beef-lovers through starting children on beef-diets at an earlier age. This advertisement intentionally capitalizes off consumer ignorance to turn a profit, jeopardizing the health of children in the process.

In the “Beef: It’s What’s For Dinner” advertisement, “Real Facts About Real Beef: Beef Production and Natural Resources,” the Beef Board promotes a similar message counter to consumer interests. This advertisement is 21 seconds long and aired on YouTube on March 2, 2020. On screen, the text reads, “Beef myth: Beef production is draining our natural resources” (National Cattlemen’s Beef Association 2020, “Real Facts About Real Beef: Beef Production and Natural Resources”). The narrator, identified as Kevin Kester, the owner of Bear Valley Ranch replies, “Our natural

resources on the ranch are better today than they ever have been. I'm a fifth-generation rancher and if we were doing a bad job, we wouldn't be in business today" (National Cattlemen's Beef Association 2020, "Real Facts About Real Beef: Beef Production and Natural Resources"). As previously established in Section II. Structural Powerlessness, production of beef *is* draining on natural resources, especially water, land, and energy (Barclay 2012, 1). Similar to the other advertisements in this series, "Real Facts About Real Beef: Beef Production and Natural Resources" characterizes beef's drain on natural resources as a "myth," intentionally misleading consumers to believe otherwise. Further, by describing the state of natural resources as "better today than they ever have been," the Beef Board both denies the impact of beef production on climate change and misattributes conditions, which are worsening. This advertisement intentionally manipulates consumers by dispelling their real interests as "myths" and purposefully deceiving them into acting against their interests.

"Real Facts About Real Beef: Cattle Production and Climate Change," which aired on March 2, 2020 on the "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" YouTube channel also exploits consumer ignorance of climate. The 30-second ad begins with text on-screen reading, "Beef myth: Methane from cattle is the leading cause of climate change." The narrator, identified as Carlyn Peterson, a PhD student studying animal biology at the University of California, Davis comments, "Methane from cattle is not the leading cause of climate change. This is incorrectly cited from a paper that's about ten years old and was actually redacted by the authors. Cattle contribute about two percent of the greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. The leading contributor is the burning of fossil fuels at about 80 percent, which is huge comparatively to beef cattle" (National

Cattlemen's Beef Association 2020, "Real Facts About Real Beef: Cattle Production and Climate Change"). As established in Section II. Structural Powerlessness, methane production from the life cycle and supply chain of animals — although difficult to quantify — has been estimated to contribute as much as over 50 percent of overall greenhouse gas emissions (Goodland and Anhang 2009, 11). Even the most conservative estimates approximate that livestock account for at least 18 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions (Capper 2011, 2454). Therefore, describing cattle-caused methane emissions as contributing only two percent to overall greenhouse gas emissions is both factually inaccurate and intentionally deceitful. The purpose of this advertisement is to downplay, if not completely obscure the effects of beef production on the greenhouse gas effect, dangerously tricking consumers against their own real interests to feel comfortable eating beef.

"Beef: It's What's For Dinner" advertisements contribute to the creation of a false consciousness, in which the real interests of the powerless are intentionally concealed from them by the powerful. These advertisements censor factual information, characterize valid concerns as "myths," and intentionally participate in ideological hegemony by shaping consumer interests towards eating beef, instead of their real interests in maintaining health and curbing methane and carbon dioxide emissions. They encourage consumers to eat beef and forgo alternatives, not for the purpose of sustaining "growing bodies and minds," but for a much more sinister objective: monetary capitalization off of powerlessness for the beef industry.

The "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" campaign and the beef checkoff have one goal in mind: to profit. Despite their dismissal of their exploitative actions, their

advertisements cannot be classified as “educational” or “informative.” These advertisements are intentionally designed to abuse and exacerbate power dynamics and capitalize off vulnerable individuals for the purpose of monetary gain for the beef industry at large.

Although the beef checkoff is currently legal in the U.S., its legal history reveals glaring concerns. From 2002 to 2005, the checkoff was even considered unconstitutional due to its exploitative nature of both cattle ranchers and American consumers. In resurrecting the Beef Act and classifying the checkoff as government speech, the court directly participated in creating a culture of powerlessness among the American people. It forces compelled speech from nearly one in five cattle ranchers who must pay into a program they neither believe in nor directly benefit from. Further, the checkoff doesn’t promote healthy or environmentally sound interests for consumers; it is a form of government propaganda designed to increase profits and boost the U.S. economy by manipulating consumers into eating beef. The checkoff intentionally misuses federal funds to lobby for beef and influence government policy and dietary guidelines for the purpose of driving beef sales. The beef lobby doesn’t just contribute to this system of structural powerlessness by maintaining food insecurity and censoring climate litigation. It created the very system itself to manipulate consumers and entrench them in a system of powerlessness. In combination with the effects of structural powerlessness, it is through attitudinal powerlessness that the beef lobby maintains this system to artificially drive beef sales, disenfranchising consumers, jeopardizing their health and security, and ultimately, robbing them of their autonomy as free-willed people in the process.

Together, the USDA and the Beef Board have conspired to bring about attitudinal powerlessness among consumers and dispossess them of their agency and freedom of choice. The checkoff has never been about checking off beef. It has always been about checking off powerlessness.

Section IV. Conscientization and Reclaiming Power

Chapter IV. Reframing Power and Powerlessness Through Conscientization

Both structural and attitudinal beef-induced powerlessness exacerbate and capitalize on racial and economic inequities, threaten the opportunity for meaningful contributions to society by marginalized individuals, revoke the rights of the powerless to agency, and entrap the powerless in a caste system of political, social, and economic immobilization. Compounded, these systems work together to maintain voicelessness and complacency, enforcing and dramatizing existing systems of inequity to sustain powerlessness. In a world where this power dynamic is so normalized and all-encapsulating, resistance and reclamation of power aren't just important; they're vital to recouping basic rights to autonomy and agency.

This section argues that structural and attitudinal powerlessness induced by beef can be counteracted through a process of conscientization. Using Paulo Freire's concept as a launchpad for critical consciousness, this thesis advocates that education and public awareness, paired with de-escalation of beef advertising, expansion of food assistance programs, and other changes in government policy can destabilize existing power dynamics and extricate marginalized individuals from powerlessness. By realizing conscientization to break the bonds of structural and attitudinal powerlessness with regard to diet and climate, this section aims to propose potential avenues for reclamation of power for the powerless that will restore agency and fight towards a more equitable future once and for all.

Conscientization

The concept of conscientization was originally theorized by Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire (Gaventa 1982, 208). Conscientization is broadly defined as "the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence" (Freire 2018, 81). The process begins with self-determination by oppressed groups to harness their awareness and begin progress towards potential aspirations and "limit situations" — issues which define areas of potential action (Gaventa 1982, 208). Limit situations, Freire argues, do not have to be major areas of oppression at first, but these initial grievances provide the foundation for self-determined action (Gaventa 1982, 209). As Gaventa notes, "With the dialectic process of articulation and action, along with reflection about what is occurring, consciousness and confidence necessary for more widespread challenge begin to grow" (1982, 209).

This thesis borrows from Freire's concept of conscientization in part to define avenues for resistance and contextualize the landscape for reclamation of power. For the purpose of this thesis, conscientization, inspired by Freire's original concept, is defined as the opportunities to reclaim power both as a society and as individuals. Within the realm of attitudinal powerlessness, I define conscientization to mean opportunities to restore agency for the powerless. Within the realm of structural powerlessness, I define conscientization to mean opportunities for destabilizing existing systems of power to promote political, societal, and economic mobilization. Both structural and attitudinal conscientization require the process of disrupting societal norms and unmasking ideological hegemony so as to contribute to public awareness and consciousness of real interests.

In subverting and deconstructing the power in order of ideological hegemony, conscientization prioritizes restoration of agency and freedom of choice as individuals. It works towards a process of unlearning for the powerless to awaken them to the ways in which their interests have been shaped and their agency has been obstructed by the powerful. In the spirit of Freire's original concept, this process gives rise to the recognition of real interests and aspirations in the hope that the powerless can and will reenter the political sphere as autonomous individuals. Therefore, in realizing conscientization, the powerless redeem the opportunity to reclaim their own power as individuals, unobstructed from the threat of powerful influence.

Broadly, I argue that the execution of attitudinal conscientization and structural transformation require different approaches because they target reclamation of power on both a macro and micro scale. Because attitudinal powerlessness targets individuals, I argue that attitudinal conscientization must also take place within an individual scope that focuses broadly on education and behavior change. Conversely, because structural powerlessness affects large demographics of individuals or even society at large, I argue that structural transformation must take place at a societal level, focusing on policy and system change. This will lead to the realization of conscientization on a large scale. Putting both into execution, I argue, presents a platform for restoration of agency, and ultimately, reclamation of power.

I. Structural Transformation

Diet & Equity

A valuable insight to understanding powerlessness as it relates to food is to conceptualize how diet is often not a choice for food insecure or otherwise marginalized individuals. Therefore, restoring choice in diet for these groups is not as simple as recommending lifestyle or diet change; it requires a more nuanced understanding of food access, economic mobility, and government influence.

Beef, and particularly processed, fast-food beef, is often selected by the powerless to provide dietary sustenance as a result of the pressures of food deserts and food swamps in creating and reinforcing food insecurity. As discussed in Section II, structural powerlessness is reinforced by the fast food industry by limiting consumer access to healthy and nutritious foods for those living in food swamps. Therefore, the crux of diet-related structural transformation rests on food access as a focus for reclaiming power. To begin, I argue that the government must expand existing food assistance programs to heighten food access, protect against predatory influences from the beef and fast food industries, and ultimately deconstruct beef-induced structural powerlessness.

In the 2018 fiscal year, the U.S. government spent $96 billion on USDA-operated food and nutrition assistance programs (Miller and Thomas 2020, 1). Of these programs, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, better known as SNAP, is the largest, with operating costs of $65 billion in 2018 alone (Miller and Thomas 2020, 1). In 2018, SNAP benefits were accessed by 39.7 million people, but even with government projects like this one and others, 11.1 percent of the population (14.3

million homes) were still food insecure (Miller and Thomas 2020, 1). Further, in the past 20 years, rates of food insecurity have never fallen below 10 percent of the U.S. population (Miller and Thomas 2020, 2). This data demonstrates that existing government food assistance programs are not adequately funded or accessible enough to properly address issues of food access. To adequately address beef-induced food insecurity and structural powerlessness, the government must expand SNAP benefits.

SNAP is a good candidate for expansion due to its design as a program — it is uniquely positioned to address personal and systemic barriers to food access (Miller and Thomas 2020, 3). Because SNAP benefits are administered through Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, SNAP members are less likely to face stigma as a result of accessing government food assistance (Miller and Thomas 2020, 3). Further, the SNAP-Ed program provides education opportunities to help SNAP recipients choose and prepare nutritious foods, reducing cultural barriers to accessing healthy foods (Miller and Thomas 2020, 3). SNAP has also proved effective as an antipoverty program, raising 3.2 million people out of poverty in 2018 (Miller and Thomas 2020, 3). By expanding government food assistance programs, freedom of choice over dietary lifestyle will become more economically accessible to food insecure individuals.

Second, overcoming geographic barriers to food access is also a necessary step towards restoration of autonomy over dietary choices. Because economic immobility contributes so significantly to beef-induced powerlessness, expansion of these programs and heightened food access is imperative to achieving structural transformation and restoring choice in diet. This can be achieved by way of food co-operatives, or food co-ops. Food co-ops are food distribution outlets which are owned by the communities they

service. Similar to a year-round farmer's market in the form of a grocery store, food co-ops place an emphasis on community building, bolstering local economies, and environmental sustainability (Neighboring Food Co-Op Association 2021, 1). By sourcing food locally and boycotting packaging through selling products in bulk, co-ops are more sustainable, socially responsible, and affordable than traditional grocery stores (The Guardian 2005, 1).

Co-ops are directly funded for communities; they charge individuals membership fees in exchange for a democratic vote in the co-op's decisions and supply of products. This is different from private industry shareholders because co-op members must live in the community in order to become members and influence decisions about the co-operative (International Co-Operative Alliance 2021, 1). Equity is practiced among members of the co-op through the mandate of a "one member, one vote" rule; therefore, no single individual possesses more power or influence than any other member (International Co-Operative Alliance 2021, 1). Further, membership in the co-op is not obligatory in order to shop at the business, which promotes equitable access to healthy and nutritious options for all, regardless of income (Neighboring Food Co-Op Association 2021, 1). Because co-ops are owned and democratically governed by their members, shoppers, and employees, they focus on serving the interests and needs of the people rather than generating a profit (International Co-Operative Alliance 2021, 1). In fact, if any surplus funds are generated by the co-op, they are reinvested directly into the business or returned to members (Neighboring Food Co-Op Association 2021, 1).

Co-ops are also value-driven rather than profit-driven, emphasizing tenets of democracy, equity, equality, solidarity, self-help, and social responsibility (Neighboring

Food Co-Op Association 2021, 1). Internationally, co-ops agree upon the following foundational principles (International Co-Operative Alliance 2021, 1):

> Voluntary and Open Membership
> Democratic Member Control
> Member Economic Participation
> Autonomy and Independence
> Education, Training, and Information
> Co-Operation Among Co-Operatives
> Concern for Community

These values ensure that all democratically owned food suppliers that classify themselves as "co-operatives" ensure a values-based approach to food access, centering on honesty, social responsibility, and caring for all community members (Neighboring Food Co-Op Association 2021, 1).

Food co-ops are a necessary step towards stabilizing local economies so they can become self-sustaining and sovereign from corporate fast food influence. They allow all community members to regain agency over their dietary lifestyles by providing equitable access to healthy and affordable food. Further, they provide an escape from the all-consuming nature of food swamps and their attributable consequences, including obesity and other diet-related ailments. Justice, fairness, and equity are "at the heart of the enterprise," making co-ops socially responsible organizations focused on restoring justice — values which are indispensable to reclamation of power (International Co-Operative Alliance 2021, 1). Food co-operatives must be integrated into the realization of structural transformation because they put the power back into the hands of the people and require nothing less than equitable access

to food, participation in democratic needs and community interests, social, economic, and political mobilization, and agency in diet and lifestyle for all.

Climate Recovery

Beef-induced structural powerlessness as it relates to climate requires an upheaval of the U.S. beef production system as we know it. It rightfully necessitates overall reduction in producing beef cattle for consumption, both on an individual and structural level. Therefore, structural transformation and reclamation of power with regard to climate must focus on production and identify the areas in which measures of sustainability can be increased.

Inherently, structural transformation with regard to beef production is reliant on technological innovations to reduce the methane produced by raising cows for beef. Mootral, a Swiss company working on reducing methane output by beef cattle, is currently investigating whether changes in cow feed could be the answer (Satariano 2020, 1). Mootral has had success in developing feed pellets for cows that mix garlic, citrus, and other additives to reduce indigestion and methane production in beef cattle (Satariano 2020, 1). Zaluvida, Mootral's parent company, proved successful in developing over-the-counter antimicrobials for humans with similar ingredients and made $150 million in 2014 doing so (Satariano 2020, 1). In studies so far, the pellet has demonstrated between 20 and 30 percent reduction in methane release by cows (Satariano 2020, 1). Further, because cows lose up to 12 percent of their energy intake from belching, reduction in methane production from the Mootral pellet has shown a reciprocal increase in milk production (Satariano 2020, 1). There's market incentive in

creating these pellets as well; if goals for the program are met, Mootral could turn a profit of €375 million per year (Satariano 2020, 1).

Seaweed is another food additive that researchers have considered in efforts to reduce methane production. At the lowest, seaweed-based diets have demonstrated reduction in methane production by 26.4 percent; at the highest, they've demonstrated to reduce methane production by 67 percent (Roque et al. 2019, 134). High levels of inclusion of seaweed into the diet have also been demonstrated to reduce carbon dioxide production by 13.9 percent, making seaweed additives a competitive agent to reducing methane production in beef cattle overall (Roque et al., 134).

AgResearch, a company based in New Zealand, has even been working on a cow vaccine to protect against the gut microbes that produce methane (Watts 2019, 1). Although this vaccine has not yet been tested on large groups of cattle, small studies have found the vaccine to be successful in creating antibodies in cows (Watts 2019, 1). The potential for a solution such as this remains unseen, but with further technological innovations, the development of a vaccine such as this could prove revolutionary for the future of beef production.

Whether it be garlic, seaweed, or vaccines, these technological advancements have the potential to reconstruct beef production systems to promote a more sustainable approach than the one with which the U.S. currently operates. Paired with reduction in beef consumption on a broad scale, this form of structural transformation would systematically reconstruct beef eating, thereby reducing beef's contributions to the greenhouse gas effect and diminishing climate-related structural powerlessness.

II. Attitudinal Conscientization

Restoring Choice in Diet

Attitudinal conscientization necessitates a process of unlearning. Because attitudinal powerlessness inherently builds upon the shaping of consciousness, it is through conscientization that the powerless become aware of their real interests and can mobilize to resist their oppressors. Reclamation of power through attitudinal conscientization can be enacted at an individual level through lifestyle choice, or at a more organized level, sometimes involving the government. Because attitudinal powerlessness is so heavily entrenched in societal norms shaped by large-scale advertising campaigns, this thesis draws on the anti-tobaccoism movement to envision a plan for attitudinal conscientization regarding beef-induced powerlessness.

Tobacco is comparable to beef for many reasons: Both are objectively against the interests of their target audiences, have been used to shape consciousness through large-scale advertising efforts and require a campaign of unlearning to disentangle systemic powerlessness. Anti-tobaccoism informs attitudinal conscientization with relation to beef for these reasons.

Historically, use of tobacco was heavily normalized — its prevalence was integral to the economic success of the U.S. and at one time came to represent Americanism, not unlike beef (Pecquet 2002: 467; Baker et al. 2000: 30). Although concern regarding tobacco use originated in the 19th century, an anti-tobaccoism movement didn't take root until the 1950s. Similar to the contemporary status of beef today, anti-tobaccoism wasn't initially popular due to tobacco norms and lack of medical consensus on the drug (Baker et al. 2000, 34).

After studies revealed the long-term consequences of cigarette use, the anti-tobaccoism movement truly sparked (Baker et al. 2000, 38). This information gained attention in the public eye after the study was reprinted and widely distributed by *Reader's Digest* (Baker et al. 2000, 38). This was the first step towards conscientization for anti-tobaccoism, and I argue that this is a necessary step towards attitudinal conscientization for beef as well. In counteracting the beef industry's ideological hegemony with scientific research and public awareness, attitudinal conscientization with respect to beef will encounter a similar public response as did anti-tobaccoism and begin the long journey of unlearning and disentangling ideological hegemony.

After the *Reader's Digest* publication, the government became more concerned about tobacco use and especially about misleading advertising that advocated its health benefits (Baker et al. 2000, 39). During the 1950s, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) took the next step and issued orders limiting cigarette advertising that falsely asserted claims of health (Baker et al. 2000, 39). Later, the publication of the 1964 Surgeon General report exponentially heightened public awareness and effected serious social change (Baker et al. 2000, 40). This led to a 1964 FTC regulation mandating that warning labels be placed on tobacco products and further, strictly regulated tobacco advertising (Baker et al. 2000, 41). Based on the effectiveness of this step, I argue that government interference in the beef checkoff and other beef advertising campaigns will prove to be an integral step towards attitudinal conscientization. Following in step with anti-tobaccoism, I recommend that the U.S. government limit beef advertising due to its harmful and predatory nature upon consumers, as well as add warning labels to beef products to inform consumers of the harm of eating beef.

In 1967, the U.S. government took an adversarial approach to anti-tobaccoism through counteradvertising (Baker et al. 2000, 45). The government required that television and radio run one anti-smoking ad for every three tobacco ads (Baker et al. 2000, 45). By 1969, the government had banned tobacco advertising on television and radio entirely (Baker et al. 2000, 45). Counteradvertising could also prove efficient towards informing consumers of the dangers of eating beef. Similar to its effects in the anti-tobaccoism movement, counteradvertising for beef would additionally influence attitudinal conscientization through the deconstruction of beef-centered societal norms. Banning media beef advertising would have an even stronger effect, disallowing the beef lobby from shaping consciousness. As for the effect on the tobacco industry, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2000 historical report recorded, "The elimination of cigarette advertising from the nation's most powerful medium was at the very least a stunning symbolic defeat for the tobacco industry" (Baker et al. 2000, 45).

The final nail in the coffin for the tobacco industry was the rebranding of tobacco — once America's most revered and popular drug — as a Class A carcinogen by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1992 (Baker et al. 2000, 48). This, paired with counteradvertising campaigns focused on the connection between smoking and disease. Doing so rebranded tobacco not just as unhealthy, but as deadly (Baker et al. 2000, 46). Beef has already been classified as a Group 2A carcinogen by the World Health Organization, suggesting this too is within the realm of possibility for the future of beef (World Health Organization 2021). In rebranding beef as carcinogenic, increasing public awareness, and disabling harmful and misleading beef advertising like

the “Beef: It’s What’s For Dinner” campaign, the realization of attitudinal conscientization could truly take root.

Since the 1950s, these tactics have proved effective in reducing tobacco use. In 1965, 42.4 percent of the population smoked cigarettes, but rates of tobacco use declined to 13.7 percent by 2018 (American Lung Association 2021). Because of the comparative value between tobacco use and beef consumption in the U.S., learning from the anti-tobaccoism movement could change the game for beef consumption in America. To truly embrace attitudinal conscientization and deconstruct the ideological hegemony of the beef industry, the U.S. government should parallel its actions regarding beef with the tactics and strategies used by the anti-tobaccoism movement. This would require emphasis on public awareness, restrictions on or even complete disavowal of beef advertising, the implementation of warning labels on beef products, and educational counteradvertising. Instituting policies like these will dismantle existing norms on beef consumption, disentangle ideological hegemony, and ultimately restore agency and freedom of choice among consumers.

Climate Literacy

Attitudinal powerlessness regarding climate is most heavily influenced by the efforts of the beef lobby to shut down climate policy and fight consumer knowledge about the contributions of beef to the greenhouse gas effect. This is evidenced by the beef checkoff advertising initiatives, which falsify information and classify the harmful environmental effects of beef as “myths,” as demonstrated in Section III. Therefore, the

realization of attitudinal conscientization rests on one primary mode of resistance: climate literacy for individuals through government education and policy.

The United Nations Alliance of Climate Change evidences a potential avenue the U.S. could pursue to effect attitudinal conscientization with respect to climate. The Alliance began in 2012 through a conference in Doha, Qatar, which brought together organizations like the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Meteorological Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, and others to convene on raising public awareness on the effects of climate change (UNFCCC 2021, 1). The Alliance implemented event planning, educational outreach, and training to promote informed discussion on environmental issues. They also held panels discussing climate education and inclusivity to heighten public knowledge about climate change (UNFCCC 2021, 1). Further, the Alliance drew from the Paris Agreement, which states, "Parties shall cooperate in taking measures to enhance climate education, training, public awareness, public participation, and public access to that information" to support climate awareness in the education sector and expand climate literacy (UNFCCC 2021, 1). In taking inspiration from the Alliance, the U.S. could expand climate literacy initiatives in school to teach children of the impacts of beef on the greenhouse gas effect and unravel the ideological hegemony propagated by the beef checkoff and other beef advertising campaigns. Further, this initiative could include other operations to advance climate literacy in the U.S., including event planning, training, and educational outreach to dispel the impact of climate-related ideological hegemony and advance public agency with respect to climate. Climate literacy is indispensable to deconstructing the shaping of consciousness and reclamation of power

as it relates to climate. Therefore, attitudinal conscientization must make climate literacy and free access to climate resources a primary course of action to reclaim power for the powerless.

Conclusion

America is a society obsessed with meat. Beef and beef politics permeate nearly everything we do as Americans and even our national identity itself, promoting power and powerlessness in our every action. Television advertisements and billboard signs may have us believe that selecting that fatty steak at the grocery store or pulling through the McDonald's drive-through on a whim are our choice, but in unraveling the effects of ideological hegemony, we begin to conceptualize the true effect beef has on our daily lives. In truth, it is the very hallmark of the beef industry's manipulation that we believe these decisions are a matter of choice. This falsified narrative reveals our ignorance and privilege with relation to food insecurity and food oppression, such that we conceptualize eating and diet as judgments of our own volition.

In reality, the beef lobby, with the assistance of the U.S. government, controls the agenda when it comes to what we eat. They use their power and influence to manipulate dietary guidelines, alter climate policy, illegally lobby the government with checkoff funding, reinforce food deserts and food swamps, exploit the powerless, and entrench vulnerable people in a system of economic immobilization and powerlessness, and they use beef to do it. Powerlessness doesn't occur naturally; it is created as a result of the exacerbation of racial and economic disparities to capitalize on social inequity.

Beef isn't just "what's for dinner"; it's a tool wielded by the powerful to shape consciousness and profit off vulnerability.

In *The Collective Definition of Deviance*, Floyd Davis and Richard Stivers write: "The diffusion of new knowledge is a major cause of collective searches for new norms in the modern world" (1975, 53). Put simply, knowledge is power, and it is exactly for this reason that the beef lobby, the U.S. government, and the fast food industry have used their influence, money, and power to shape the consciousness of the marginalized, strip them of their rights to agency, and pacify them into complacency. It is through the process of structural transformation and attitudinal conscientization that those who have been made powerless by the exploitation of the powerful can become enlightened, break system barriers, and reclaim their agency as autonomous individuals. Because knowledge is power, and once it is in the hands of those who can wield it for their own good, no one can take that away.

Eating beef has never been a choice. Conscientization makes it one.

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