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Southeastern Food Movement: Nonprofit Perspectives on Progress and Inclusion

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Abstract

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By Mackenzie Aime

This thesis provides insight into the perceptions and strategies that advocates within food-oriented nonprofits use to create a more sustainable and just food system. Three central themes are analyzed throughout this study: motivations for entry, ideologies for change, and perspectives of whiteness in the movement. Due to the numerous issues present in the current food system, motivations that galvanize individuals to food movement action are diverse. Individual advocate motivations can play a role in determining which issues are addressed and the forms of activism that are used for food system change. As such, much debate exists regarding the best ways to create a better food system. Some activism promotes change by creating alternatives to industrial agriculture through market-based approaches. Other forms of activism use non-market based approaches to challenge the structure of the food system. Within these food movement dynamics exists the critique that the movement is predominately white and excludes communities of color from participating and shaping solutions. Semi-structured interviews with 23 nonprofit advocates, both people of color and white, working in the food movement in the Southeast were used in this study to interrogate food movement dynamics of motivations, ideologies, and race from the perspective of nonprofit practitioners. Taken together this study demonstrates that nonprofit food movement advocates are primarily motivated to work in this sector due to health considerations, the potential to create community through food, and environmental concerns. Ideologically, advocates expressed support for market- based activism that seeks to create alternatives in the current system. In terms of race, a majority of advocates agreed that the food movement is dominated by white folks but complicated that critique through testimony related to power. In addition, advocates outlined a plethora of barriers that they feel hinder nonprofits from more explicitly adopting racial equity practices and policies. Aside from highlighting how food movement actors become interested in the moment, rationalize their modes of activism, and view the level of inclusion they foster within their organization, this study calls for deeper and more transparent institutional collaboration in addressing these critiques systematically to build a transformational and socially progressive food movement.

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I. Introduction

Music reverberated off the mundane concrete bank high-rises on an early Saturday morning as I dragged my parents to our local farmers market in Boise, Idaho. Although we rarely bought anything, wandering through the assortment of farmer and craft stalls made me truly feel at home. At that time, my early teenage self's ultimate aspiration was Food Network stardom. This future goal added meaning to the farmers market, transforming it into a space for creative recipe generation, community connection, and enhanced understanding of my state's diverse agricultural offerings. For me, as a white metropolitan female, the market was an inviting space. Everything about it drew me in, from the communal atmosphere to the impressive artwork.

I loved the market because it provided an alternative to the supermarkets I had always visited. Community was actively created as people stopped to pet one another's dogs, listen to music, and talk with vendors. This event-like atmosphere was exciting and, all of a sudden, grocery shopping transformed from pulling something off the shelf to really investing time and thought into a purchase. Most of these initial thoughts reflect the literature regarding individual's motivations for visiting farmers markets. Justin Schupp (2015) notes that people often purchase from farmers markets because of their environmental values, their love of cooking, and their personal health concerns (p. 829). Gilbert Gillespie et al. (2007) notes that farmers markets are also often seen as a source for community development (p. 66). However, these feelings were later problematized for me as I began to take note of the racial dynamics within other food spaces, like this market.

After moving to the Southeast, and being exposed to new understandings of the multifaceted ways racism functions in society, I realized that my positive experience at the Boise farmers market was not merely a product of the market itself, but also was a product of my identity. As a white woman in a predominantly white state, I felt no threat walking around the farmers market, sampling food with no intention of purchasing, and standing in the middle of the road listening to music. In 2010, my hometown of Boise, Idaho was 89 percent white, sharply contrasting my new Southeastern city home's 38 percent white population (United States Census Bureau). Moving to Atlanta cultivated a heightened awareness of the benefits my identity and privilege garnered me relative to other identity groups. As naive and privileged as it was, looking back, I see how my whiteness provided me with accessibility, sense of familiarity, and comfort within the predominantly white space of the Boise farmers market, that people of color may not have had in those same spaces.

Now, my education at Emory has allowed me to confront the realities of systemic racism within social institutions, like alternative food spaces. Systemic racism is the, "Foundational, large-scale and inescapable hierarchical system of US racial oppression devised and maintained by whites and directed at people of color… [it is] the material, social, and ideological reality that is well embedded in major social institutions" (Feagin & Elias, 2013, p. 936). This theory is exemplified in the United States through the disproportionate rates of Black men in prison, loss of indigenous land, myth of the model minority, and creation of residential segregation (Alexander, 2010; Norgaard, Reed & Van Horn, 2011; Takaki, 2000; Williams & Collins, 2001). Learning about systematic racism deepened my understanding of the food system and, I began integrating race and ethnicity studies into my food systems work. Upon my first visit to a farmers market in the Southeast, I was taken aback by the lack of racial/ethnic representation in the shoppers and the vendors. Instead of reflecting the city's racial diversity, the majority of vendors and shoppers were white. The lack of representation at this market highlighted the residential segregation in the city (Quinn & Pawasarat, 2002; The Racial Dot Map, 2017; Turner, 2014). Later I discovered that this experience was supported by academic literature that has shown that farmers market patrons usually mirror their community, thus in white segregated areas mostly white patrons will frequent the market (Brown, 2002, p. 169; Byker, Shanks, Misyak & Serrano 2012, p. 47; Payne, 2002). Furthermore, white shoppers have also been noted to participate in farmers markets in non-white areas (Alkon, 2012, p. 93-4). This experience, combined with knowledge from classes I had taken on race and food, crystallized my desire to understand the segmentation in our food system.

I began working with food-based nonprofits in the community to understand how they sought to repair some of the problems, including racial division in the food system, of which I had become aware. Inspiration for this thesis originated directly from those work experiences. As a volunteer and intern at a few food-oriented nonprofits in a Southeastern city I began to ask: how did staff become interested in food movement work? What was influencing their work and the solutions that they sought to implement in the food system? And how did racial representation play into all of this? This thesis is an attempt to answer these questions by looking at the movement towards a more just and sustainable food system.

Background

In this section I will present a concise history of agriculture in the United States and outline how damaging aspects of agricultural practices have brought about what is known today as the alternative food movement. This review is not meant to be a comprehensive history of food in the United States, rather I highlight the aspects that are most necessary for this paper. As such, I will start by referencing the history of chattel slavery in the United States. Then, I will quickly introduce industrial agriculture, which now dominates the American food system (Magdoff, Buttel & Foster 2000, p. 8; Sheingate, 2001, p. 17). Discussion of industrial food production will include an overview of some of the ways our current food system harms society as a whole. Finally, I will delve into the particular marginalization people of color[1] face in this country, as it relates to our food system.

Chattel Slavery in the US

Since American inception, food has served as source of domination. Seventeenth century chattel slavery was a central form of labor used across the country, but utilized more pervasively in the Southern United States for agricultural production (Berlin, 2003, p. 123; Phillips, 1925, p.132; Schneider & Schneider, 2000, p. 251). The vast number of chattel slaves brought to the US and the dehumanization they faced have left a lasting imprint on US race relations and agricultural practices (Heuman, 2003, p. 4). The racism that accompanied and was used to justify slavery has created enduring legacies of white supremacy and embedded social inequalities that continue to benefit white people today (Feagin, 2010, p. 1-3; Gilbert & Leak, 2010; Nadal, Griffin, Wong, Hamit & Rasmus 2014; Ray, 2010a; Schneider & Schneider, 2000, p. 251; Sewell, 2010).

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[1] Person of Color or POC will be used in this paper to refer to individuals that are not white and/or of non-Europe heritage. This decision was made to ensure inclusion of various identities and with a bend toward contemporary language use. See https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/03/30/295931070/the-journey-from-colored-to-minorities-to-people-of-color and https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/person_of_color for a historical analysis and contemporary framing of the term

The Rise of Industrial Agriculture

After legalized Antebellum-era chattel slavery ended in the 1800s (though agriculture exploitation remained) agriculture continued on its track towards becoming a large-scale industry (Timeline of Agricultural Labor, 2018). Following the New Deal, the introduction of subsidies in the US economy helped quicken the pace of already changing farming practices (Sheingate, 2001, p. 17). Industrial agriculture's rapid progress was also aided in part by WWII and the reimagining of chemicals used in weaponry as chemical inputs to help support mono-cropping systems and increase agricultural productions (MacIntyre, 1987). Industrialized commercial agriculture began to dominate partly due to greater stability from subsidies, and farmers started to invest in technology like chemical pesticides and fertilizers, improved machinery, and hybridized seeds (Sheingate, 2001, p. 17). These changes moved US agriculture towards more intensive and expedient production of crops. Much of what now dominates our current agricultural system is mono-crop industrial agriculture (Magdoff, Buttel & Foster 2000, p. 8; Sheingate, 2001, p. 17).These changes to farming practices in the United States resulted in many unintended consequences for the food system that galvanized social movements opposed to industrial agriculture.

Consequences of Industrial Agriculture

Industrial agriculture attempts to increase yields through energy intensive, highly mechanized, and large-scale processes (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011, p. 1; Barlett, 1989, p. 253; Fitzgerald, 2003, p. 20-32; Lyson, 2004, p. 2; Sims, Dubois, Flammini, Feliz & Bogdanski, 2011). This now dominant form of farming causes great harm to society environmentally, socially, and economically (Tegtmeier & Duffy, 2005, p. 64; Wartman, 2012, p. 75).

These farms contribute to a host of ecological problems including but not limited to: climate change, land degradation through soil erosion, compaction, salinization, and pollution, depletion and pollution of water and other natural resources, and decrease in biodiversity (Horrigan, Lawrence & Walker, 2002; Velten, Leventon, Jager & Newig, 2015, p. 7834). While industrial agricultural is used around the globe, the impacts of US-based practices can often spread beyond its borders. Chemicals used in agriculture, like fertilizers and pesticides, seep into the environment and into international waterways, causing widespread negative impacts to marine life and water quality (Boody & DeVore, 2006, p. 839). Industrial agriculture also harms wildlife, which can often lead to upstream effects on the animal ecosystem in its entirety (Horrigan et al., 2002, p. 445). These are just some of the major pitfalls from a constantly expanding list of environmental problems resulting from industrial agriculture that have disturbed consumers and activists.

Industrial farms are often characterized as unsustainable and detrimental to the social health and wellbeing of societies (Barlett, 1989, p. 254; Pretty, Morison & Hine, 2003, p. 376). In his book, *As You Sow,* Goldschmidt (1978) concluded that in areas where large-scale industrial farming took place, community members had a lower standard of living and quality of life. The social cohesion also suffers in these areas where large-scale industrial agriculture dominates because it leads to “rising production costs; an ever decreasing number of farms and, linked with that, poverty and a decrease in rural population” (Horrigan et al., 2002; Velten et al., 2015, p. 7834). Industrial food processes can put further strain on society because of its contributions to health issues including: antibiotic resistance, foodborne illness, asthma and other breathing complications, and several chronic diseases (Horrigan et al., 2002, p. 449-51).

Two other important social problems resulting from industrial agriculture are the health and human rights impacts on farm workers. As noted by Brown and Getz (2011), “the neoliberal domestic policies and international trade regimes that privileged corporate agribusiness over small farmers in Mexico, forced many off their land” (p. 122). These individuals then come to the United States to work as immigrant laborers, and suffer from alarming rates of hunger, violence, and poisoning from pesticides (Consciousness Commitment = Change, 2018; Wright, 2005). Farm workers have long suffered the consequences of industrial agriculture's widespread use of pesticides that cause acute and chronic illness, and even death (Wright, 2005). These egregious acts against the individuals responsible for helping move food from farm to table demonstrate some of the drastic social implications resulting from industrial agriculture. However, these adverse effects on social justice are compounded by the economic impact that industrial agriculture has had on the modern economy.

Many of the negative impacts to the environment and society are not directly seen or paid for by the companies that carry out the practices, and thus are not included in the cost of food. As these costs do not trickle down directly to companies or consumers, they are considered externalities and are usually ignored by these two groups. In order to showcase the true cost of agriculture, scholars have attempted to quantify the exact monetary amount that the consequences from industrial agricultural costs consumers. Tegtmeier and Duffy (2005) estimate that the combined effects on natural resources, wildlife and ecosystem biodiversity, and human health costs consumers somewhere between \$5.7 to \$16.9 billion yearly (p. 82). Similarly, Pimentel (2005) reports that each year pesticides alone can cost up to \$10 billion as a result of environmental and societal destruction in the US. These estimates elucidate the astounding and widespread impact of industrial processes on society. As a result, this type of agricultural system—that depends on the input of high cost products, constantly changing machinery, and large swaths of land—cannot be deemed sustainable.

The external costs from industrial agriculture are not the only economic effects caused by this system of production. As this mode of production is resource intensive, it has become economically infeasible for some to continue farming because of the high cost associated with growing on these massive scales using very specific seeds, fertilizers, and types of equipment (Sheingate, 2001, p. 18). In the early transition to industrial agriculture, many farmers were forced to leave the profession, concentrating market power in the hands of few farmers while also hurting rural economies as unemployed farmers migrated to urban centers (Magdoff, 2000, p. 8; Sheingate, 2001, p. 18-9). This depressed once thriving rural towns as farmers were forced to find other forms of work. Additionally, family farming traditions and generational land can also be lost due to the cost barriers that force farmers out of full-time farming, hereby creating social consequences due to the economic effects from industrial agriculture. The centralization of farming has mirrored the centralization of corporate agribusiness power with food companies like Coca-Cola and seed producers like Monsanto dominating the market in their specific industries (Magdoff, 2000, p. 11). This concentration of power has had drastic results for the livelihood of farmers. Richard Sexton notes that in 2000, "the top six supermarket retailers… controll[ed] 50 percent of supermarket sales, versus 3 percent in 1992" (p. 20187). Today these numbers are even more skewed as the top four grocery retailers captured nearly 45% of all sales in 2016 (USDA ERS, 2017b). Additionally, in 2016, only 14.8 cents of each food dollar went directly back to farmers (Sexton, 2000, p. 1087). These economic indicators further demonstrate how unsustainable and detrimental the industrial agriculture system can be and provide justification for why individuals often feel compelled to work against it.

Industrial Food System Consequences for Communities of Color

Race[2] has played a key role in shaping life outcomes in the United States. Since the problem of whiteness will become a core theme of this paper I want to outline the ways in which people of color are disadvantaged by our food system. Providing an overview of some disadvantages illustrates why scholars, activists, and organizations seek to dismantle systems of oppression within the food system. Outlining the disproportionate harms done to people of color in the food system demonstrates why the claimed whiteness of the food movement is problematic because, if true, it means that those with lived experience of food systems problems are not included in the movement for change.

While this short section can in no way fully represent the plethora and constantly evolving ways race dictates life in the United States for people of color, I hope this section will provide a small window into the ways race interacts with our food system. Examples of how racism has impacted our food system are seen in the location of food and food outputs, labor issues, forced foodway changes, and land rights, to name a few.

Concentrated animal feeding operations, otherwise known as CAFOs, are spaces where more than 1000 animal units (i.e. 1000 heads of cattle, 700 dairy cows, 2500 pigs, 125,000 chickens, or 82,0000 laying hens) are kept and raised in confined spaces (USDA NRCS, 2017). These hog CAFO operations are disproportionately located in communities of color. Hog CAFO operations are linked to decreased mental health, poor physical health usually due to asthma prevalence, and disruption of social life since residents cannot go outside or hold outdoor neighborhood functions because of the overpowering smell emanating from the CAFOs (Donham et al., 2007).

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[2] While race is a core aspect of this paper, other identity markers like class, gender, sexuality, ability, nationality, and citizenship also determine how people are able to interact with our food system. These various axes of identity function concurrently—when individuals embody separate identities—giving rise to new and often more nefarious forms of oppression, outlined in the theory intersectionality. (See Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw)

Due in part to residential segregation, there is also a higher per capita placement of fast-food restaurants and a lack of grocery stores in communities of color compared to white, thus creating unhealthy food environments, otherwise known as food swamps (Airhihenbuwa & Liburd, 2006, p. 490; Baker, Schootman, Barnidge & Kelly 2006; Bell, Mora, Hagan, Rubin & Karpyn, 2013; Kwate & Loh, 2009; Rose et al., 2010). Food available in these neighborhoods tends to be less healthy and more calorie-dense, consumption of which is linked to overweight, obesity, and lower health outcomes (Baker et al., 2006; Bell et. al, 2013; Drewnowski, 2004; Satia, 2009).

Food service work is also plagued by labor exploitation. Reports have shown that restaurant workers are paid some of the lowest wages across the nation, are victims of wage theft, and suffer from high rates of sexual assault (ROC & Forward Together 2014; ROC, Benner & Food Lab and Research Center, 2015a; ROC, Food Lab and Research Center & International Human Rights Law Clinic, 2015b). A disproportionate number of these workers are people of color, further exacerbating food system injustice (ROC, Benner & Food Lab and Research Center, 2015a).

Foodways can normally shift over time as a result of social change and progress. However, some cases demonstrate that changes to cultural food practices are largely forced. An example of this comes from the Klamath Native Americans who have had to significantly change their foodways due to selective food availability on their reservation, lack of land access, and legislative prohibitions to cultural hunting and wildlife management practices (Norgaard et al., 2011).

Examples of other food system oppression includes unsubstantiated loan denial for minority farmers and forced displacement of farmers off their land (Donham et al. 2007; Pigford v. Glickman, 1999; Walker, Keane & Burke, 2010). Unsubstantiated loan denial were enacted by the USDA, which further underscores the institutionalization of discriminatory practices within the food system. These are just some of the problems that sectors of the food movement specifically seek to change by dismantling the systems of oppression that give rise to these lived experiences.

Food Movement Beginnings

The alternative food movement seeks to move society away from industrial agriculture and processed goods, and toward a more sustainable systems that emphasizes "fresh, local, and often organic offerings" (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011, p. 1; Holt-Giménez & Wang, 2011, p. 85). "Alternative" is often used to describe the movement because it seeks to create a system counter to the industrial food system. Pinpointing the definitive origins of this social movement is difficult because values and practices associated with the current food movement have existed across space and times. Much of the attention and action around food in the United States took place during the social upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, this section is less concerned with answering who started the food movement, but rather seeks to contextualize contemporary food activism with its historical underpinnings.

Much of American popular understanding of the alternative food movement starts with the 1960s and 1970s counterculture and environmental movements (Constance, 2014, p. 8-9). The origins of the larger counterculture hippie food movement are traced back to a 1966 group called the Diggers (Belasco, 1989, p. 18). This group is credited with helping lay the ideological foundation for both People's Park, a decentralized urban garden started in Berkeley, California in

1969, and the widespread use of cooperative grocery stores through their practice of giving away free food (Belasco, 1989, p.1-19). The movement that surfaced from the establishment of People's Park was characterized by young political radicals. This group believed that food was common property, and used the Diggers' model of providing free food to communicate new political ideals about cooperative living and decentralized government (Belasco, 1989, p. 18-22). After this wave, the Yippie generation, along with others, combined politics with agroecology in the form of organic farming and "back to the land" practices (Alkon & Guthman, 2017, p. 4; Bauermeister, 2014, p. 5, Belasco, 1989, p. 20-21). This change was seen to channel the political, social, and environmental values of the movement for justice into a singular and deeply personal aspect of social life: food (Belasco 1989: 20-22, Goodman 2012: 132, Guthman 2014: 50-1). However, these historic beginnings largely functioned outside of capitalism as activists considered food a common good rather than a commodity for market-based economies.

The timing of this counterculture movement coincided with labor movements. Agricultural labor in the US has consistently functioned by exploiting people of color. Continuing this legacy, the Bracero Program, which lasted from 1942 until 1964 employed 4.6 million Mexican agricultural laborers and was the largest event of contract labor in United States history. While the rules of the program prohibited exploitation and even provided substantial benefits, they were never actualized, resulting in much suffering for those in the program (About, 2018). Then in 1960, the widely viewed film, *Harvest of Shame*, showcased the underbelly of American agricultural exploitation to the public (Blair, 2014; Murrow, 1960). This television documentary unveiled the horrifying conditions of predominantly Black migrant agricultural workers in the United States (Murrow, 1960).

This national worker awareness was followed by activism within the Latinx community. In 1962, the National Farmworkers Association, now known as United Farm Workers, led by Cesar Chavez, worked “to combat low wages, unfair hiring practice, and dangerous working conditions” in agriculture fields in California (Araiza, 2009, p. 202; Bauermeister, 2014, p. 5; Kim, 2017; UFW Chronology, 2018). Agricultural labor exploitation has a long and tenacious history in the United States that continues today, in the fields of both industrial and alternative forms of cultivation (Consciousness Commitment = Change; Guthman, 2014).

Another example of food-related activism came from the Black Panther Party (BPP), which started in 1966, around the same time as the counterculture alternative food movement. This group is notorious for starting the first free breakfast program in the country (Alkon, 2012, p. 22; The, 2009, p. 3). Originally one of the BPP’s survival programs, the Free Breakfast program, was soon integrated into other institutions like, “churches, parent-teacher associations, and local governments across the country” (Araiza, 2009, p. 208). BPP’s example demonstrates that the ideas of combating food system problems via community organizing and direct action is not limited to the alternative food movement, even though the movement has used some of these forms of activism. Due to various starting points, especially within different racial groups, it is unsurprising that the food movement has transformed and diversified its approach to change since its inception.

Motivations

Extensive scholarship exists on the values and motivations that propel growers and consumers into the alternative food movement. I am choosing to highlight the motivations of these two groups, in particular, to understand if nonprofit advocate motivations varying from these two highly studied populations. Literature on growers’ motivations largely shows that environmental sustainability is a key factor in pushing farmers to adopt non-conventional, more environmentally-friendly, practices (Andreatta, 2005; Broad, 2016; Lyson, 2014; Paxson, 2012; Trauger, Sachs, Barbercheck, Brasier & Kiernan, 2010, p. 44). Additionally, growers who pursue alternative farming methods of production and distribution are also seen to value the community connections they foster (Paxson, 2012; Trauger et al., 2010). Consumer oriented literature describes the personal factors that contribute to individuals' choice to visit alternative food institutions. As mentioned above, these desires and motivations are usually related to health concerns, taste and quality, environmental concerns, support for local farmers, and participation in community bonding opportunities at alternative food institutions (Gillespie et al., 2007, p. 65; Schupp, 2015, p. 829).

In this study, I focused on how motivation helps explain why staff members decide to pursue careers within the food system. While there are multiple social psychological theories of motivations, delving into the specific rhetorical differences in motivations was beyond the scope of this study. Rather, asking advocates about their motivations for pursuing this work is meant to better inform the potential reasoning participants espoused specific ideologies for change.

Within the establishment of what is now called the alternative food movement, there is some debate on how exactly to create a sustainable food system that takes into account a plethora of issues from environmental stewardship to nutrition to equal food access. Often civic agriculture, which is seen to have "complementary and embedded social and economic strategies that provide economic benefits to farmers at the same time that they ostensibly provide socio-environmental benefits to the community" is heralded as the preferred way to practice sustainable agriculture (Lyson, 2012; Trauger et al., 2010, p. 43). Some individuals favor farmers markets as spaces where local farmers can sell their products to the public as ideal spaces for dissemination of civic agriculture because it promotes community engagement (Trauger et al., 2010, p. 44-5). Others note that Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) models are better outlets because they create shared risk of farming, collaboration, and responsible farming practices (Feagan, 2014). These are just two dominant alternative food institutions of many. However, they showcase some of the values and beliefs attached to alternative food purchasing. With these various forms of participating in the alternative food system come tensions concerning the best way to procure more sustainable food.

Ideology

Various ideologies have been put forward as means for accomplishing food system transformation. Some approaches mirror the origins of the alternative food movement Diggers, by working outside of the current neoliberal capitalist system to accomplish change. Others see institutions working within this system as key partners and seek to work within institutions to accomplish their goals. Scholars have termed these two different approaches "oppositional" and "alternative" (Constance, 2014, p. 5). As with any form of activism, both of these approaches have strengths and weaknesses. Oppositional approaches are called into question regarding their ability to make real change when they are only able to reach the smaller audiences that already question the dominant economic system. On the other hand, alternative forms of change, at best, have surface level effectiveness due to the nature of our capitalistic system, and at worst, can reinforce the very structures that create food system failures (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011).

Alternative modes of enacting change in the food system are utilized because they provide a new form of consumerism. This line of thinking promotes the idea that change can be made in the agrifood systems when consumers find alternatives to what is currently available.

Two dominant forms of engaging in this mode of activism are exemplified by community food security and local food.

Local food activism often focuses on civic agriculture and green economy purchasing strategies as a way to restore local food systems (Alkon, 2012; Mares & Alkon, 2011). The green economy, much like civic agriculture, seeks to promote environmental and social well-being within the current economic system (UNEP, 2011). Consumer purchases are the mechanism through which food system change occurs in both civic agriculture and the green economy.

Community food security specifically targets access and availability of food at the hyper-local level (Holt-Gimenez & Wang, 2011, p. 86; Mares & Alkon, 2011, p. 70). This thread of food activism, “frames solutions within improvements to food access and availability” and as such is usually aimed at low-income communities (Mares & Alkon, 2011). While community food security goals can be incorporated in the goals of the other modes of activism, this philosophy focuses more on bridging emergency food programming with food system strengthening through market-based strategies.

A classic example of alternative activism comes from organic agriculture. As detailed above, when first conceptualized, organics largely fit under the oppositional approach as it rejected the commodification of food (Belasco, 1989). However, organic food prevalence has skyrocketed since the late 60’s and is now in nearly every large-scale grocery store where Americans spend nearly $50 billion a year on it (Organic Trade Association, 2017; USDA ERS, 2017). This sort of impact has helped farmers net more income, decreased pesticide use on farms, and lessen the number of Americans who eat foods exposed to pesticides. While it has created positive effects for some farmers and consumers, organics has also faced criticism for being co-opted by large corporations that keep small producers out of the market (Johnston, Biro

& MacKendrick, 2009, p. 513-4; Guthman, 2014). In face of criticism, some still see organics as a prime example of the success embedded in alternative forms of resistance within the food system, since what once was niche is now commonplace. However, organics have been criticized for leaving the key forces of industrial agriculture in place, being easily co-opted by industrial processes, and only being accessible to wealthy consumers (Allen & Kovach, 2000; Guthman, 2014).

Others see oppositional forms of resistance as the best method of engagement. These individuals see constraints of working within neoliberal capitalist frameworks. One of these constraints is that capitalism is only successful when profitable; thus it needs constantly expanding markets to succeed, which runs counter to the ideal of conservation within sustainable food thinking (Guthman, 2011b, p. 164-8). This camp foresees limits to alternative modes of consuming, as used in green economies. Under this umbrella, scholars and activists alike seek to challenge the proliferation of market-based solutions to envision a new path forward, divorced from neoliberal capitalism. Contemporary iterations of oppositional resistance are food justice and food sovereignty.

Food justice focuses on the underlying structural inequalities, related to race, class, and gender, that create inequalities within the food system (Alkon & Agyeman 2011, p. 4-5; Bradley & Herrera, 2015, p. 101; Broad, 2016, p. 3; Slocum & Cadieux, 2015, p. 27). While this form of activism also utilizes market-based approaches in order to implement change, it challenges the underlying structures of inequity, like systemic racism. Additionally, food justice places the agency to enact change within communities that are most hurt by the food system (Mares & Alkon, 2011, p. 70). However, this form of activism can sometimes become co-opted by organizations that incorporate justice-based policies or practices without any real directions of accountability from the communities they claim they serve (Mares & Alkon, 2011; Passidomo, 2014).

Food sovereignty focuses more on community and national self-determination over the food supply. The groups who adhere to food sovereignty work to reallocate decision-making power to communities that have been disenfranchised in the passage of international trade policies (Holtz-Gimenez & Wang, 2011, p. 90; Mares & Alkon, 2011, p. 70). This principle was first developed by La Via Campesina, which identifies as an "international movement bringing together millions of peasants, small and medium-size farmers, landless people, rural women and youth, indigenous people, migrants and agricultural workers from around the world" (La Via Campesina, 2016). This movement was started by what scholars term the Global South in direct reaction to international neoliberal trade policies that helped weaken local food economies (Food Sovereignty- Via Campesina, 2003). Although strong internationally, some scholars argue that this thread of the food movement is not as dominant and/or has taken on a different form within the US context (Brent, Schiavoni & Alonso-Fradejas, 2015; Schiavoni, 2009).

This thesis seeks to understand how staff members in nonprofit institutions conceptualize the best ways to go about achieving change. Strategies of activism are important to study and understand as they help food movement actors preemptively locate and overcome potential barriers to their ascribed forms of activism. Additionally, situating this study within current ideologies helps to map the food movement. Combined, this analysis leads to richer, more informed, and hopefully more successful strategies for food system transformation.

Whiteness

One of the main critiques of the food movement is that it ignores the white supremacy at play in how it goes about propagating its mission, values, and benefits (Guthman, 2008a;

Guthman, 2008b; Guthman, 2011a; Holt-Giménez & Wang, 2011; Mares & Alkon, 2011b; Morales, 2011, p. 150; Sbicca, 2012; Slocum, 2006; Slocum, 2007). Many assert that the racial privilege within the food system itself permeates the food movement.

In this section, I will outline some of the current critiques of the food movement as it pertains to racial privilege. While scholars, like Patricia Allen, Alfonso Morales, and Priscilla McCutcheon, study food in the context of racial differences to understand how race impacts the American food system, a large portion of food movement activism and scholarship hinges upon the idea of creating sustainable food systems ("Sustainable Agrifood Systems," 2015). Although sustainability is not inherently divorced from ideas of racial equity—in fact there is a long standing history of environmental justice, a movement that combines race and sustainability issues—the dominant rhetoric of sustainability within food scholarship is often devoid of racial politics (Guthman, 2008b; Guthman, 2011a; Holt-Giménez & Wang, 2011, p. 85). This so called "color blindness" within food scholarship and the food movement itself cultivates the implicit understanding of "white as 'normal' or unmarked," meaning that theories of change are constructed around white identity which is perceived to encompass all identities (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 56 & 59; Guthman, 2008b). Furthermore, this "white as 'normal'" implies that whiteness not only functions as the baseline identity but is also falsely considered neutral of racial privilege. In this way, white rhetoric, white understandings, and white solutions are universalized and thought to be a solution for all people. This is largely exemplified in the food movement's phrase "vote with your fork." This rhetoric acts as a call to action in the movement but easily ignores how white privilege creates more opportunity for white Americans to gain physical access to alternative or "good" food, where purchases have social meaning. These forms of rhetoric and solutions often ignore the racialized problems within the food system.

Although much of what is emblematic of the alternative food movement does not specifically target large-scale race-based problems, some scholars are attempting to bring race more intentionally and unapologetically into alternative food movement conversation. Rachael Slocum has focused on anti-racist practices within the community food movement and has extensively documented the spatial politics of race within alternative food spaces (Slocum, 2006; Slocum, 2007; Slocum, 2015). Both Julie Guthman and Alison Alkon analyze the racialization of food projects, identifying the various ways these projects are problematic while investigating how food justice, along with other modes of engagement, can serve to remedy this problem (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011; Guthman, 2008a; Guthman, 2008b; Guthman, 2008c; Guthman, 2011a; Mares & Alkon 2011). These scholars assert that the food movement's dominant rhetoric of whiteness and solutions created by, and for, white folks hinders society from engaging in new methods of food system change.

However, alternatives to the predominately white movement exist. Scholarship from Priscilla McCutcheon, Robert Gottlieb, Anupama Joshi, and Carolina Van Horn, among many others, document how people of color resist white supremacy in the food system. McCutcheon (2011) as well as Green and Kleiner (2011) show how Black farmers in the South reclaim agriculture and are working to transform the history of slavery into a future of self-determination by working to increase Black community food security through farming. Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) show how teens in New Orleans advocated for better school meals after Katrina. Additionally, Tunde Wey (2016), Michael Twitty (2017), and John T. Edge (2017) focus on racialization of cuisine and seek to challenge the narratives of whiteness in culinary arts. By no means is this an exhaustive list of the ways people of color have resisted the racial discrimination in the food system, but I hope it demonstrates some of the ways communities of color seek to challenge the problems in the food system.

Most of the scholarship that critiques the food movement for being predominately white talks *about* the alternative food movement rather than talking *with* the movement. In particular, there is a lack of scholarship analyzing the ways in which food-focused nonprofit organizations understand and respond to the critique of food activism's pervasive whiteness. While Danny W. Tarng (2015) theorizes how privilege and allyship could function within the call for food justice, his theory is not accompanied by commentary from those working within organizations.

Filling the Void: Nonprofit Focused Research Questions

This thesis attempts to address three main questions: 1) how do staff working in food oriented nonprofits become interested in food related work? 2) What ideologies are individuals espousing for food system change and how did they come to support those ideas? And 3) how is the critique of whiteness in the food movement perceived by individuals involved in changing the food system? This study attempts to fill a gap in the research by interrogating how personal factors influence who participates in alternative food movement, how they participate, and why they participate. To ensure the creation of a more equitable food system, forms of activism, food system motivations for action, and perceptions of inclusivity need to be understood through research. These three research questions ensure that multiple factors are considered when grappling with the status of the food movement's progress within the nonprofit sector.

The first question works to uncover how individuals first become involved or inspired to engage with food. This aspect of the research is particularly important for understanding how to bring more people into the movement. Determining the motivations for movement involvement creates knowledge around what the turning point is for individuals to move from merely thinking to actively participating in the movement (Lyson, 2014, p. 316). Answering this question can help advocates identify ways to engage other individuals through different points of entry. Uncovering what motivates nonprofits advocates to work in the food movement captures important information about the way that individuals working within the food movement see their roles in effecting change and decide which ideology to use for enacting change. Altogether, this initial question explores how people become interested in the food movement, how that initial interest informs the problems they seek to change in the food system, and provides insight on how to spur action from other individuals who may be interested in the food system but not quite at the point of engagement themselves.

The second research questions explores how nonprofit staff come to subscribe to their ideologies for food system change. Personal identification with a certain ideology for change can be influenced by a variety of factors, from political beliefs to lived experiences. These influencing factors are teased out through the first question in assessing motivation. Then, this second question investigates whether those influencing factors determine the tactics advocates feel are most useful. Understanding how individual actors come to their political beliefs regarding food is important for unification and progress of the movement. By studying how individuals come to ascribe to the various sub-ideologies of the food movement advocates can better trace the potential barriers and opportunities for more transformative action.

The final question investigates how food movement advocates view the current status of racial inclusion in the movement. This question is used to explain whether, and to what extent, advocates perceive whiteness in the food movement. This third question promotes racially cognizant scholarship and food activism that enables progressive social change within our food system. This research question, regarding whiteness, attempts to address a main concern about the composition of the food movement, as a movement comprised of mainly white people and therefore marred by racial exclusion (Guthman, 2011a). As a hub for social justice action through the civil rights movement and a source of deep wounds of oppression because of southern slavery, the Southeast is a key place in which to see how race and the food movement interact.

This third research question was incorporated without knowing how receptive participants would be. But, to my surprise and gratitude, many individuals were willing to engage in discussions around race in the food movement and some participants even brought the topic up in our conversation before I did. Although not the primary intent, the research began to take a more explicit look at race as I talked with participants and began to see how this topic intersected with the motivations and ideologies at play. Analyzing and discussing race in this study is meant to call-in organizations not currently working from a foundation of racial equity. While both call-in and call-out cultures are useful in specific contexts, I hope this project works under the frame of call-in culture. A key goal of call-in culture, that I hope this study reproduces, is to bring people into social justice movements by working with them to understand how their actions can be destructive or constructive towards social justice ends (Ahmad, 2015; H, 2017; Mahan 2017; Nakamura, 2015).

This analysis provides food movement activists with information on how to bring more individuals, with diverse perspectives, into the movement. Simultaneously, it adds to the scholarship surrounding food-oriented nonprofit staff motivations and actions. All together this study complements organizational understanding about how to inspire other individuals to care about food, engage in transformational activism, and prioritize racial equity within food systems. The intention is that this information be used to create a more unified front, or, at the very least, be seen as an aid for working across difference with others who seek to create a more just and sustainable food system.

Note on Self

I want to take a moment to talk about myself as a researcher and the impact my identity has on the research process, attitude towards the research, and goal for dissemination of knowledge. The purpose of this section is to create, “a nurturing bed to place the research findings in” and to ensure total “transparency of the research process” (Chesney, 2001, p. 131).

In terms of the third research question, as an educated white middle-class woman I realize my privilege in broaching the subject of race, never having to face discrimination and its effects myself. As such, I have worked to be mindful of that effect on this project. This research turned out to be a process of mutual reflection and analysis. As I have analyzed the participant responses and sought scholarship to aid in the reflection process I have seen some of my actions perpetuating problematic dynamics in the food movement itself, and am taking steps to change. And, as a white American, I have been socialized to operate in this world without taking into considerations the way in which I can be, have been, and will be an agent for white supremacy. I include this to say that while some of the points made in this paper may feel accusatory to some or separate from me as the writer, they are not. Instead, this research has been part of continued critical self-analysis. Any comments made about the ways in which organizations function within the critique of whiteness can likely be made about me as well. However, by including race in this thesis I hope scholars and practitioners will be able to glean insight about the current trajectory of the food movement and what is required to move the needle towards more collaborative organizing.

Much inspiration regarding the history of academics as “engaged scholars” and social activists was used while undertaking research (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011; Bradley & Herrera, 2016; Broad, 2016, p. 5;). As such, I come to this research through the lens of social justice: to create a more inclusive and equitable society in which all actors have agency over their lives and are not unfairly punished in any situation due to factors beyond their control. Therefore, I bring my own set of assumptions and biases about the goals of the food system and the underlying priorities I wish were constantly part of the discussion within the alternative food movement. In acknowledging these beliefs, I will better be able to practice reflexivity and stay hyper-vigilant of myself and the conclusions I draw from this work (Ahern, 1999, p. 407; Chesney, 2001, p. 128; Finlay, 2002, p. 531). By naming myself within this research I acknowledge that, “the researcher is a central figure who influences the collection, selection and interpretation of the data...Research is thus regarded as a joint product of the participants, the researcher, and their relationship: It is co-constituted” (Finlay, 2002, p. 531). By understanding this process and the potential effects I, as a person and researcher, can have on respondents I hope to practice what Bradley and Herrera (2016) call, decolonized food justice (p. 104), where I see and actively work against the power dynamics that can result from the academic status of the researcher in the data gathering and analysis phases.

As an student researcher, I see this supposed power dynamic as having lesser effect, but want to be conscious of the power dynamics and personal relationship influences at play. Additionally, as an undergraduate student hoping to work in the food movement, many of my respondents hold power over me because of their positions as potential employers and/or references. This power dynamic could create potential for me to soften or look less critically at the problems in the food movement for fear of negative impacts on my career. I have attempted to mitigate both of these potential problems by showing results to participant organizations, to ensure accuracy, while also looking to academics to ensure I am not shying away from necessary critiques.

II. Methodology

To answer my three research questions I recruited nonprofit staff that are actively involved in the food movement to hear their stories and thoughts on the movement itself. The focus on nonprofit organizations is especially important because these organizations engage heavily in changing the food system, compared to government institutions, because they work on the community level and largely outside of bureaucracy. Additionally, our current economic system, rooted in neoliberal capitalism, privatizes many social services, instead of using government reform to alleviate social inequities. This leaves nonprofits and other organizations to fill the gaps. These characteristics allow nonprofits to play a key role in implementing which alternative food ideologies are used and what problems the communities they work with are most informed about and involved in changing. Therefore, it is essential to the progression and success of the movement as a whole to understand how these organizations come to prioritize certain issues within the food system and work toward solutions. The institutions chosen for this study provide a unique perspective because they are not directly involved in day-to-day grassroots interactions like farming or running farmers markets. Rather, they serve as gatekeepers of: knowledge on how to implement alternative food programs, resources to begin implementation, and support networks to ensure successful implementation. Therefore, these nonprofit actors actively shape strategies used for change that impact several communities within their region simultaneously. Each of these organizations has a stake in various aspects of the movement and each focuses on a different key issues in the food movement.

I conducted interviews with staff from three food-centered organizations located in a Southeastern city. To garner data this study focused on personal experiences of individuals in their path to food-related work and potentially charged topics like race and privilege. As such, the participating organizations and individuals will remain anonymous to protect the individuals themselves and the integrity of each organization. I am hopeful that anonymity allowed individuals within the organizations to share open and honest answers without the fear of being targeted by myself or other groups in the Southeast and beyond. All data was de-identified and pseudonyms were randomly generated and assigned to each participant.

Organizations were selected using purposive sampling. This was done in an effort to ensure that research participants felt that they could trust me as a researcher. After working within the food movement in this Southeastern city, I have had the opportunity to interface and establish ties with various food-oriented nonprofits. Using this experience allowed me access to organizations with whom I already had developed rapport. Bradley and Herrera (2016) note that conventional research practices tend to “lack adequate means for research subjects to shape or respond to how they are represented” (p. 104). In doing this research with organizations I have already developed relationships with, I hope to challenge the notion that scholarship is often done *to* nonprofit respondents. Instead, this analysis works against this power dynamic by working *with* respondents to ensure their comments are accurately represented while giving them a chance to comment on results and resolve issues before results are published (Bradley & Herrera 2016, p. 104).

To create a more holistic and humanizing understanding of organizational dynamics, I conducted semi-structured interviews accompanied by short surveys. Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to “include questions that are asked of all respondents (either in a structured or unstructured form) as well as other, unstructured questions” (Gray, 2007, p. 162). This level of flexibility was appealing in that it allowed my questions to be molded by each conversation. I used a survey tool to gather additional information on social and cultural capital measures as well as demographics. These two forms of data collection allowed me to gain personal perspectives of participants while taking into account the additional factors that affect participants. The sections below on semi-structured interviews and surveys delve more deeply into the contents of these two methodological tools.

Recruitment

To recruit participants, I emailed the executive director of each organization and then was put into contact with the rest of the staff (see appendix D). Some organizations asked me to present the research at staff meetings while other organizations fostered internal buy-in. Potential participants were then emailed individually to gauge interest in participation and sent the study consent form (see appendix E and appendix C, respectively). Out of the 26 individuals contacted for participation, 23 (88%) agreed to participate. Two did not respond and one declined. Interviews took place over a four week period in December 2017.

Data Collection

At the beginning of each interview, individuals were asked to read over the consent form that had been originally sent over email. All participants were reminded that they were allowed to leave the interview at any time, ask any questions they had, and refuse to answer any question for any reason. After the survey (see Appendix B) was completed participants were free to ask any follow-up questions regarding the research itself. Interviews varied in length, lasting anywhere from forty minutes to almost two hours. Each interview was held in a in private rooms within each organization; only the participant and myself were present.

Semi-Structured Interviews

During semi-structured interviews I questioned individuals about how they became interested in food activism, the problems they found most pressing in our food system, their understanding of the whiteness critique, and how they saw whiteness played out within their organization. This line of questioning ascertained how organizational staff felt about their role in the alternative food movement and assessed their ability to engage in conversations around racial equity and inclusion. The choice to use semi-structured interviews and the basic themes for questions were developed from existing literature (Lyson, 2014; Slocum, 2006). An interview guide was used while conducting each interview (see appendix A). Most questions on the guide were asked in every interview. Participants were also allowed to ask follow-up or clarifying questions if something did not make sense. The ability to ask the basic same questions (adding additional if needed) enabled cross participant comparison.

Due to my previous interactions with individuals in all of these organizations, it is near impossible to view anything with objectivity (if that is even possible without prior contact). Rather, I focused on accuracy while being cognizant and reflexive of how my personal beliefs influenced the questions I asked and conclusions I have reached. To further this point, semi-structured interviews are seen as a method that has researchers “co-construct a narrative with your participant, you bring your values to the encounter” and with this open acknowledgement researchers are able to practice “open reflective reporting of [their] assumptions, and whether they were challenged, will produce a valuable insight” (Hale, Treharne & Kitas, 2007, p. 143). Therefore, this practice required constant personal reflection and enabled research participants a level of agency in the interview process itself. Furthermore, when designing this research I hoped the personal nature of these interviews, as well as my position as a fellow advocate for the alternative food movement would allow me to cultivate a caring and understanding interview atmosphere. The goal was to create a more conversation- based interview relationship, where participants felt comfortable sharing their open and honest perspectives with me. This turned out to be accurate as two participants explained that they had never told anyone else the information they divulged during the interview.

Surveys

A simple survey was used to collect demographic, social capital, and cultural capital information from employees (see appendix B). Questions included on the survey were adapted from the social benchmark survey put out by Harvard University including both social and cultural capital measures. Social capital is defined as, "connection or reciprocity among people, which forms social networks that can affect much change within the community" (Glowacki-Dudka, Murray & Isaacs, 2012, p. 76). Cultural capital is useful in assessing how structural characteristics give rise to preferences and alignment with certain cultural values or "tastes" (Bourdieu, 1984). The questions on the survey varied in what aspect of social and cultural capital they addressed in order to gain a more holistic view of the various markers held by individuals working within these organizations. The addition of these measures provided a better picture of the staff makeup within each organization.

These surveys were given to each staff member after interviews were conducted. I chose to give the surveys at the end of the semi-structured interviews because I did not want to unintentionally prime participant answers through the questions asked on the survey. Additionally, the survey included questions about race, class, and other personal orientations. As such I did not want to accidentally offend interviewees at the beginning of the process and have the survey questions negatively impacted the interview experience.

Analysis

A thematic analysis was used in this study. This method was chosen because it allows for flexibility in what can be drawn from the data, is accessible to non-academic audiences, and provides ample “thick” description (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After initially familiarizing myself with the data, I coded the data according to motivations, ideologies, and perceptions of whiteness. These codes were then split into further subcategories based on participant responses. Following this coding process I began to parse out the central themes from the data. Those themes were refined and then named to produce this thesis.

III. Results

Demographics

Demographic questions included information regarding participant age, race, gender, income, political ideology, and personal and familial education levels. The average participant was white (15), female (18), moderately liberal (13), around 30 years of age, and held a bachelor's degree (13) (Table 1). The median household income of participants was $52,000 per year. There was approximately even representation of partnered and single participants. This profile of white, female, educated, with household income around $50000 is representative of those who normally participate in the food movement (Byker et al., 2012; Lyson, 2014).

Table 1. Overall Demographic Measures

		Count (n=23)	Percentage (%)
Race			
	White	15	65%
	People of Color	8	35%
Ethnicity			
	Non-Hispanic/Latino	22	96%
	Hispanic/ Latino	1	4%
Gender			
	Male	5	22%
	Female	18	78%
Age			
	24-44	19	83%
	45-64	4	17%

Cultural and Social Capital

The cultural and social capital indicators showed homogeneity in the sample. All participants held at least a Bachelor's degree. In terms of inherited cultural capital, 22 out of 23 respondents had one parent with a higher education degree and 18 out of 23 respondents reported that both parents held degrees. All participants felt they could have some impact on their community. The vast majority, 19 out of 23, identified as liberal on the political spectrum (See Table 2).

These results imply that most participants hold similar levels of cultural and social capital in terms of the information they have had access to and the groups they are affiliated with. The educational attainment and political ideology of this group could signal involvement in similar and intersecting social capital networks and cultural capital hierarchies. This sentiment is reflected by the literature that notes that social movements "both embody and produce social capital" (Putnam, 2000, p. 153). By functioning within similar social networks these advocates are able to engage in similar discourse and understandings of the problems in the food system (Lyson, 2014). The literature demonstrates that those with higher educational attainments (i.e. higher cultural capital) often draw their food activist motivations from knowledge gained from higher education rather than lived experience with food-based problems, which influences the strategies used to pursue food system change (Lyson, 2014).

Table 2. Overall Cultural and Social Capital Measures

	Count (n=23)	Percentage (%)
Higher Education (Self)		
Bachelors	13	57%
Masters	9	39%
PhD	0	0%
MD	0	0%
JD	1	4%
Higher Education (Parents)		
One Parent	22	96%
Both Parents	18	78%
Political Ideology		
Very Conservative	0	
Moderately Conservative	0	
Middle-of-the Road	3	13%
Moderately Liberal	13	57%
Very Liberal	6	26%
Ability to make an impact on one's community		
Small impact	1	4%
Moderate Impact	9	39%
Big Impact	13	57%

Motivations: Health

The most common theme, cited by 19 out of 23 participants, was involvement in the food movement due to interest in health and nutrition. Within this category, some participants were motivated by the results from their own diet changes while others focused more on the impact to societal well-being. Both of these sentiments inspired participants to work more directly in the alternative food movement.

Personal experience proved an important component of individual motivation to become involved in the alternative food movement. As Joan (white, female, 45-64 years of age) explained, “I had some very minor health issues, very minor, but it caused me to eat healthier, and it was clearly the healthy diet that made the difference, and it made it such a minor issue” (2017). Here, personal experience spurred a motivation because of the positive transformational change that Joan felt in her life. Tamara (person of color, female, 24-44 years of age) also noted, “some of these issues I’ve had… I’ve started realizing that they were food-related and I’ve really struggled to figure out what foods do I need to avoid what is the problem… it's really been me just doing research on my own and you know let me avoid these foods and see how I feel” (2017). After understanding how certain foods impacted her Tamara was able to get to a better state of health. These positive experiences with food as medicine, worked to convince respondents of the merit in working towards food system change, so that everyone could have access to these benefits.

Alternatively, some individuals were interested in nutrition because they worried about the larger societal impacts of poor health. Wendy (white, female, 24-44 years of age) noted, “we have a very sick country and we’re getting sicker by the day and… a lot of our sickness, our sicknesses are becoming more and more preventable and it's crazy that we are making ourselves sick with the food we're eating..." (2017). Through this excerpt Wendy communicates her concern with the overall health of society. Wendy does evoke personal choice through her use of the term "we" and the phrase, "we are making ourselves sick." This rhetoric places blame on consumers rather than questioning corporate influences. In contrast, Elizabeth (white, female, 45- 64 years of age) noted "I really started to understand the food system and how ridiculously, I guess broken it is and it just serves to make people sick" (2017). Another participant (white, female, 24-44 years of age) echoed this while contextualizing the problem within the larger food system, "I think eating a healthy diet has the potential to improve quality of life and save our country billions of dollars… there has been billions and billions of dollars in marketing money from big food companies that brought us here" (Jaime, 2017). Here participants show their concerns with societal health status, however one group focused more on the personal aspects while the others highlighted corporate and external influences. These understandings are reflective of the population study as well. Nonprofit actors in this study felt compelled to change the nutrition profile of Americans as a way to impact the overall health status of the country.

Motivations: Community

Community development and the ability of food to connect people was another central theme noted by 15 of the 23 of respondents. This language centered around community as a way to bridge difference and community as an avenue towards coherence.

A core theme of food as community came from the idea of bridging differences. Nancy (white, female, 24-44 years of age) describes how she views food: "I always look at it as a way to build community and I've always come at it from a community development perspective and food is the one thing that we all have… so let's start with food because that's the one thing that we can all bridge our differences on" (2017). Her testimony hints at difference, which can include political, cultural, or personal differences. Lynne, (person of color, female, 24-44 years of age) emphasized foods ability to bring those of different beliefs together. She noted that, "people really started to embrace my culture with food" and playfully added that when she meets someone with deeply ingrained stereotypes about her or her racial and ethnic background she can approach the situation like this: "You're afraid of my people, but, like, [a certain food] is awesome. We make this and you love [it]" (Lynne, 2017).

Community cohesion was also seen as a function of food. These ideas were expressed in notions of development and individualized connections. Melvin (white, male, 24-44 years of age) explicitly said that his food-related work was a way for him to channel his passion in community development (2017). Wayne (person of color, male, 24-44 years of age) then framed the community cohesion potential of food by focusing on the individual-level connections he made through his food-related work (2017). He utilized this idea of food as a way to create cohesion within the local food movement itself.

This idea of community cohesion within the food movement itself was contradicted by some participants, however. For example, Judy (white, female, 24-44 years of age) a expressed her frustration regarding the cohesion of the movement, "I think collaboration is really important so all of these organizations doing different things that always conflict with one another. But more so, like everyone has the same idea in mind. So how do we work together?" (2017). Tami (white, female, 24-44 years of age) echoed this sentiment and even said outright, "I think the local food community is slightly disjointed" (2017). Here Tami seems to demonstrate that the unity within the food movement is not where she envisions it. Hazel raises similar question about cohesion but on the national scale. She notes, "our movement nationally is very weak… [but]

there is a national organization that is trying to form right now" (Hazel, 2017). This shows a lack of national cohesion in bringing the food movement together to envision a path forward. These counterpoints demonstrate that food can often be used to create community, but as with any social movement, there is some fracturing in the community created within the nonprofit food movement itself.

The idea of food as community highlights participant desire to create personal and large scale connections over food. However, some participant testimony shows that the food movement itself has the potential for community that has not yet fully realized. The fact the food has been utilized and seen as a source for community provides hope that perceived fractures in the alternative food movement can be mended.

Motivations: Environment

Environmental ethics were also featured prominently; out of the 23 participants, 13 expressed concern about the environment and the impact that current agricultural processes have on our planet. This motivation took varying shapes and degrees of interest for respondents. Within this motivation, individuals fell into two groupings: environment as a core value or environment as a component.

Some see the environment as central because of the interconnectivity that the environment has with everything else. As Hazel (white, female, 45-64 years of age) notes, "we all live downstream and that's where my passions began...life is interconnected, you know we can't look at ourselves in isolation" (2017). This statement signals a systems-based approach, but in this case the environment is at the center of the food system. This participant also made her love of the environmental ethic clear by saying, "I come at it more from the pesticide side and a lot of people come to this movement from a social justice side or a food access, and those are all important, but I come at it from the fact, the very simple fact, that I think it is ridiculous that we put pesticides in our food" (Hazel, 2017). By comparing this "simple fact" to other large scale issues, she demonstrates how central the environment is to her entry into the food movement. Some individuals would see pesticide use falling under the realm of food justice, because it is usually applied to crops by often exploited laborers. However, Hazel showcases her pure ecological motivation by segmenting this one problem from all the others. By focusing on such a concrete and singular issue, she is able to convey the importance and the weight she places on the environmental aspect of food systems. This was also echoed in the response from Fannie (white, female, 24-44 years of age). She explained that her interest in sustainability was piqued during an environmental science course which translated to a direct passion: "I thought I was going to graduate and go farm" (Fannie, 2017). This romanticization of farming was later overturned by the hard realities of farming in terms of labor, economic security, and life outcomes. However, these ideas of environment as sacred and central can sometimes be devoid of history, as will be discussed later.

This sort of testimony is contrasted by others who saw the environmental component as part of the overall draw of food systems work, but not as central. For example, when explaining her motivation for involvement in the food movement, Wendy did not mention environmental values. However, when discussing an ideal food system, she added a requirement that food take into consideration and mitigate the negative impacts on the environment. While not featured prominently in her motivation for entry, Wendy's integration of environmental components in her "ideal" food system demonstrates how some participants saw other aspects of the food system as more central to their involvement, but were still motivated towards environmental sustainability. This example provides a more nuanced understanding of the variation in participant responses regarding their environmental motivations.

Regardless of how individuals conceptualized the environment fitting into their passions, a dominant theme arose in that participants were compelled to protect the environment because of childhood experiences. Sylvia (white, female, 24-44 years of age) explains, “ So I grew up [doing an activity] on farms… so I feel like I’ve always been kind of drawn that way… I think just being outside” (2017). Here Sylvia explains that her connection to the environment was seeded early in her life and has since grown. This connection to the natural world was also mirrored in the testimony from Laurence, Gordon, Jaime, and Hazel. Each had a strong affinity for nature while growing up doing outdoor related activities, which allowed them to develop a deep devotion for protecting the natural environment (Laurence, 2017 & Gordon, 2017). Laurence (white, male, 24-44 years of age) was able to recall a specific memory from childhood that resulted in his passion for the environment. He said, “I remember experiencing some of that environmental degradation cause by agriculture… when I was a teenager it got down to the point where there were no more crawdads in the stream… and my [family member] said it was probably because farmland that was cleared for pasture was not managed upstream and so it goes off downstream” (Laurence, 2017). During this experience the connection between agricultural processes was made clear through the lack of marine life. These tropes of childhood connection to nature was the primary ethic that surfaced in participants’ environmental motivations, echoing other sustainability literature (Barlett, 2008, p. 10885).

Other Motivations

Overall, only three respondents come to this work through the realm of activism, especially in terms of social justice (Fredrick, 2017; Lynne, 2017; Roxanne, 2017). With fewer people directly focused on social justice, conversations around race may not have happened as frequently. This elucidates a possible explanation for why the movement has been critiqued for whiteness if so few people are explicitly motivated to enter the nonprofit side to elevate social justice and racial equity. Even if organizations knew racial equity was necessary in the movement, not having an individual dedicated to social justice could excuse organizations from bring racial justice into organizational conversations. Instead, due to the lack of internal motivation for racial equity, organizations may have been more likely to address other causes, like health or the environment, that more staff members felt compelled by. Highlighting this demonstrates a potential area of improvement for non-racial equity oriented nonprofit organizations, to market their job listings in activist spaces if that is not already being done. Ultimately though, organizations should not be relying on one or two people on staff to facilitate conversations around racial equity

Less common, but also important to highlight, is that three participants joined their nonprofit because, above all, they needed a job. Although many people sought their positions out within these various nonprofits because of the connection to the food system, some merely saw their position as a source of income and for career development. For example, Violet (person of color, female, 24-44 years of age) noted that, “I just needed a job before graduate school” (2017). Gordon (white, male, 45-64 years of age) noted, “it just sounded like an interesting job… it was an opportunity to come in and have that challenge of taking an… organization and kind of getting control of the wheels and letting them be more stable” (2017). However, in Gordon’s case the environmental ethic was incredibly strong before he started working at his organization, but he initially saw his position through the lens of further career development. Then, once in the position, Gordon became more passionate about the food system component. Angelica (white, female, 24-44 years of age) directly explained her need for a job, “I needed additional income” (2017). This job only motivation is important to highlight as some staff in this space were not internally motivated to work for these organizations because of the organizational commitment to food system work.

Participants enjoyed working across different aspects of the food system and felt engaged by food system work and its multifaceted impact. I highlight this to say that while I find distinct, overarching motivations for food movement involvement from these interviews, each of the motivations has an implicit or explicit link to one another. While certain individuals gravitated to particular issues over others they were all able to use their skills and passions to elevate the food movement as a whole. Yet, this does not mean that these motivations are singular or are meant to constrain participants in a static state of motivation. As many participants describe, their original motivation for entering the food movement has been greatly expanded and enriched as they have worked in their respective nonprofit. As such it is important to note that these themes are time-bound and represent a specific snapshot in history that influenced which issues were foremost in the minds of participants. Respondent testimony highlighted the importance of system-based thinking that undergirded much of the appeal of working within the food movement.

Ideology

The two major ideological themes that came up regarding the best way to effect change within the food system centered around using “alternative” modes of activism instead of “oppositional” (Constance, 2014, p. 5). Many people felt that “working within the system”, meaning institutional structures, was far better than working to topple institutions and rebuild a better system. Additionally, the idea of market-based solutions, were seen as the most successful model of activism.

Overall, participants voiced support for “working within the system” to effect change and accomplish their goals. As Roxanne (white, female, 24-44 years of age) notes, “I’m just old enough to know that, just I think there’s more that can be done within the system” (2017). However, she also acknowledges the importance of the people working against the system as an accountability apparatus for those trying to reform while working within institutional settings (Roxanne, 2017). Gordon echoes this when he explains, “you need people on the outside of the spectrum… the purist's screaming and yelling to get the next layer of people to say ‘What? Oh yeah, there is an issue’” (2017). So, there is a general acknowledgement that in order to accomplish change you need people working through all different types of activism. However, study participants felt most progress was achieved through institutional change made from within.

The other ideological rhetoric used by individuals was the notion that all potential solutions need to function as and/or working within a business model. Gordon had the strongest opinions of this as he came from a business background. He even called himself a “capitalist” thus demonstrating how strongly he aligned with the idea that business can be used to create transformative change (2017). Surprisingly, Fredrick (person of color, male, 24-44 years of age), who most aligned with the ideals of food sovereignty, which usually functions outside the bounds of market driven economies, felt that business was the most productive way to change our current food system (2017). This shows that even individuals who would seem to fall along the more radical spectrum in terms of conceptualizing change operated under the ideology of neoliberal capitalism.

Whiteness

Conversation around the whiteness critique allowed participants to comment on the overarching structures of American society and also discuss some of their ongoing questions about the best ways to change the perception of whiteness in the food movement. Out of the 23 participants, 19 said that the critique of racial privilege in the food movement was accurate.

Of those that agreed with the critique of whiteness two sub-themes emerged: the fact that issues of whiteness are symptomatic of larger social issues related to race and that a disproportionate amount of power is provided to white led organizations. Both of these themes allowed participants to explain potential reasons for the perceived whiteness in the food movement.

Participants exhibited a race consciousness in this discussion on whiteness. Tami highlighted this well when she said:

> I think that we are very aware of it and that we actively try to change that and make working in the local food movement more accessible… I mean there is a larger history of oppression when it comes to people of color working in agriculture… and it's just that systemic racism is one of the hardest things to fight in this country, like it just feels impossible sometimes. (2017)

Here she communicates her understanding of the fact that legacies of oppression have created contemporary inequities and acknowledges that the food movement is being affected by these problems. Simultaneously, she seems to express a sort of paralysis in enacting change because of the way racism is so deeply embedded in our society. This aligns with what another respondent, Dianne (person of color, female, 24-44 years of age), noted, "you know, everyone thinks that nonprofits are immune to what happens in everyday life and we're not" (2017). Dianne's comment seems to be about those who work outside of the nonprofit world and see the sector with rose-colored glasses. Her comment suggests that nonprofits can sometimes be seen as excluded from the social issues, such as race, that the rest of society face. Dianne's understanding of nonprofits in society further demonstrates that individuals within the food movement connect the whiteness critique with the overall structure of society.

The theme of power and resource discrepancies resulting from historical injustices was seen as a reason for the perceived food movement whiteness. Courtney (person of color, female, 24-44 years of age) highlighted this when she said, "if you think about the power structure of who has been in decision making power, that's still very much, around the world, that it is the case where people who have money and power are more often white" (2017). Here she acknowledges that the power structure in the United States and globally is skewed towards favoring whiteness. Jaime (white, female, 24-44 years of age) outlined the more explicit ways power and resource inequality translates to who is able to gain more notoriety in the food movement space, "who has power and who doesn't have money and connections and access to resources to have communications staff to write press releases so that your work can be seen and that sort of thing. So I think it's like layers on top of a lot layers," (2017).

After discussing racial equity with participants who felt whiteness was a problem in the food movement, several barriers came to light that prohibit organizations from more directly addressing the problem. These barriers included: fear of having race-related conversations, discomfort with the need to acknowledge personal privilege, confusion over personal roles in the movement for racial justice, and concern about the public backlash and potential ramifications of explicitly addressing this issue.

Broaching the subject of race was seen as difficult for some respondents due to fear of conflicting opinions, and fear of inflicting unintended harm on someone else due to deficient knowledge and vocabulary around the subject. As Tamara notes, "I think the problem is that we[3] are uncomfortable to have these conversations" (2017). Here we see Tamara understands that people do not want to have conversations about race. Later she states that, "I think the problem with society is that we're uncomfortable to… disagree and [we] have an aversion to opinions that aren't our own," highlighting how these conversations can often be difficult to have because of the vastly different, and often conflicting, opinions people may have regarding race (Tamara, 2017). Although Tamara does not express fear having race-related conversations herself, she understands that fear can often be present in those discussions.

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[3] We here means American society in general. This can imply that she sees this problem as symptomatic of our society and that it also reproduces itself in the food movement.

Working on racial equity was also seen to be difficult because it required personal accountability for one's own role in the problem. Angelica explains, "it's challenging to talk about race and equity in the first place like it takes people acknowledging it first and seeing that it's real and then seeing their place in it too, and that's really hard for people" (2017). Wendy also echoed this by saying, "well I think it makes a lot of people uncomfortable… because people are uncomfortable with their privilege" (2017). Both participants acknowledge the difficulty that privileged people often have in taking ownership of how they benefit from oppressive systems.

Finding one's role in the struggle for racial equity was seen as a potential barrier, voiced predominately by white participants. Jaime notes, "what is my role in that? I think it is really important that we do this work but is it my role?... I don't feel like I should be leading it but I am also in a place organizationally where it, theoretically, is my role" (2017). These sentiments signal a genuine lack of understanding on how to situate oneself. Alternately, some people feel that their expected role, as a white person in leadership, was too extreme. Joan explains, "in some cases they[4] think it's our responsibility, you know something, those folks have done very well and in this community in particular… you have a lot of very wealthy African American people, Hispanic people, Asian people, whatever, and I'm being held accountable where are they?... they're not being held accountable" (2017). Here we see the opposite end of the spectrum. While Jaime felt there was a barrier because of her lack of knowledge on how to consciously engage in racial equity work, Joan is upset about what she sees as the unfair standard placed on white people and their role in racial justice. These opposite sentiments fall under the category of confusion because they both lack the knowledge to articulate what their specific role is and why it is justified.

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[4] They refers to people of color in this context

A final barrier participants mentioned involved the larger ramifications of doing more public racial equity work. When discussing greater integration of racial equity into organizational processes Courtney noted:

> I think it's something that needs to be revved up more and it's hard because there are so many different politics you have to play and there's different understandings of how the food system works,... who are the groups that need additional help and empowerment, and how you should go about it. How would that[5] affect our ability to get funding grants and be attractive to donors and things like that, so it's a lot of things. (2017)

Here Courtney communicates an understanding for the plethora of downstream effects more explicit racial equity stances could have on the organization. Even with these in mind though, she underscores the organization's need to do more. Jaime also highlighted that public racial equity work can either alienate some of the non-food movement actors that organizations have long standing partnerships with or prohibit organizations from building new partnership (2017).

Only one person, a person of color, provided an outright no to this question of the food movement's whiteness. However, her "no" response was conditional. She noted that the alternative food movement was not led predominately by white people because the Black community already had a health food and alternative food movement of their own that had occurred since before she was born (Tamara, 2017). Tamara states that, “what you see in the public eye is white America’s version of the food movement. There has been a Black American version of the food movement going on for as long as I’ve been alive it’s just… nobody paid attention” (2017). Tamara not only discredited the critique of whiteness but also acknowledged how it came into existence. This reference to what the public sees potentially demonstrates her understanding of how the perception of whiteness in the food movement came about. Tamara’s insights proved helpful in understanding the divide that can often exist between popular representation and grassroots-level action.

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[5] More explicit racial equity work

Three respondents fell in between a yes and a no response. Within this group, some people did not answer the question, could not answer the question, or said no but highlighted a popular misunderstanding in organizational capacity between predominantly white organizations and organizations run predominately by people of color. For example, after being asked if she had interacted with or heard the critique about how the food movement is predominantly white, Gertrude (white, female, 24-44 years of age) responded with, “I have not specifically within the food movement, but nonprofits are predominately white” (2017). Here she was unable to answer the question of whiteness, because of her unfamiliarity, but used her knowledge and background working with other nonprofits to provide a potential answer for why that critique may exist within the food movement, without confirming or denying its accuracy. On the other hand, participants like Gordon, did not answer the question directly. However, he did not seem to intentionally avoid the question. Rather, to answer the question he told me a story about someone on the board of the organization explaining to him that their organization was started by wealthy, white women. However, Gordon did not end up confirming or denying whether he thought that critique was true for the movement overall (2017). He did acknowledge though, that as an organization they were predominately white; but used their job applicant pool, and its lack of diversity, as the underlying cause of that fact rather than the intention of the organization (Gordon, 2017). Finally, Melvin fell in the grey zone between agreeing and disagreeing with this critique, "Our local food system is full of leaders, minority leaders, like full of amazing leaders that are minorities" but that, "the organizations that are well-resourced or understand how to become well-resourced are led by predominately white people" (2017). Here Melvin disagrees with the critique of the movement being white overall, but acknowledges the inequity that organizations staffed and lead by people of color face as opposed to white organizations.

Finally, two forms of successful organizational racial equity projects were highlighted by respondents. These centered around representation and redistribution. In terms of representation, staff at each organization highlighted the fact that in order to work towards racial equity and dismantle the idea of whiteness in the food movement they needed to hire more staff of color (Nancy, 2017; Roxanne, 2017; Melvin, 2017; Courtney, 2017; Hazel, 2017 & Laurence, 2017). For redistribution, the intentionality behind choosing to establish more partnerships with and channel more resources to organizations led by people of color aligns with the idea of reallocating power within the food movement (Nancy, 2017; Roxanne, 2017; & Wayne, 2017). Nancy even employed the idea of affirmative action to demonstrate the power reallocation that she hoped to create by choosing partnerships more intentionally and with a greater social context taken into consideration (2017). The use of this language shows how explicit her actions were even though the organization had no institutionalized policies that lay claims to affirmative action. Laurence described the most radical form of redistribution effort. He notes, "this is really a reparations project… this is an institution and I am always trying to find creative ways within this institution to for that type of work" (2017).

III. Discussion

The discussion will elucidate how participant responses from the results are applied to current food system scholarship. First, I show how some of the rhetoric used by participants in terms of motivations can leave out important considerations in terms of health, community, and the environment. The ideology section will contextualize the language used by participants in terms of alternative and market-based solutions. Finally, the whiteness section highlights the theoretical foundations that explain the ideas of racial equity used by participants and provides a better understanding of how organizations can overcome perceived barriers.

Motivations: Health

The most common motivation was health. Participants not only saw health benefits in their own life because of better food choices, but also wanted to make a greater impact on national well-being. However, the larger theme of individualized rhetoric does not acknowledge the complicated story of food choice shaming throughout history, including the first nutritional guidelines in the late 19th and beginning 20th century and more recently obesity (Biltekoff, 2013) .

In the United States the topic of obesity has become central to conversations around health. The CDC notes that in 2015-2016, 39.8 percent of adults and 18.5 percent of youth were categorized as obese (National Center for Health Statistics, 2017). This is often situated next to the fact that some scholars estimate that the maintenance of obesity related complications costs the national health care budget $147 billion annually (CDC, 2015). Other studies show that childhood obesity results in adverse physical health problems like sleep apnea, hyperlipidemia, hypertension, and abnormal glucose tolerance (Dietz 1998; Ebbeling, Pawlak & Ludwig, 2002). Childhood obesity has also been tied to negative social effects like discrimination and flawed socialization due to perceptions of maturity (Swallen, Reither, Haas & Meier, 2005). Other scholars have found the opposite, concluding that there are no clear correlations between diet and obesity in adolescents (Janssen et al., 2004). Similar supporting and conflicting results exist among adults (Ebbeling et al. 2002; Guthman, 2011b; Mokdad et al., 2003;). Much of the literature and public conversation around obesity focuses on the role of food and caloric consumption as the key contributor to obesity and other diet-related diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, osteoporosis, and dental disease (Ebbeling et al. 2002; WHO, 2018). Although some scholars have critiqued these facts and the alarmist way that obesity has been treated[6], stating that factors beyond diet contribute to obesity, many people are still concerned with dietary impacts to health and thus seek to change the way Americans eat (Guthman, 2011).

Participants demonstrated concern for these cited public health problems by connecting healthy food to healthy diets. These sorts of sentiments echo the ethos of community food security literature. While community food security works from an anti-hunger approach, it also incorporates nutritionally adequate provisions into its operational structure (Community Food Security Coalition, 2006; Mares & Alkon, 2011, p. 69). Therefore, many of these participants were likely concerned with healthy food, as a core aspect of the food movement. This could further the access based advocacy strategies, where organizations attempt to provide healthy food resources in order to better serve public health needs. Academics, advocates, and individuals in these organizations highlighted the needs for affordability, cultural appropriateness, and consideration of other community needs when attempting to provide equitable access to healthier food choices.

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[6] Note that much rhetoric around obesity uses the term "epidemic" to describe the change in BMI over the years see: http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/obesity/en/ and https://www.forbes.com/sites/brucelee/2017/06/13/global-obesity-epidemic-new-study-shows-how-big-a-problem-its-become/#7ab511f22a2c,

On the other hand, participant rhetoric also exemplified a larger trope of nutrition and obesity scholarship that operates on an individual level. This individualistic approach has been criticized as a part of larger strategies that work towards food system transformation through consumer choice, which places the burden of change on individuals instead of institutions (Mares & Alkon, 2011, p. 69; Guthman, 2008c). Constructing health and nutrition problems in this way furthers the idea of personal responsibility and decontextualizes how food choice is often influenced by economic constraints, physical availability, and predatory marketing strategies (Drewnowski, 2004; Andreyeva, Kelly & Harris, 2011; Kwate & Loh, 2010; Walker, Keane & Burke, 2010). While I am not suggesting participants were unaware, because several did express frustration regarding the larger corporate influences, I highlight this to show that some participants continue to utilize language that describes obesity as a choice or lack of personal control. Using this type of rhetoric reinforces the idea that consumers just need to make better choices with what they buy, instead of holding corporations accountable for food production.

Motivations: Community

Creation of community is regarded in the literature as a core component of alternative food networks (Alkon & Ageyman, 2011, p. 2; Andreatta 2005; Trauger et al., 2010). Because of this, the term “civic agriculture” arose to characterize alternative food’s ability to revitalize a community’s social and economic conditions (H. Lyson, 2014, p.2; T. Lyson, 2012). Theoretically, civic agriculture operates at the community level through alternative food networks that bring individuals together around food (Lyson, 2014, p. 70). This prevalent theoretical undercurrent of alternative food systems was supported in the context of this study as well. However, I want to take a moment to more deeply delve into the smaller ramifications at play from participant responses.

Cross-cultural connection through food has been utilized around the globe for many years. However, it is important to note that people can communicate cross-culturally and love a specific type of food while still holding deeply damaging and false stereotypes about certain population groups (Counihan, 2005). Not all stereotypes about a specific population group vanish after introducing someone to the food from the population group they discriminate against. Southern food provides an excellent example for this, because many people eat and enjoy Southern and soul food, often created and crafted by Black chefs, but still ascribe to discriminatory and hateful ideals. Food can also be used as a tool to "other" certain groups when they do not conform to what is often seen as conventional white foodways (Biltekoff, 2013; Tam, 2015).

The desire for further collaboration in the alternative food movement showcases the notion that alternative food networks can and want to serve as a source of community building (Gillespie et al., 2007, p. 65; Holstein, 2017; Paxson, 2012; Schupp, 2015, p. 829; Trauger et al, 2010). Yet, participant insight demonstrates that this does not necessarily happen to the desired extent between food movement nonprofits. The perceived divisions do not seem to be symptomatic of conflicting ideologies between organizations but instead are partly a result of competition over resources and notoriety. This provides an excellent area for more intentional and transparent collaboration, which some of these organizations are already doing. While there is a limit to the amount of collaboration organizations can do, participant testimony highlights that there is an interest in fostering additional partnership and communication to strengthen the alternative food movement overall.

Motivations: Environment

The food system, and particularly industrial agricultural processes, are intricately linked to environmental destruction. Because of this connection, it is not entirely surprising that a very small majority of participants were motivated to enter the alternative food movement space because they valued the environment and ecological sustainability. The current literature supports the idea that many individuals from farmers to activists are also motivated to enter the food movement or change food systems because of their desire to transform the extractive relationship of industrial agriculture, to one based on ecologically sustainable principles (Barlett, 2008, p. 10885; Buttel, 1993; Konefal, Hatanaka & Constance, 2014; Trauger et al. 2010). This also aligns with the historical origins of the counterculture movement rooted in ecology and agriculture's ability to enact environmentalist aims (Belasco, 1989, p. 20-22). Participants in this study expressed this desire in varying degrees and for a diversity of reasons. Although the connection to the environment is an important aspect of the food movement it can be problematic when devoid of historical knowledge.

While environmental motivations came from what seems like an altruistic place, they sometimes fed into the construction of whiteness in food movement spaces. For example, Sylvia notes that, "kids touch things and… we make our strongest connections when you can grow your own food" (personal communication, December 2017). This example highlights a finding from Guthman, who describes that the notion of "getting your hands dirty in the soil," which Sylvia just referenced as a more effective way of teaching kids about the importance of knowing where your food comes from, "is more easily romanticized by whites than others" (Guthman, 2008b, p. 394). Based on the rest of our interview, it is unlikely that Sylvia thought about this implication while referencing the physical act of farming. However, this very fact demonstrates our need for more cultural sensitivity in the food movement and within food organizations.

The romanticization of the environment, and farming in particular, often idealizes the conditions and histories of agricultural exploitation. Again, Guthman (2008b) notes, "a romanticized American agrarian imaginary erases the explicitly racist ways in which American land has been distributed historically" (p. 390). While those who expressed positive sentiments of farming became cognizant of the difficult realities of this profession and the struggles that accompany agricultural work, this theme highlights the whiteness that often emanates environmental ethics, as it can be devoid of historical context. As Fredrick, notes that many of the current issues that young farmers advocate for, like debt forgiveness and governmental support in alleviating some of the barriers in starting and succeeding in agriculture, have been the norm for Black farmers because of their destructive history with agriculture (2017). This comment marks romantic ideas as white, because of the lack of personal and historical experience with agricultural oppression that gives rise to fanciful ideas about farming reality is like. This insight is not meant to demonize respondents, or anyone else, for not taking these histories into consideration when thinking about careers in farming. Rather this points to larger consequences regarding how chattel slavery history and agricultural exploitation is taught—or rather, not taught well—in American education (Turner, 2018). I highlight this example also to show how environmental motivations vary drastically from person to person and within different racial groups, as more white participants essentialized agriculture then participants of color. This example underscored the importance of diverse racial and ethnic representation within the food movement as a way to bring different insights and experience to the work.

The environmental piece has extra-sensitivity because of the history of slavery in America as well as contemporary examples of environmental racism, as outlined previously. Not contextualizing passion for the environment within environmental racism can work towards erasure, where key aspects of the lived experience of people of color are invalidated. This adds to the romanticized notion that the environment is meant to be protected without a conscious acknowledgement regarding who was displaced from these places and for what purpose. This idealism also works to further marginalize and invalidate the experience the farm workers who, as demonstrated in the introduction, are often exploited and forgotten by mainstream America. While many of these advocates communicated an understanding of structural and institutionalized racism, the fact that this was not brought up shows how racism can become siloed as a problem divorced from the environmental ethic that motivates some people towards entry.

Ideology

A dominant theme that arose from participants is their alignment with the notion of "working within the system" as the best mode of activism. In this section, I argue that neoliberal capitalism constrains the ability of nonprofit organizations to work collaboratively and that the potential for working "outside of the system" is stifled by the perception that market-based solutions are most effective. Due to the overwhelming dominance of industrial agriculture in our neoliberal capitalist economic system, many people questioned their ability to enact widespread change in the food system due to the immense forces they were up against. The resulting effect is that respondents often celebrated incremental changes to the food system made through market-based business solutions.

Neoliberalism and its role within the food movement has created an inherently competitive atmosphere between nonprofit organizations. Under the economic structure of neoliberal capitalism, many of the problems created by industrial agriculture and corporate control over the food supply go unfixed due to the lack of governmental regulations. As a result, many foundations and philanthropic organizations have sought to fill this void by providing funds to organizations doing work to alleviate some of these negative consequences. Yet, as Tami noted above, those funds are often limited which can create a competitive funding atmosphere between alternative food nonprofits. As a result, this put constraints on the ability of multiple nonprofit food-oriented groups to work together to achieve change, as they are all competing for the same grant dollars. This neoliberal framework, that contemporary nonprofit advocacy groups work within, not only hinders the ability of alternative food groups to work together but also pushes these organizations to work within business-based models to achieve change.

Working within the neoliberal capitalist frame is just one of the ways that food movement advocates have sought to change the food system. As noted in *The Discourse on Alternative Agrifood Movements*, alternative food movement actors take either a “oppositional” or “alternative” stance to their work depending on how much they oppose current institutional structures (Constance, 2014, p. 5). Eric Holt-Giménez and A. Shattuck (2011) mirrors these definitions using the terms “progressive” and “radical” to define the models of activism used by food organizations. Business-oriented solutions fall under the umbrella of alternative or progressive because they do not inherently seek to challenge the neoliberal capitalist economic structure that our society currently operates within. This economic system has enabled individual spending to more powerfully impact politics and business practices (Renard, 2014, p. 72). The resulting effect is that nonprofits and other social change organizations look to consumer purchases as a way to influence both corporate actions and legislation (Allen, Fitzsimmons, Goodman & Warner, 2003, p. 72; Renard, 2014, p. 72). If not on a cognizant level, the fact that most participants believe in the use of market-based solutions as a way to change the negative aspects of our food system demonstrates their alignment with alternative/progressive rather than oppositional/radical action. Preferencing alternative/progressive types of activism over oppositional/radical was reflected in findings from a study conducted with alternative food institutions in California as well (Allen et al., 2003).

The alternative/progressive form of activism, like every form, has positive and negative dimensions. Yet, operating within this system often leaves advocates questioning if their work will actually create an impact. *The Discourse on Alternative Agrifood Movement*s suggests that opposition-based activism aligns less with justice-oriented missions. Most of the organizations in this study do not inherently work on social justice aspects of the food system as it pertains to dismantling structural inequality, and some believe that is not their role (Wendy, 2017). Because of this, it is unsurprising that these organizations adhere to market-based solutions that work within the system and predominantly advance community food security and local food strategies rather than food justice or food sovereignty. However, Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) question the real impact organizations using these strategies can have as they do not inherently change structural inequalities and sometimes can “even reinforce the status quo” (p. 322). Instead, he calls for change through convergence. By working within the system, while aligning with more “radical” or “oppositional” activism, Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) are optimistic about structural food system change. These sort of strategy debates are what I hope these, and other like-minded, organizations are having or will have to determine what sort of change they hope to create in their communities. If these organizations simply seek to provide different food choices, then the highly used modes of alternative food purchasing would likely be their best approach. But, if food-based organizations fundamentally want to enact true transformation, moving against the neoliberal marketplace to oppose the current food system model could be the more fruitful way to enact change. As such, organizations should seriously consider their approach and whether it moves toward true transformation. This analysis shows that the alternative strategies can make change—evidenced by the growth in alternative food institutions, like farmers markets, and their ability to strengthen local food systems—but that these changes are limited because they fail to address and fundamentally change underlying social inequities.

Whiteness

While the majority of participants agreed with the idea that the food movement was predominantly white, many contextualized this critique in a discussion regarding the racial inequality of power and access to resources in the U.S. more generally. This discourse underscores that participants had an overall understanding of the impact of race on society. These communicated understandings of larger social structures combined with the confusion regarding the best way to change the issue of whiteness may imply that individuals felt overwhelmed by how to change the racial issues in America, since they are structurally ingrained. This section explores these dynamics and their implications regarding the progress the food movement is able to make.

Research shows that the reasons participants used to explain the food movement's perceived whiteness are supported by facts. Oppression in the United States, historically and currently, has created inequality in: who has access to quality education, employment, multi-generational wealth, and positions of power (L'Heureux & Pattison, 2010; Oliver & Shapiro, 2010; Ray, 2010b; Sewell, 2010). The benefit that these inequalities provide white organizations were reflected in perceptions of who was awarded more grants and thus entrusted to lead larger projects (Nancy, 2017). This exemplifies the idea of "possessive investment in whiteness" (Lipsitz, 1995). This concept was developed to describe the ways that knowingly and unknowingly, governmental policies have invested in whiteness and provided white Americans with disproportionate levels of privilege as compared to people of color. Examples of this unequal distribution include construction of highways through thriving communities of color, discriminatory loan practices in housing, and discriminatory employment practices (Lipsitz, 1995). These historical examples show how government policies and spending were used to elevate white folks at the expense of people of color. In the context of the food movement, this concept is linked to the fact that nonprofits led predominately by white people are seen to gain greater access to funding. Yet, when it comes to moving beyond the open acknowledgement that whiteness and racism are problems in the food movement, when asked why racial equity was not explicitly ingrained in their organization participants outlined the potential barriers to incorporating racial equity into their work.

Common, especially among white respondents, was the confusion over roles, personally and organizationally, in trying to change the racial landscape of the food movement. While some demonstrated confusion while still wanting to act, others questioned the validity of their expected role. These expressions align with the notion that white people often feel confused about their placement in the movement for racial justice (Sleeter, 2015, p. 82). Role confusion can be attributed to multiple factors including: the guilt that some white folks feel after understanding how they benefit from unearned privilege, the action paralysis some experience due to the seemingly insurmountable challenge of racism, perceived exclusion when organizers of color create safe spaces away from white people, the fear of re-centering whiteness by leading racial equity projects, the lack of full understanding surrounding the institutional effect of racism, or the outright denial of racisms' contemporary impact (Armstrong, 2017; Gulati-Partee, 2014; Tatum, 1997). Even though respondents noted that they were having or have had conversations about race as a staff, the lack of understanding regarding roles demonstrates how those conversations could have been lacking serious depth in helping staff understand their place in the movement for racial justice.

Some anti-racist organizations outline how white folks can act as "actors," "allies," or "accomplices" (Osler, Picower, Morse, Benson & Friedman, 2018; Clemens, 2017). Actors are seen as those who do not "disrupt the status quo" and make marginal impact on racial justice efforts. Allies are defined as actors that challenge institutionalized racism and white supremacy, usually in predominantly white spaces. Lastly, accomplices are those who risk something in order to directly challenge "institutionalized racism, colonization, and white supremacy by blocking or impeding racist people, policies, and structures" and realize that collective liberation specifically mandates risk-based action (The Black Love Convergence Convocation, 2017; Osler et al., 2018). Education on these different forms of racial justice roles could help white nonprofit staff greater understand and become advocates for racial equity in the food system and within organizations.

Additionally, education on these roles and why they are necessary can help quell the idea that white folks are held to an unfair standard in racial justice work. Underlying the rhetoric around unequal racial equity responsibilities are two potential explications: colorblindness and white fatigue. Colorblind rhetoric, which works to take race out of the conversation and places everyone on an equal playing field, eliminates the idea that some people benefit from systems of privilege and works to erase racial differences. Colorblindness effectively creates an imagined idea of equality that does not currently exist in the context of race in the United States, where race is no longer considered a social determinant in shaping life outcomes (Gallagher, 2003). Especially in terms of wealth, while the Southeast may be home to wealthy people of color, studies have shown that concentrations of wealth and multi-generational wealth are higher in white communities as opposed to communities of color (Oliver & Shapiro, 2010). This type of rhetoric also lacks historical nuance regarding the ways in which white people unfairly benefitted from discriminatory policies and were able to obtain education and large amounts of wealth while people of color were kept in inferior positions (L'Heureux & Pattison, 2010; Oliver & Shapiro, 2010). Lastly, at all levels of socioeconomic status, people of color still face discrimination at individual and institutional levels. White fatigue may also be used as an explanation for this negative reaction to the proposed role of white folks in racial justice. This concept refers to the, "dynamic of white students who intuitively understand or recognize the moral imperative of antiracism (primarily viewed as individual racism); however, they are not yet situated to fully understand the complexity of racism and how it function as an institutional and systemic phenomena" (Flynn, 2015, p. 115). When white participants express frustration over their expected role in racial equity work, they exhibit white fatigue in their desire to work on an assumed even playing field, where each individual is responsible for the same level of activism. Again, like color blindness, this expression of white fatigue prohibits conversation and additional action around racial issues, and thus preserves the status quo of white privilege.

These contrasting perspectives regarding white folks expected roles in racial justice work showcase some of the inter-office dynamics that can challenge organizations as they attempt to further racial equity. This lack of cohesion prohibits the ability of organizations to work towards racial equity because people have varying opinions of the best ways, and to what extent, they should go about implementing racial justice. These different expressions of confusion over the role of white folks showcases the lack of knowledge being disseminated on an organizational level about legacies of oppression and ways to move forward.

Another dominant theme in regard to barriers of working towards racial equity centered around the discomfort that often accompanies any conversations about race and discussion of tangible action regarding racial equity. This barrier was often due to the reported concern over political correctness and unknown level of receptiveness by those engaging in the conversations. Many participants, both people of color and white, worried about offending others unintentionally through language and opinion, thus alienating them from further discussion. For white-dominated organizations, this fear could be rationalized under the idea of creating happy and collaborative working environments. However, operating under this assumption could further marginalize people of color: when race is not openly discussed or individual acts of racism are not called out, it creates a hostile work environment for people of color in order to protect the feelings of white staff.

Even though race-based conversations can bring to light differences of opinion that can alter team dynamics, net gains can occur from collective conversations about the topic. Altering these dynamics does not have to be looked at negatively. Instead, these conversations can help fill the knowledge gap that some participants expressed in terms of racial equity. Additionally, the idea that these conversations are difficult and need to be avoided in order to protect the feelings of staff, particular when discussed by white staff, eludes to the idea of “White fragility” (DiAngelo, 2011). White fragility is defined as, “the state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 54). This action works to stunt or prohibit conversations around race. When talking about race, white people's idea that white experiences are universalized is called into question and the privileges garnered by a white identity are exposed, which can be threatening to some (DiAngelo, 2011). As Fredrick notes, "your discomfort about the conversation does not trump my discomfort about experiencing the oppression, so be uncomfortable for a moment please" (personal communication, December 2017). This comment clearly and concisely communicates that conversations and concerns about discomfort should not hinder the work to dismantle forms of oppression and create a more just society. Furthermore, DiAngelo (2011) explains that as white people discuss issues around race, their ability and comfort in broaching the topic strengthens. Thus, white folks begin to have more "stamina" to discuss these topics, which can lead to greater acknowledgement and transformation of the way race impacts society (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 56, 65-6).

Another reported barrier related to discomfort was the fact that people in positions of privilege may be less willing to recognize their fault in oppression. Openly recognizing one's role in racism is something that may be difficult to do, especially in nonprofits where individuals work to resolve problems in society. In nonprofit spaces, it can be extremely hard for people to hear that they play a role in perpetuating other social ills, as their work attempts to combat societal problems daily (Lynne, 2017; Laurence, 2017). Analyzing this issue through the lens of white fatigue provides a more nuanced understanding for a potential reason staff may not want to acknowledge their active role in racism. Those operating within the realm of white fatigue only see racism as an individual rather than an institutional concept and may feel that owning up to their unearned white privilege is an act of racism rather than an act of understanding and a progressive step forward in racial justice understanding. However, the theory of white fatigue, while useful in some regards, can become an excuse for white people not to take action towards racial justice. Some people can demonstrate the individualized understanding of racism, exemplified in white fatigue due to lack of knowledge, but simply do not believe in the concept of systemic racism. This concept is therefore limited and a critical assessment of skeptical and/or unsupportive white folks should be attempted so as not to mistake those explicitly racist white people from those without knowledge.

The final barrier participants mentioned involved the larger ramifications of doing more public racial equity work. The structure of nonprofits themselves, dependent on the grants and funding by external sources, can act as a potential barrier to incorporating racial equity into their work in more explicit or public ways. Shying away from public racial equity work for fear of the impact to funding and potential partnerships is another key example of possessive investment in whiteness because the very act of working against societal white supremacy hinders one's ability to gain access to funds, thereby promoting unquestioned white supremacy. This funding barrier further supports this idea that working within the frame of neoliberal capitalism can hinder the ability of nonprofits to fully engage with the problems engrained in the food system, due to their primary reliance on external sources for capital. Hindered by the need to appeal to potential funders, organizations may shy away from taking a direct stance on "touchy" systematic issues like race. As a result, some of these organizations work to advance racial equity quietly within their programmatic work (these examples are highlighted below). However, participant testimony showcased the complicated dynamics at play, specifically within nonprofits regarding which issues they decide to champion and how that changes the resources, particularly economic, they have access to.

Two notable ways these organizations are working on racial equity include representation efforts and redistribution efforts. Both of these forms of racial justice projects represent a way to destabilize whiteness. As an alternative to the possessive investment in whiteness above, hiring more staff of color diverts funding and career development to a person of color. Additionally, these sort of conscious hiring practices can bring more diverse perspectives into the room, which can help decenter white narratives and provide examples of diverse leadership for younger generations. However, it is important to note that hiring staff of color into lower level jobs without allowing them opportunity for upward mobility can be destructive to those individuals and work to reinsert racial dominance in the workplace (Jackson Thoits & Taylor, 1955). When employers fall into this trap, the result is tokenism, which refers to "the policy or practice of only making a symbolic effort" (Tokenism, 2018). Motivations undergirded by tokenism will not effectively change organizational priorities regarding racial equity, and will instead only superficially change the makeup of the organization. "Micro-reparation" initiatives act as a form of redistribution by providing new streams of funding to those who have been systematically excluded from those resources previously (Biewen & Kumanyika, 2017). New streams of funding exclusively given to communities of color can help further racial equity within the food movement. These progressive steps demonstrate a willingness for organizations to implement action towards racial equity. However, in highlighting these successes, I do not want to minimize the need for further exploration and implementation of racial justice. In fact, until anti-racist values are central to the food movement underlying racial inequities will be continually perpetuated.

Those who challenged the idea of the food movement's perceived whiteness, indirectly highlighted a potentially problematic aspect of this study, in that it could re-center whiteness.

While investigating the perceived whiteness of the movement has allowed for greater exploration of potential barriers to making racial justice a core component of organizational programming, it also lends additional power and voice to predominantly white organizations and white voices. As identified by participants, this power and voice are two key components that led to the whiteness critique. These potential implications underscore the need for raw statistics, much like an alternative food movement census, in order to accurately access who is part of the movement and what sort of agency they have. However, the dissenting opinions in this section help prove the important point that although the food movement may be seen as predominately white, there are many organizations led by and for people of color doing food related work and making tremendous impacts on our food system even while not being given as much notoriety as other largely white organizations.

V. Conclusion

The testimony from the staff at these three different nonprofit groups illuminated the ways in which people become interested in the food system, how they feel change is best enacted, and how they understand racial equity and its role in the food movement. Investigating these three strands of movement dynamics has helped situate the function of food-oriented nonprofits in food scholarship. As with any social movement there is still much work to be done to ensure the creation of a better and more just food system, that values every member of society. As such I will end by highlighting the impacts of these interview findings and suggest ways to move forward in an attempt to bridge the gap between where we are and where we want to be.

The current neoliberal capitalism that we in the United States, and across the globe, function within is pervasive. As such, many of the current solutions to societal problems are conceived under market-based ideals. The same is true within the food movement. However, this mode of activism is not the only way to achieve change. Much can be gleaned from the food sovereignty movement and its opposition to the global economic structures.

Since food is such an overwhelming part of our lives, it is fitting that participant motivations for entry intersect. The fact that some people are more drawn to certain problems is a strength of the movement. By incorporating individuals into food-oriented nonprofits with different food system priorities, organizations diversify their perspectives. However, there is a tendency to address these issues singularly, focusing on some more than others. What I suggest is that an approach that works across differences and can help to align food movement advocates, and one of the best ways to envision this approach is through race.

Much like food itself, the food movement needs to be intentionally intersectional. Intersectionality refers to the way, “race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age not a unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but [are] reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities" (Collins, 2015, p. 1; Crenshaw, 1989). More simply put, this theory explains how individuals with various identities experience multi-faceted forms of oppression. In the food movement, an intersectional approach can be used to ensure multiple forms of oppression are being combated simultaneously. This approach leaves ample room for multiple modes of activism, from progressive to radical, to be employed in order to create a more just food system for all. Functioning under this framework enables food nonprofits to change the food system while bridging various divisions in US society more generally, to create a more cohesive community. To help create this type of food movement, organizations should, and some already do, build coalitions with other groups that work towards dismantling societal inequities, from the ground up.

By moving towards food activism that looks beyond single issues struggles, the food movement could better unite, build stronger networks, and have a stronger front in which to dismantle the institutional structures (like racism and classism) that give rise to the problems within the food system. With this framing, food movement advocates could work towards a mode of activism that does not see racial equity as important because of accusations of pervasive whiteness and white supremacy, but feel compelled to incorporate racial justice as part of the solution in creating a better food system for all. However, moving towards this understanding as a movement will take time, conversations that make some people uncomfortable, and an open acknowledgement when mistakes are made, but can result in a new more aware and transformative food movement.

I invite organizations to ruminate on some of the following questions and then to consider undertaking the list of potential actions below. Beyond just naming race as a core problem in the food system and whiteness as a problem in the food movement, there are several questions organizations in the work should seek to answer for themselves. As Rachael Slocum (2006) notes in her piece *Anti-Racist Practice and the Work of Community Food Organizations*, many of the following question while useful remain unanswered. To quote one of her respondents:

> we need to ask 'Who will take control?' and 'Who is building power? Do the solutions we are developing speak to the issues that low-income communities and communities of color have identified as crucial (i.e. living wage jobs, housing, childcare, even supermarket development, etc.)? What are we doing to provide people with the resources and information they need to identify their own solutions? What kinds of 'leadership' are we trying to foster? (p. 341)

To this list I would add a basic underlying question. If one's organization is working to create a better food system—no matter the mode of activism—can it be done without the foundational principle of justice? And if justice is required (which I argue it is) what does real justice look like for the organization?

These questions are by no mean all that could be placed here in discussions on race, class, gender, and other forms of identity. Nor are these questions meant to be accusatory or assume that those reading this have not thought about these topics. The purpose in posing these questions is simply to outline some of the ways to begin thinking about and having organizational conversations about race.

Moving beyond thinking, the following are a few ways in which to incorporate race into organizational structure. For white people, this study showcases that there needs to be a more critical investigation into our own whiteness. As white folks we are socialized to see our experiences as universal (DiAngelo, 2011). For many white folks it can be difficult to hear that their experiences and successes also come from racial privilege (I know this has been difficult for my family to understand and something I continually am uncovering). However, there are many organizations, like the Racial Equity Institute, Food First, the Racial Equity Alliance, the

Center for Social Inclusion, the Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative, the Center for Environmental Farming Systems and so many others who provide workshops, trainings, and educational material to help individuals work through the concepts of racial equity and enact real change. Through humility we can begin to see that comments and conversations about racial justice aren’t always accusatory and that by understanding whiteness white people can begin to work towards a world of true equality.

For organizations, investing in education, partnerships, and projects that further racial equity is necessary. Many of the organizations in this study are exploring or currently undergoing racial equity trainings. To take a further step, food-oriented nonprofits can partner with organizations led by people of color to highlight the amazing work they do within the community. These partnerships can also serve to distribute the power and attention that respondents noted causes the whiteness in the food movement. Further, diverting resources to these POC led organizations will also help with power differentials. However, it is important to also ensure that one organization does not begin to overshadow other organizations doing incredible work. Following the lead of other organizations that make racial equity a core component of their work, can be just as, if not more, transformational than taking charge.

VI. Study Limitations

This study is by no means representative of the entire food movement, or even the food movement in the Southeast. Importantly, the purpose of this study was not to speak for the movement as a whole. Instead, I hope that this interview analysis will illuminate and add further nuance to scholarship on the food movement. Additionally, it is important to reinforce that this study represents opinions of individuals. Those opinions, like any, are limited, represent a moment in time, and are subject to change. Therefore, the findings from this study are limited and should not be universalized to any regional or national movements. Instead, they should be seen as insights into what some organizations perceive when questioned about their personal beliefs and perspectives about the food movement. Even though participants reported a level of trust during interviews, they may not have divulged their true or even full opinions of each question I asked. This could be especially relevant with questions regarding race, as participants expressed concern saying the wrong thing. As such, participants may have held back some of their comments for fear of making similar perceived mistakes. An additional limitation is that I conducted data analysis alone. While I worked to think critically and reflectively the fact that my thematic findings were not corroborated by another researcher is a potential limitation of this study.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview

Interview Guide

Introduction: Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me about your involvement in the food movement. Before we start I just want to reiterate some points from the consent form. You are not required to answer any of the questions I ask, feel free to stop the interview at any point if you no longer want to participate, and please ask any clarifying questions if you are confused or uncertain of what I am trying to ask. I am more than happy to rephrase my question or provide additional information. Keep in mind there are absolutely NO correct answers to any of these questions and the purpose of this interview is to hear your perspective and story on the food movement to better understand its inner workings and what propels people into this work, so I want your honest and true perspective. To set the stage, this interview is split into three components: first we are going to talk about you and your involvement in the food movement, second we are going to talk about why you choose this organization to work with and what methods the organization uses to create change in the food system, and lastly we will talk about the current ideologies and perspectives about the food movement and what you think of them. Ready to start?

Component 1: SAY: Like I mentioned this first part of the interview will be focused on you and your perspective.

1. How did you get interested in food and working in the food system? What triggered your initial interest in food related work?

2. What was your family food culture like? How did you interact with food growing up? And has that interaction changed over time? If so why?

3. *Supplement Question: What do you define as good food? And do you think there is a status attached to eating good food?*

4. What are some of the main issues within the food system that you are really passionate about? Why are you passionate about those things (how did you become passionate in those issues specifically)?

5. SAY: Right now we are going to talk about your opinions but these questions that I am going to ask will be repeated in the context of the organization in a moment. [But if you think that the organization and your values are exactly the same feel free to tell me that.] How do you determine success in working towards a better food system? What do you see as the most ideal food system?

Component 2: SAY: Now we are going to shift focus a little and talk about {insert org name} and the way it works within the food system

6. Why did you decide to work for this organization specifically?

7. What about their approach to changing the food system motivated you to work here? And why do you like their approach?

8. Which of the problems within the food system is your organization seeking to change?

9. How do you think the organization is doing in accomplishing its goals for change? Is there anything you would like to see added in your organization's priorities or do you feel like everything that is most important is included?

10. SAY: And now I am going to repeat some of the questions from above with the focus on the organization: How does your organization determine success in working towards a better food system? How do you think your organization determines an ideal food system?

Component 3: Ideologies SAY: This is the last portion of the interview and we are now going to talk about some of the ideologies and the different theories of change within the food system.

11. Based on your experience what ideas do you identify with in the alternative food movement? What are the ideologies that resonate with you most? On the flip side are there some beliefs/stances you do not identify with?

12. SAY: Now we are going to shift the conversation a little to talk about a dominant critique of the food movement and your opinions of it: Have you heard or interacted with the discussion of race and racial privilege as being a problem within the food system?

13. If Yes→
    a. What do you think of this critique? Do you agree with it or not? Why or why not? (if they say they don't agree and you ask why then can end the interview)

    b. From what you have said it sounds like you agree somewhat with this critique so do you think you have addressed this issue in your work? And if so- how? Or why not?
        i. *Do you feel like you all can do more? In what ways would you like to do more?*

        ii. *Does your organization have any goals for racial equity that you know of?*

        iii. *How do you think you will achieve those goals and what is currently standing in the way of achieving those goals?*

    c. Do you see any challenges or fear in talking about race or engaging in changing the way race and the food system interact? Why do you feel like those barriers are present?

14. If No → SAY: Okay, so you have never heard of this critique before:

  a. Why do you think that is? Is it because you don’t think it’s a problem in the food system or some other reason (like other issues)?

SAY: So we are almost done- thank you so much for answering all these questions- I know they are varied and hit on some different topics within the food system so I appreciate you taking the time and giving your opinion. To end on a high note I would love to know:

15. What is something in your food related work that you felt you have made progress on or feel deeply satisfied by? Is there that one story that you keep in the back of your mind to keep you going?

SAY: That was a really uplifting story and I am so glad I was able to talk with you about why you became interested in food as a career path and how you hope change will come to the food system. So we are finished: do you have any questions or comments for me?

Appendix B: Survey Information

Participant Survey

1. What is your gender? _________________

2. What year were you born? __________________

3. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin? _____ Yes _____ No

4. How would you describe yourself?

________ American Indian or Alaska Native
________ Asian
________ Black or African American
________ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
________ White
Other:_____________________________________

5. What is your household income? __________________/month OR ____________________/year

6. What is the highest education level you completed? _____________________________________

7. Please indicate the highest level of education that has been achieved by your:
a) Father: ____
b) Mother: ____
c) Partner: ____

8. Overall, how much impact do you think people like you can have in making your community a better place to live
a.) no impact at all
b.) a small impact
c.) a moderate impact
d.) big impact
e.) don't know

9. How many days in the past week did you spend reading or watching news related to food?

____

Please note the top two news sources that you get your information from:
1.) ____
2.) ____

10. Which of the following things have you done in the past twelve months (Circle all that apply):

1. Signed a petition

2. Attended a political rally or meeting
3. Worked on a community project
4. Participated in any demonstrations, protests, boycotts or marches
5. Donated blood

11. Thinking politically and socially, how would you describe your own general outlook--as:

a. Very conservative
b. Moderately conservative
c. Middle-of-the-road
d. Moderately liberal
e. Very Liberal
f. Other:______________________________
g. Don't know

12. How many times in the past twelve months have you socialized with coworkers outside of work? ____

Appendix C: Informed Consent

Emory University

Consent to be a Research Subject

Title: Nonprofit Activists in the Atlanta Food Movement

Principal Investigator: Mackenzie Aime, Interdisciplinary Studies Department and Department of Sociology

Funding Source: Luke Kendall Research Fund

Introduction

You are being asked to be in a research study. This form is designed to tell you everything you need to think about before you decide to consent (agree) to be in the study or not to be in the study. It is entirely your choice. If you decide to take part, you can change your mind later on and withdraw from the research study.

Before making your decision:

- Please carefully read this form or have it read to you
- Please ask questions about anything that is not clear

You can take a copy of this consent form, to keep. Feel free to take your time thinking about whether you would like to participate. By signing this form you will not give up any legal rights.

Study Overview

The purpose of this study is to understand racial politics within the food movement from the perspective of those actively working on food related initiatives in Atlanta. The overarching goal is to better understand how individuals working in the food movement started their journey and how that informs what solutions they incorporate into their daily work.

Procedures

You will talk with the Principal Investigator, Mackenzie Aime, in an unstructured interview for approximately 1.5 hours. During this time you will talk about a range of subjects included but not limited to: your path to your current job, your outlook and relationship to food, identity, decision making, current food system scholarship, food system problems, office culture and attentiveness to politics.

Risks and Discomforts

You may be asked to recall information from the past that could be difficult to remember or uncomfortable. Some questions are difficult to answer and may be uncomfortable or require time to answer- there are no correct answers or time limits before responses are needed. All of your answers are completely confidential and anonymous so none of these answers will be identifiable to you or would affect your life outside of this room.

Benefits

This study is not designed to benefit you directly. This study is designed to learn more about the food movement in general and more specifically in Atlanta. This is done in effort to identify weaknesses and strengths in the movement to help it progress and be successful in the long term. The study results may be used to help others in the future.

Compensation

You will not be offered payment for being in this study.

Confidentiality

Certain offices and people other than the researchers may look at study records. Government agencies and Emory employees overseeing proper study conduct may look at your study records.

These offices include the Office for Human Research Protections, the Emory Institutional Review Board, the Emory Office of Research Compliance. Study funders will not look at your study records. Emory will keep any research records we create private to the extent we are required to do so by law. A study number rather than your name will be used on study records wherever possible. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results.

Study records can be opened by court order. They may also be produced in response to a subpoena or a request for production of documents.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study

You have the right to leave a study at any time without penalty. You may refuse to do any procedures you do not feel comfortable with, or answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. If you decide to withdraw from the study all the information you provided up to that point will still be kept for potential analysis.

The researchers and also have the right to stop your participation in this study without your consent if:

- They believe it is in your best interest;
- You were to object to any future changes that may be made in the study plan;
- or for any other reason.

Contact Information

Contact Mackenzie Aime at (208)484-7451:

- if you have any questions about this study or your part in it, or
- if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research

Contact the Emory Institutional Review Board at 404-712-0720 or 877-503-9797 or irb@emory.edu:

- if you have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research.
- You may also let the IRB know about your experience as a research participant through our Research Participant Survey at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/6ZDMW75.

Consent

Please, print your name and sign below if you agree to be in this study. By signing this consent form, you will not give up any of your legal rights. We will give you a copy of the signed consent, to keep.

Name of Subject

Signature of Subject Date Time

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion

Appendix D: Initial Contact Email

Dear [insert organizational contact name],

I hope that all is well at [organization name]! I am contacting you because I am currently starting my senior honors thesis. The thesis is centered around the topic of food and I hope to work with organizations, like yours, to understand how individuals become interested in food system work and what the key influencing factors are that determine how they envision enacting change in the food system.
Because of the amazing work you and your team does, I would love to talk with you about being part of this research study. Participation in the study would include an interview with each of your organization's staff members about how they got started in the food movement, their thoughts on the state of our current food system, values, civic engagement, and any other clarification question that may come up during the discussion. Each of these interviews would be about 1.5 hours each and I would schedule them with each staff member individually.

I may also ask, if possible, to come to your office and/or attend events your organization holds throughout the year to get a general understanding of the internal operations of your organization and observe what sort of projects are being pursued in the community. Please know that if you decide to be involved, privacy and confidentiality are of utmost importance and neither the name of your organization nor staff names would be used in the thesis or any other publications.

In return for your time, I would love to help your organization, as a volunteer in any way possible. I have worked for a few nonprofits around Atlanta and have event planning skills that I would be more than willing to volunteer in turn for the time your staff spends with me.

The study is meant to help individuals dedicated to creating a better food system understand how to bring people into the movement and understand the values that motivate people to engage.

If you would like to talk through this information more please provide a few dates and times in which I could either call or come in and talk with you at your office.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Best,

Mackenzie

Appendix E: Interview Scheduling Email

Dear XXX,

[Organizational contact name] gave me your contact information in order to schedule an interview with you about your path into food system work. To provide some context, these interviews will take approximately one to one and a half hours. During this time we will have a conversation about how you got started in the food movement, your thoughts on the state of our current food system, your values, your civic engagement, and any other clarification questions that may come up during the discussion. Please note that our conversation will be kept completely confidential and that your interview will be de-identified and transcribed using a pseudonym to keep your identity private.

Attached is a consent form for you to look over. We will also go through this consent form together before the start of the interview where I will give you the opportunity to ask any clarification questions and then have you sign the form if you still would like to take part in the interview.

The goal of this study is to help individuals dedicated to creating a better food system, like yourself, understand how to bring people into the movement and understand the values that motivate people to engage.

Please let me know your availability for an interview, whether during the workweek or weekend. Feel free to share your calendar if you think that would be easier, but if you'd rather just send a few dates and times my way that would be wonderful. I am happy to accommodate whatever works best for your schedule.

Looking forward to hearing from you, thank you so much for your time!
Best,
Mackenzie