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## CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN COMMUNITY-LED FOOD JUSTICE MODELS

Teya Cuellar

*University of Kentucky*, teyasimone@outlook.com

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Teya Cuellar, Student

Dr. Keiko Tanaka, Major Professor

Dr. Patricia Dyk, Director of Graduate Studies

CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN COMMUNITY-LED FOOD JUSTICE  
MODELS

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THESIS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in  
Community and Leadership Development in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environment at the  
University of Kentucky

By

Teya Cuellar

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Keiko Tanaka, Professor of Community and Leadership Development

Lexington, Kentucky

2019

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN COMMUNITY-LED FOOD JUSTICE MODELS

Non-profits that do community-led food justice work with lower income communities face particular constraints and opportunities. This study examined those constraints and opportunities through participant observation of one such organization and interviews with four other organizations. Findings include the diversity of definitions for “community-led,” assets that can help or constrain the organization, and diversity in defining “scaling up” their organization models and missions. The organizations that heavily focused on lower income consumers noted tensions with the board of the non-profit and lack of engagement of consumers. I conclude by critiquing using language such as “models,” “scaling up,” or “replicating” when doing community-led food justice with lower income communities. I propose using the “scaling deep” framework (Moore, Riddell & Vocisano, 2015) and using Social Network Analysis as a tool for community development and developing alternative food initiatives with lower income individuals and communities.

KEYWORDS: Community-led food justice, food justice models.

Teya Cuellar

7/19/2019

CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN COMMUNITY-LED FOOD JUSTICE  
MODELS

By  
Teya Cuellar

Dr. Keiko Tanaka  
Director of Thesis

Dr. Patricia Dyk  
Director of Graduate Studies

7/19/2019

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Local agri-food networks can offer new ways of provisioning food for historically food-insecure communities that do not benefit from the current industrial agricultural system in the United States. Stakeholders involved, methods used, and values held within this alternative food system can vary immensely. Answering questions such as *who* is involved, *how* are they involved, and *why* they do this work can shift a conversation between the nebulous terms of food security, food justice, food sovereignty, and community development. Working within local, alternative food systems is immensely technical, heavily collaborative, and requires deep cultural and behavioral shifts. Integrating these skills and practices with a community development framework for lower-income and marginalized communities can shift values and practices to move beyond food access and security and include community capacity building, collective action, and ownership and control over food provisioning. In this thesis, I ask: how do we move beyond food access to community development and empowerment through food? Furthermore, what tensions and challenges are there when a non-profit seeks to do food justice *with* lower-income communities?

### Background of Study

Over 10 months I had many opportunities to interact with a 501(c)3 organization that did community-led food justice work in the United States. To protect the non-profit identity, I will not disclose the location (including the state or region) or the name of the

organization. The non-profit will be referred to as Community Food Power Inc (CFP Inc.). This non-profit works to do food justice through community power in mostly urban settings. Within its geographic region the non-profit coordinates with several community food markets here titled Power Markets. These markets are hybrid cooperative buying clubs and multi-farm CSAs (Hyden, 2017). Markets are mostly located in lower-income neighborhoods where food access is a concern. In principle, the Power Markets are meant to be located at significant community sites, such as churches, theaters, or community centers. These markets are run by community members and volunteers who are the buying club “shareholders.” Cooperative economics and a sliding payment scale are used based on diverse income levels. EBT is accepted. Full share purchasing is not required at the beginning of the season; flexible payment is important for the overall model to accommodate lower-income families and individuals. The non-profit strives to help communities start a Power Market. As I will discuss fully below, CFP Inc. uses the rhetoric of “volunteer-driven,” “community-powered,” and “food is a human right,” to distinguish Power Markets from other hybrid markets run by similar community-based organizations (CBOs).

## Methodology

Through multiple modes of participant observation, I developed a more nuanced and critical perspective of CFP Inc. as an organization. Underneath the community-powered social enterprise rhetoric, I saw an organization struggling to balance its financial, social, and environmental goals and maintain its viability as an enterprise. I saw

mission drift, a discordance of community empowerment values amidst a technical assistance approach to achieve food access for lower-income communities, and various leadership and collaborative tactics that seemed antithetical to the organization's mission. My observations and reflections allowed me to critically evaluate community agro-food economies and the neoliberal<sup>1</sup> centric paradigm in which they exist. I wondered: Can we "scale-up" and "replicate" community-led food models? If we can: Should we?

In addition to my time with CFP Inc. and the Power Markets, I had the opportunity to conduct four semi-structured interviews with non-profit leaders (including one hybrid non-profit/LLC) who in diverse ways incorporated community-led food models into their organizations. Methods for community-led food models varied from mobile markets, to organizing retail outlets for Amish produce auctions, to food aggregation for CBOs who decided their sliding payment scales for their specific constituencies. Once I analyzed the data from participant observation and interviews, I was able to discern common struggles, methods and approaches to creating not only food access but community development. Through comparing CFP Inc. and the four other organizations, I was able to understand the difficult tradeoffs organizations make financially, practically, and ethically when working *with*, not for, marginalized communities to create healthy food access *and* community development.

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<sup>1</sup> It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the full meaning and extent of the term "neoliberal." For the purposes of this study I identify its meaning broadly with primarily market-based solutions, private ownership rather than collective action, and replicated solutions.

## Statement of Significance

I write this thesis for people who believe in community power and community ownership yet recognize that they are not a part of the community. This has been something I have internally struggled with throughout my graduate studies. I find myself volunteering, working, or talking to someone. I stop to wonder: Am I doing everything I can to create change? Does the organization I am working for or with not seem to be doing enough? What is *enough*? I conjecture that this anxiety is experienced by many non-profit, social enterprise, and business people who want to do good through their work. How do we position ourselves within a community, recognize our privilege with grace, and help others help themselves without perpetuating stereotypes, the existing power dynamics between ourselves and the community, and the greater capitalist system we all operate within? Furthermore, how do we financially operate our non-profit or business *and* empower others? This thesis will contribute to the existing literature that examines Alternative Food Initiatives (AFIs) that conduct community-led food justice work and how they balance social and financial values. It will also critique the language of “replication” and “scaling up” language used by AFIs.

In simple words, my thesis and understanding of food justice and food sovereignty is this: It is hard, and how it looks depends on where you are and whom you are working with. There is no perfect, all-encompassing solution, no perfect best practices, and no perfect how-to manual. I argue that there shouldn't be. I hope that my observations, findings, and analysis can provide those who do this work with context and ideas to consider when trying to make an unjust food system just through democratic and empowering means for those whom it negatively impacts the most.

## Purpose of the Study

Through multiple modes of participant observation and semi-structured interviews, I will explore challenges and tensions that organizations can face when implementing community-led food justice work in lower-income communities. My research questions are as follows:

1. What challenges and tensions arise when non-profits do community-led food justice models with lower-income communities?
2. What challenges and tensions arise when attempting to replicate, scale-up, or scale-out lower-income community-led food justice models?

## Organization of Thesis

This thesis will be divided into six chapters. Chapter 2 will review the literature on community and propose a framework for what community development ought to be. It will be from this framework that I will evaluate the organizations and their ability to do community development and effect greater change through food. The role of organizations that do this work and the challenges they face will also be discussed. Chapter 3 will explain my methodology which includes participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Included in this chapter is the evolution of my research since it had a significant impact on my project trajectory and how I would ultimately analyze the data and frame my recommendations. Study limitations will also be discussed. Chapter 4 includes my results. The themes that arose with all and with some of the organizations will be discussed. Chapter 5 includes my analysis and chapter 6 includes my conclusions and recommendations.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I will explore the relevant existing work that relates to my study. This includes research in community development, food security, justice and sovereignty, and the intersection between food and community development for and/or by marginalized communities. I will then explore the literature on organizations who do this work with or for communities and the tensions and challenges of doing so.

### Community and Community Development

Community is multifaceted, dynamic, and not easily measurable. As we are all a part of multiple communities, it is important to note that I move forward with defining community development in the context of marginalized communities who develop (or are developed) to improve their current situation. Jnanabrata Bhattacharyya (2004) theorizes that the purpose of community development is to realize and create solidarity and agency. He writes:

I propose... that we conceptualize the purpose of community development as the promotion of solidarity and agency. I will argue that solidarity is the essential characteristic of community, and, there is an important view that the purpose of development is to support agency. (p. 12)

Bhattacharyya proposes a way to define community (solidarity) and what exactly is being impacted by development (agency). Solidarity is the shared identity and norms that are reinforced by relationships (Bhattacharyya, 2004, p.12). Bhattacharyya ties solidarity to

the community capacity to create change and ignite civic engagement and social capital, as do other scholars (Balfour & Alter, 2016; Emery & Flora, 2006; Ennis & West, 2013; Guillory, Everson & Ivester, 2006; Lau, 2012; Sturtevant, 2006). To do community development is to impact social capital and the social webs which create solidarity. This solidarity ideally results in individual and collective agency.

Agency presupposes a desire for the community to be problem solvers who can create, own, and sustain their solution. Choice and the ability to take collective action is key to a sense of agency. The role of an organization in realizing this agency can be problematic. Bhattacharyya writes, “human development is defined as the creation and promotion of people’s choices and capabilities, this is, agency, which is the unifying concern of the social sciences and humanities today” (p. 13). Bhattacharyya also explains, “Many governmental as well as private social service organizations create chronic dependency in the ‘clients’, establishing a relationship as between givers and abject recipients, the latter rarely gaining the capability to break out of the relationship” (p. 13). Applied development anthropologists and their critiques of international development are useful and similar to some development done within the US. Dependencia theory (Charles-Coll, 2013; Hidalgo-Capitán, 2012; Mason, 2017) critiques the “development industry” that necessitates development and entrenchment of development actors. Dependency sustains the development industry but directly opposes agency, empowerment, and capacity building (Chaskin, 1997; Herdt, 2012; Robson & Spence, 2011; Zereyesus, 2017). This thinking assumes people in those communities are a “target” population that must be developed because they don’t have the knowledge or means to develop. This thinking sometimes causes development professionals to not

consult with communities meaningfully or to impose rather than create solutions together (Alvarez, Van Leeuwen, Montenegro-Montenegro & Van Vugt, 2018; Cooper & Packard, 1997). To see development as a vehicle to promote solidarity and agency alters the course for development projects, as they will capitalize on and build human and social capital rather than operate from only 'deficit assumptions' and implement technical assistance or market-based solutions divorced from local knowledge (Missingham, 2017; Li, 2007; Zereyesus, 2017). Community development is the intent to build capacity, empower individuals to come together to make a difference, to recognize strengths and capacities and not only deficiencies, and to authorize development professionals to act as supporters who will help leave a legacy of capacity and self-realized development. To move forward with these beliefs allows us to use different approaches that build solidarity and agency and champion unique solutions for communities. One such approach is Asset Based Community Development (ABCD).

ABCD is a practical methodology and approach that focuses on relationships and community strengths rather than deficiencies. It was first proposed by John Kretzmann and John McKnight (1993). In their practical guide to ABCD, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*, Kretzmann and McKnight explain the two divergent pathways to community development.

In response to this desperate situation, a well-intended people are seeking solutions by taking one of two paths. The first, which begins by focusing on a community's needs, deficiencies and problems, is still by far the most traveled, and commands the vast majority of our financial and human resources. By

comparison with the second path, which insists on beginning with a clear commitment to discovering a community's capacities and assets, and which is the direction this guide recommends. (p. 1)

The first path views devastated neighborhoods and poverty as problems that can only be fixed by outside resources. Kretzmann and McKnight explain how this relationship between the outside and the community in need has a client-service provider dynamic where the community people are recipients to a service, product, or aid. ABCD instead aims to have the community contribute to and control their development. ABCD methods aim to mobilize people and empower them to see and capitalize on the capacities they already have. While there are real problems that need to be dealt with, ABCD seeks to place more emphasis on capacities that already exist so that those problems can become manageable. Once internal relationships are strengthened and fostered then the community may choose to create or strengthen relationships with other entities who have access to the resources they may not have. While outside resources and help are needed, community ownership and capitalizing on capacities while strengthening the community's relationships allow them to collectively improve their situation (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 8). ABCD is asset-based, internally focused, and relationship-driven (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Winther, 2015). Supporting theories and frameworks for ABCD include Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003), Social Capital (Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000), Civil Society (Winther, 2015), and Collectivist Empowerment Theories (Ennis & West, 2010; Saleebey, 2000).

A critique of ABCD is its lack of attention to broader structural constraints on communities who are trying to do their own development. Increasing service fluidity or

connections to those with resources does not always shift power dynamics, create equitable systems, or address the reasons there is inequality and exclusion from resources in the first place (Scott & Liew, 2012, p. 2756). The responsibility of community development falls on those who are dealing with problems and a system they did not create and they may not have the time to do so. Although the lack of time may be a deficit assumption, it is a real constraint. Hence, it is often organizations that choose to use ABCD as a method to do community development work; it is not always a community itself with no organizational affiliation that utilizes the ABCD method or community capacity building practices (Chaskin, 2001). The client-recipient dynamic is a possibility, as is the non-profit or community-based organization (CBO) struggle for financial viability. Without financial viability, or if a certain grant is not rewarded, we still see the community dependent on an entity they don't have control over, even if democratic and participatory processes are in place to include the community in decision-making. The balance between community autonomy and ownership with the need to access resources through a fiscal sponsor is a constraint on ABCD development and collective empowerment theories.

A similar framework to ABCD is the Community Capitals Framework (CCF) (Emery & Flora, 2006). The basic premise of the CCF is that increasing social capital in communities can lead to increases in other capitals such as physical, economic, or political (Emery & Flora, 2006; Flores & Rello, 2003). This process is titled "spiraling up." This is contested as some studies have seen negative aspects of social capital, an example being demanding relationships (Dominguez & Watkins, 2003; Portes, 1998). Others find an unclear relationship between the different capitals in the CCF (Pigg,

Gasteyer, Martin, Keating & Apaliyah, 2013). In the CCF, Emery and Flora (2006) write, “through the spiraling up process, we identify critical investments in social capital as the entry point for community change” (p. 20). I draw from the CCF as it prioritizes investments in social relationships as a precondition to other forms of capital, namely economic capital. Connecting the intangibles of solidarity and agency with the tangible and measurable outcomes that are sought after in impact assessments and grant requirements is vital for organizations.

I draw from Jnanabrata Bhattacharyya’s (2004) community development theorization and the ABCD and the CCF frameworks as a foundation for ideal goals and practices of sustainable community development. The foundation is investing in relationships and power and ownership being held by the community itself. I also draw from the ABCD and CCF because throughout my time of completing my thesis, I saw the real constraints of these methods due to broader structural pressures and individual and organizational shortcomings. I started my graduate career romanticizing these methods and thinking, “why doesn’t everyone just *do* this?” I learned there are organizational limitations, as well as limitations on lower-income individuals and families to mobilize themselves and spiral up. Additionally, I saw organizations not valuing community ownership in its fullest sense; this led me to wonder, what constrains entirely community-led food justice models? How do different organizations define “community-led” and “food justice?” I sought to understand the balance between community ownership and organizational support, and “spiraling up” and “scaling up.” If an organization or non-profit is involved, what power dynamics and tensions exist when they need community engagement and are using empowerment strategies to sustain a financial outcome?

## Community Development and Food

In this section, I will explore the literature on food and community development in the United States. First, what are the critiques and tensions between food security, justice, sovereignty, and community development? I'll move forward with a framework for food justice that centers on community development and uses food as a method to develop community. This review is not an all-encompassing account of food security, justice, and sovereignty literature in the United States, but rather a review of the key critiques of AFIs as they relate to literature on community development.

The alternative food movement in the United States is vast and multi-faceted. Its organizers, stakeholders, beneficiaries, and their respective methods and values in their alternative food systems are diverse (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011; Bolles, 2019; Flora & Bregendahl, 2006; Holt-Giménez, 2009). The facets the movements share in common is their resistance to the “global food regime” which has immense control of food production and distribution partly through monopolistic industry consolidation and globalized food chains that benefit corporate entities. Some alternative food movements exist within the global food regime’s capitalist ideological framework rather than challenge it (Allen, Fitzsimmons, Goodman & Warner, 2003; Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011, p. 115). Holt Giménez & Shattuck (2011) explain these divergent, though sometimes overlapping facets of the global food movement, respectively titled the Progressive and the Radical wings. This framework, together with the respective “liberal” and “radical” co-op categorization presented by Zitcer (2017), is useful for understanding alternative food systems in the US that use the term “food justice.” Zitcer defines liberal methods as those which rely on market tactics and only modify the liberal paradigm.

Radical methods uncover systemic food injustice causes and attempt to eradicate them (Zitcer, 2017, p. 183). These divergent, though sometimes overlapping values can help us understand power and inequity underneath the alternative food movement umbrella in the United States (Guthman, 2008; Slocum, 2007). Placing security, justice, and sovereignty initiatives into liberal and radical categories is not straightforward. Patricia Allen (2013) comments on defining food security and its solutions:

Differences lie in how the problem is defined, for whom it exists, and how it can be solved. Concepts such as sustainable intensification, food rights, local food systems, food sovereignty, and food justice are swirling in the food security discourse, with varying definitions that presuppose varying solutions. Different material interests, ontologies, epistemologies, and strategies fragment these discourses. (p. 135)

The theoretical discourses, terms, and practices around alternative food movements intermingle, coalesce, and diverge in the US as much as they do globally. However, this liberal and radical framework can help us conceptualize these different methods and models and move forward with a food justice concept that prioritizes community development and social capital.

Food security and food justice can fall into the liberal (Zitcer, 2017), also called Progressive (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011) category. Food security, when simply conceptualized as getting lower-income individuals access to food and increasing food production, prevents these means from being participatory, democratic, and challenging to systemic inequalities in the existing food regime and the dominant alternative food movement (Cadieux & Slocum, 2015). Food security movements within the US, both

public and private, have been dominated by this needs-based discourse, patronization of lower-income populations rather than addressing underlying causes of poverty and hunger, and not considering food as a human right (Anderson, 2013). However, Community Food Security (CFS) is a developing trend within the food security discourse that tries to address deeper issues, develop community, and move beyond individual food security measurements (Anderson & Cook 1999; Kaiser, 2013). Food justice within the US ideally marries food access with food system transformation through racial justice, social justice, empowerment of the poor, and community organization (Alkon & Norgaard, 2009; Cadieux & Slocum, 2015; Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). Although this movement is progressive in comparison to the global food regime, and ideally more progressive than food security measures, they can often be problematized by the tendency to fall short when changing the underlying market and power assumptions accepted by the global food regime. Examples could be the predominant whiteness in the alternative food movement, or though ingenuine connection and participation, and even exclusion of marginalized peoples (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Guthman, 2008; Slocum, 2007). Building community and organizing marginalized individuals as described in Holt Giménez & Shattuck's (2011) Progressive conceptualization is not always meaningfully realized in US food justice efforts.

Many organizations or people who work to sustain an alternative food movement regard community as a value (Aucoin & Fry, 2015; Brower, 2013), but they can often fall short in creating community (Everson & Holst, 2015; Firth, Maye, & Pearson, 2011). This value of community can refer to economic, social, and spatial embeddedness in producer-consumer relationships (Brinkley, 2017; Hinrichs, 2000; Sage, 2003) or a sense

of community among non-producing community members, such as with community-supported agriculture (CSA) (Milstein, 2013). This community is often reserved for white audiences who struggle to transcend their demographically narrow movements, even if they do want to be inclusive (Kato, 2013; Kato & McKinney, 2015; Piatelli & Derber, 2008). Lack of inclusivity, as indicated by lack of participation and ownership of projects by diverse and/or lower-income individuals, is problematic for movements or methods that are “doing good” by getting food to those diverse individuals. This needs or handout based approach to doing food justice has been critiqued for not responding adequately to food insecurity and for sustaining structural inequality (Carney, 2011). Acting in servitude of the poor or marginalized and assuming similar values in food is problematic, counter-productive and not only a critique of food security rhetoric (Guthman, 2008). Bellows and Hamm see that innovative models and “energizing grassroots constituencies” are often met with mixed, or poor results (as cited in Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011, p. 125).

For example, using the CCF, Meenar (2015) assessed the non-profit driven community capacity building efforts of 116 NPOs (non-profit organizations) that addressed food insecurity in Philadelphia. A significant finding was that many of the organizations struggled with their organizational social capital (partners and collaboration) as well as with engaging local and diverse communities. Meenar notes that white and middle-class presence in these initiatives, even when located in a Latinx or Black community, can be a barrier for the people who live there to be meaningfully involved (p.91). Meenar recommended more community involvement in planning and decision-making, and not only “educating” or “enlightening” them as some AFIs are

critiqued to do (Guthman, 2008b; Meenar, 2015; Slocum, 2006). Poulsen, Spiker, and Winch (2014) also note the dangers of only sharing organization information or confusing community buy-in, or complacent acceptance of a project, with empowerment and ownership.

The second global alternative food trend (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011; Zitcer, 2017) is the radical trend. Holt Giménez & Shattuck write, “the Radical trend also calls for food systems change on the basis of rights, but focuses much more on entitlements, structural reforms to markets and property regimes, and class-based, redistributive demands for land, water and resources, as captured in the notion of food sovereignty, a concept advanced by *Vía Campesina*...” (p. 115). The radical is tied to food sovereignty ideology which seeks to address structural inequalities such as the issue of ownership, land, and redistribution of resources and power over all aspects of food production. This line separating food security and justice from food sovereignty, while sometimes clear, can often blur. For example, a more recent shift to the Community Food Security (CFS) movement in the US includes values such as community planning and participation, collaboration, and coalition building (Anderson & Cook, 1999) and addresses more complicated causes of security and hunger (Carney, 2011). Both food security and sovereignty can reflect the neoliberalism of global food systems (Carney, 2011) and the terms “food justice” and “food sovereignty” are interchangeable and sometimes divorced from social justice in US alternative food networks (Cadieux & Slocum, 2015). I propose that community *ownership* and subsequent power shifts in the food system are vital when non-profits or CBOs do community-led food security, justice or sovereignty (Sonnino & Hanmer, 2016).

There are challenges when organizations do lower-income community food systems work. Campbell, Carlisle-Cummins & Feenstra (2013), with the help of a graduate-level seminar, composed a community food systems bibliography. The three challenges they found for community food systems practitioners were: Difficulties supporting both small-scale local farmers and lower-income populations (Flora & Bregendahl, 2012; Nelson & Stroink, 2014), confronting racial and class bias while creating solutions, and reconciling diverse approaches to change (i.e. radical or liberal approach). The literature on social enterprise efforts to maintain a triple bottom line (social, economic, and environment) and pursue a social mission through market-based strategies is helpful when understanding the inherently transactional food systems that also try to do social justice. Mission drift, or shift toward business or market logic over the social mission, is common in social enterprises as these two institutional logics (liberal and radical) compete with one another (Cornforth, 2014; Woodside, 2016). Collective social entrepreneurship, as opposed to the traditional solo entrepreneur, seek to change systems collaboratively (Montgomery, Dacin, P., & Dacin, M., 2012) in the same spirit of collective action, ABCD, or the entrepreneurial community capitals framework (Flora, J. L., Sharp, Flora, C., & Newlon, 1997). Flora et al. (1997) pose that market initiatives that include communities will be more successful.

Enderton, Bregendahl, and Topaloff (2017) develop the “shepherd” as a vital component to facilitate community-based food initiatives and recognize difficulties in facilitating organizational power while meaningfully incorporating community capacity building and ownership of solutions. The paid staff member conceptualized as a “shepherd,” “use their position and power in the community to act in ways consistent

with the goals and chosen actions of local participants.” They also facilitate and guide the greater conversation towards systems changes and manage conflicting ideas on how to move forward. There are challenges when doing this. Paid individuals with the time and organizational support to make decisions and lead in food initiatives, even community-focused ones, often do so since it is easier for them to just do it (Enderton, Bregendahl & Topaloff, 2017). These individuals who work for stakeholders and fail to meaningfully engage a community have been titled “grasstops” rather than “grassroots” (Enderton, Bregendahl & Topaloff, 2017). The researchers concluded that even low community engagement (informing and educating) can take all the time and resources of an organization, so they suggest partnerships and organizational collaboration to effect wider change and be able to shift from engagement to ownership. The power dynamics of a self-appointed grassroots organization determining community readiness is also problematic if these are marginalized people who are “difficult” to work with since they have been historically disenfranchised, are resource-poor, don’t trust institutions or lack the motivation to engage. They found that even high trust relationships between paidstaff and a community can lead to communities engaging less in decision-making.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I will describe data collection methods, my data analysis, and the evolution of my research. The nearly a year and a half long research process that concludes with this thesis has been, in kinder words, just that -- a process. I found relief that my experience of being a fledgling researcher so surprised by the sometimes ephemeral, and sometimes painfully perpetual demands of research was shared by my colleagues who published their reflexive research experience, and not only their findings (Welch, 2004). In retrospect, the unfolding of my experience is vital to my theoretical framework, the questions I would ultimately ask, and the lens through which I would develop my final analysis.

### Evolution of Research

I interacted with the Power Markets as a volunteer and I interacted with CFP Inc. as a research assistant with the state land grant institution. The grant I was assisting with was written with the end goal of helping CFP Inc. replicate and disseminate its model. The grant was geared toward finding a model that could increase small-scale farmer participation in their social justice-oriented mission. I had the unique experience of being a layperson that was told what the markets were and what they stood for at the consumer end: empowerment, cooperative economics, and building internal community relationships that were valued synergistically with getting people fresh food. At the beginning of my experience as a volunteer, this is what I saw. The markets, to me,

bridged true community development, capacity building, and empowerment strategies within an alternative food systems context. Food access and the market spaces were a method by which relationships could be built and sustained, and these relationships also resulted in food access. Community leaders were often involved in the logistics of food procurement. These markets were more than shareholder pick up; they were a community event (Alkon, 2007; Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny, 2004). The food was not a handout, a symbol of dependency; it was more than that. I saw the Asset Based Community Development and Community Capitals Framework that I had read about in my graduate-level work. From a CCF perspective, the idea of igniting social capital through social networking to “spiral up” and attain other capital, such as fresh food access, was intellectually interesting and I saw at the markets that this was practical. I was inspired to have my master's thesis be a social network analysis (SNA) of CFP Inc. and the many Power Markets it supported.

I wished to use SNA as a tool to further harness collective action, improve communication among the market leaders, and coordinate a greater food justice movement. However, I was ultimately unable to complete the social network analysis as CFP Inc. had financially pressing issues and was uninterested in participating. Through an honest conversation with the executive director of CFP Inc., my research team and I came to learn that the organization was struggling financially and would be undergoing a restructuring period. When I explained that understanding and seeing the network could be used to enhance communication and network efficiency I was told, “I know what the network looks like. Our problem is that we need to be better at acquiring funding and we simply don't have enough people to communicate and coordinate with to get the work

done.” I walked away defeated and frustrated with myself for not having the foresight to see this common issue with non-profits and grassroots organizations: the competition for resources, people, and time is tough. I still felt that maximizing efficiency of the capital they did have, i.e. the social capital, they could potentially overcome these “deficiencies,” and make a bare-bones infrastructure as efficient as possible. My understanding of the connection between organization sustainability and lucid communication networks fell on deaf (and busy) ears. Lack of time and the immediate need to put out short-term fires understandably made my social network analysis seem abstract and irrelevant (Hoey & Sponseller, 2018).

Although I was unable to do the social network analysis, my time spent researching and preparing for a social network analysis gave me an interesting perspective through which to view alternative food justice models and would partially influence my final recommendations for this thesis. The bridge between community development and social network analysis is small, but growing (Balfour & Alter, 2016; Ennis & West, 2010; Ennis & West, 2013; Lawlor & Neal, 2016; Wheeler-Brooks, 2010) and complements the work done on social capital and community development, such as with the Community Capitals Framework (Ansari, Munir & Gregg 2012; Emery & Flora, 2006; Flora & Bregendahl, 2006; Sturtevant, 2006). The connection, however, between alternative food systems and social network analysis is scant (Jarosz, 2000; Wood et al., 2014). Though “alternative networks” and “community,” and even embeddedness and social capital are often used in alternative food systems literature (Hinrichs, 2000) the direct connection between the SNA tool and food systems are few and far between. Excitedly, I thought that these fields could be connected at the community level to bolster

marginalized communities who are provisioning their food and growing their capacity. Within the literature connecting SNA and alternative food systems, few were done at the community level or for collective action and organizing communities hit hardest by our unjust food system (Mertens et al., 2015; Migliore, Schifani, Guccione & Cembalo, 2014). Both studies by Mertens et al. (2015) and Migliore et al. (2014) were done outside of the United States.

Once CFP Inc. let our research team know their struggles, our research focus shifted. We moved from asking how to replicate the model and build a tool kit for replication, to asking how does this model operate? And, what is crucial for its sustainability? How do other organizations do community-led food justice work? With more time I began to better understand the organization and the markets. Through further observation of CFP Inc. and analyzing the model organizations, my belief that SNA should be used as a tool with communities advocating and working for their own food justice strengthened. Repeatedly, I saw and heard the need to bolster networks and thought that SNA could help with this. But, I also saw the difficulties in doing so. From these real-life examples, some successful and some not, I have come to understand the complexities of “spiraling up” in a food justice context. I wish not to critique the CCF, but will inflect its reach in light of social enterprises balancing a triple bottom line.

My originally fuzzy and loving view of these markets waned as I saw the realities of community politics, sometimes inadequate leadership, and difficulties for social enterprises to maintain the triple bottom line, particularly when community power and grassroots organizing is central to both the “how” and the “why” the organization creates food access. I found myself struggling to understand the chicken and egg situation of social capital. I saw

similar tensions amongst these organizations and developed nuanced perspectives on doing this kind of work that is ultimately the subject of this research.

### Research Questions

1. What challenges and tensions arise when non-profits do community-led food justice models with lower-income communities?
2. What challenges and tensions arise when attempting to replicate, scale-up, or scale-out lower-income community-led food justice models?

### Research Design

My research design includes participant observation of CFP Inc. and the Power Markets coupled with semi-structured interviews with four model organizations with similar structure and mission to CFP Inc. Methods for conducting this research and the data analysis are explained below.

### Participant Observation

For 10 months, from August 2018 to May 2019, I conducted participant observation. This included my time as a student in a Community Engagement course, where each student in the class was placed at one of three markets in our city and volunteered at the bi-weekly markets. Volunteering at the markets was eye-opening to us as students; the differences between each market was astounding. My forthcoming critiques of community-led food

justice work were formed during this observation period. A non-profit partner to CFP Inc. was a key organizer for two of the markets but was completely absent from the third. My classmates and I struggled to reconcile the role this external non-profit played in creating community capacity in the two communities it worked with. The shareholders who did not work for the non-profit most often presented as black. While there were other races and ethnicities represented by shareholders and those who were actively involved as leaders, the markets seemed to me to have predominantly black shareholders and leaders. This also seemed to be true of the third market unassociated from GR. However, I do not have a list of shareholders and their races and backgrounds and undoubtedly did not meet all of them.<sup>2</sup> I noted a difference between those who did not work for the non-profits and those who did; the latter most often, but not always, presented as white. I will note that there were 11 other markets elsewhere in the region that I was not able to interact with and am not able to speak to. Those other markets worked, to my knowledge, exclusively with CFP Inc. and not a partner CBO.

My second role as a participant observer was as a research assistant under a grant that was working with CFP Inc. My role enabled me to hear the struggles of the organization trying to do this work and compare it to what I saw while I was a volunteer at the markets. These observations tempered and complicated my observations at the markets; I was able to grapple with the divergence between a community and

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<sup>2</sup> The mission of CFP Inc. is to improve food security in low-income neighborhoods. While those markets I attended were urban and did have predominantly black participation (approximately > 50% depending on the market) I recognize the complexity of food insecurity and the role that race, geography, gender, etc. play. There are other populations that were involved with the markets I went to and their representation was possibly different at other markets I did not attend.

community-based organizations (CBOs) and the tensions that can arise between the two.

In addition to conversations with the executive director, I was able to attend the annual leadership retreat that was a space for all market leaders from all over the state to convene, meet new faces, reconnect with old friends, and talk about what is working and not working at the markets. Through advisory board meetings, community meetings, and conversations I had with CFP Inc., my fellow research team, and others, I listened to many ideas, concerns, and excitement for replicating Power Markets and the organizational backdrop through which the markets functioned and were supported.

In observational research, special importance is placed on the researcher, what they interpret from their observations, and what they choose to focus on from an abundance of information and ideas (Esterberg, 2002). Considering, “the self as the instrument,” as Esterberg (2002) puts it, singularizes a researcher trying to make sense of and accurately represent multiple perspectives. In agreement with Patterson, Hart, and Weaver (2010), the emphasis on the individual who does and disseminates their research misrepresents or downplays researcher collaboration in collective meaning-making. It is the informal conversations I had with my research team and with my friends and colleagues who also volunteered at the markets that most shaped my relationship to what I was observing. It took time to learn to “come up for air,” from the weeds of data analysis and the difficult realizations I had when understanding how grassroots empowerment operates, and sometimes with not the most transparent leaders (Esterberg, 2002, p. 170). Though my analysis is my original work, my understanding developed with the trust and time it took to be able to explore ideas with my supportive team.

## Model Organization Interviews

As a research team, we conducted interviews with five other organizations that in some form incorporated community-led food models into their mission and practices. A database of nearly 300 values-based supply chains within the US was filtered down to those which were within our region of interest and had some or several components in common with Power Markets or CFP Inc. We quickly found that it was difficult to find organizations that were within our region of interest, were a hybrid cooperative buying club and multi-farm CSA, with markets operated by the communities, a sliding payment scale, and a clear food justice and community development centered mission. We expanded our search and found ten organizations that had some of these components in common with Power Markets or had clear and strong alignment with food justice and community development values. Because of this decision to broaden our criteria, there was a considerable diversity of organizations and how they do community-led food models. Of these ten organizations, five responded to our interview request. Four of the five are used in this study, as one organization was found to not be as aligned with community-led food justice as was indicated on their website. Interviews were semi-structured and aimed to understand organization history, structure, capacity, food justice elements they practiced, and difficulties they have faced when finding the balance between maintaining their social mission and financial health. Interviews were exploratory and were approximately one hour-long. I recorded and transcribed the interviews myself.

Interviews were coded and analyzed. A round of open coding was used to parse through the interviews and find themes I saw were relevant across the four model

organizations. I compared the unique stance each organization took in implementing community-led food justice models. Second, these findings were compared to my observations of CFP Inc. and the Power Markets.

### Study Limitations

The small sample size is a limitation of this study. Although the organizations interviewed and CFP Inc. span diverse regions and similarities were found across all of them, five organizations is too small a sample size to make generalizations regarding this work. For the sake of time in completing this thesis, follow up interviews were not conducted with the four model organizations after their original hour-long interview. The de facto processes and messiness that often accompanies any organization was, of course, not discussed by our informants. Once we completed the interviews, they truly seemed to be the “models” for the tangled confusion that was CFP Inc.

An hour-long interview with one individual at an organization is not an accurate and full representation of the leadership styles, conflict resolution strategies (or lack of), collaborative skills (or lack of), and personalities and disagreements that happen when humans work together. Furthermore, we were trying to understand the evolution of their organizations and understand the best we could the snapshot of where they were then. The truth is that CFP Inc. was pivoting so that it could survive and was going through common non-profit growing and sustainability pains. After working with them for a year, I had a better sense of CFP Inc. than I do of the other four combined. Directly comparing CFP Inc. to four other organization’s highlight reels helps me extract meaningful themes

common to this work, it is not an entirely reflexive and holistic review of the individual organizations themselves.

My role as an observer does not account for the full complexity of CFP Inc. as an organization and the many dedicated and passionate individuals who work with the Power Markets. Further work that will be completed by our research team includes more in-depth interviews with members of CFP Inc. and the Power Markets, financial analysis of the model organizations, and farmer case studies that explore the balance farmers strike when working with socially just food organizations. At the time of writing this thesis, the only data available to me are my observations and the model organization interviews. My data and subsequent analysis are not entirely comprehensive nor representative of all the individuals who directly work with CFP Inc. Additionally, being a researcher not tied up in the daily work of doing community-led food justice gives me the privilege to have an objective, critical eye. This is both a hindrance and a strength to this work.

On the one hand, I can take a step back and see a bigger picture and rationally impose my opinions on how things “should be,” based on my observations and my observations alone. I can ask critical questions such as Cadieux and Slocum (2015) do and theorize how food justice and sovereignty should be done. I often found myself thinking, “Community Food Power is doing it wrong, they are in mission drift and they don’t even know it.” On the other hand, I felt terrible for being so critical of a grassroots organization that was trying hard to do good work. I could not pretend I fully and completely understand CFP Inc. when I am not myself the executive director, the farmer liaison, or a part of the community that needs this food. I proceed with my analysis

through a self-professed idealist lens modulated with the realization that the people, organizations, and communities that do social and food justice themselves are flawed, as are the systems and cultures they operate within, try to work against, and sometimes unintentionally revert to.

## Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, I will describe the various ways that the organizations do food justice and their basic infrastructure. Table 1 shows an overview of the organizations, and more detailed explanations follow. Their food justice or food access models described below have gone through multiple cycles and changes that led to where they are today. What I describe below is the most current model they operate under that most closely reflects the work of CFP Inc. These descriptions may not include everything that the organizations do. Furthermore, I will describe themes and nuances that arose when considering all five organizations regarding challenges and tensions when attempting to do lower-income community-led food justice work. The themes I discovered were: Defining community-led, lack of engagement, the board, finding your assets, and scaling. In addition to the challenges and themes when doing agri-food work with lower-income communities, I will analyze each organization's take on replicating or scaling up these initiatives.

## Model Organizations

Table 1 <i>Overview of Model Organizations</i>			
<b>Code</b>	<b>Informant</b>	<b>Legal Structure</b>	<b>Food Justice</b>
MO1	Food Hub Manager	Non-profit	Mobile Market
MO2	Community Outreach Manager	Non-profit	Community organized distribution systems
MO3	Director of Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry	Non-profit	Produce auction with outlets in food-insecure areas
MO4	Founder and President	Hybrid Non-profit/LLC	CBO organized distribution systems
<p>Notes: A mobile market is a van that acts as a mobile grocery store and can have multiple delivery sites. Both MO2 and MO4 work with farmers to aggregate and deliver food to either a community (MO2) or a CBO (MO4). The community or CBO organize how members get their food and their payment models. MO3 has organized a produce auction, or wholesale outlet for small scale producers in their state. MO3 connects corner store managers or other entities who live in a food insecure area and helps them order through the produce auction.</p>			

**Model Organization 1 (MO1):** MO1 is a non-profit primarily concerned with supporting and educating farmers and food hub activities. While their mission, organizational activities and structure center on the food hub and the farmers, they have a mobile market that acts as a wholesale buyer from the food hub and delivers food to 10 different housing authority neighborhoods. They accept SNAP at these markets and have a “community advocate” at each market. They had one mobile market stop before they decided to expand their mobile market operations. This decision was made after “lots of meetings” with the communities involved to get input and see if there was a demand for a mobile market. The housing authorities already had a structure for community input and

leadership which helped MO1 access active community members, many of whom would become community advocates. Community advocates sit with the market staff member at each stop, and since they are well-respected community members, this draws other community people into the market and “gives us some standing in the community.” While the food itself is not subsidized, a partner funds the double ups program so that market-goers that use their food stamps card can get double the amount of food.

**Model Organization 2 (MO2):** The second model organization states in their mission that they want to create a more equitable food system by supporting local farmers, creating healthy food access for all, and building community around food. They do this through donation stations at farmer’s markets throughout the state they are in, and through a neighborhood-based program where communities organize themselves and their distribution system. These communities order from the food hub as a regular wholesale buyer. The goal for MO2 is to have the community sites be entirely self-reliant after three years. Our key informant was the coordinator of these community groups, and she noted that of the three they currently have, one is a CSA model and one is a cooperative. By looking through MO2’s website, one community is located in a lower-income area with predominantly people of color. They are aligned with collective action, community resilience, and community building through a racial, class and power lens. The other two community sites either accept EBT or SNAP, have a sliding scale, or have an option for members to buy shares for those who are food-insecure.

**Model Organization 3 (MO3):** MO3 is a large non-profit that has been operating for 18 years. The core of what they do includes helping small communities, growing the

local economy, building leadership, and sustaining a healthy environment. Of their many sustainable agriculture and community building initiatives, we spoke more extensively about their pop-up markets that sounded similar to Power Markets. We learned that MO3 aggregated from the small farmers in the region through a produce auction. This food is then delivered to sites such as hospitals, schools, corner stores, or mini markets at college campuses. Our informant believed there were nine sites last year. MO3 helps with the retail sites (corner stores) by obtaining refrigeration and marketing the produce. MO3 works with site partners to organize the market in a way that suits them and utilizes current systems already in place. For example, their pop-up model in a hospital utilizes the existing hospital email list and hospital credit cards can be used to purchase food. This particular pop up gives MO3 a budget and suggested items and MO3 orders for them. The corner stores order through a website.

**Model Organization 4 (MO4):** MO4 is a non-profit hybrid LLC. Of the four model organizations, it is the only one that spoke explicitly through a racial, class, and power lens. The race of board members and the rhetoric of community ownership is transparent and essential to who they are. Through multiple evolution cycles, their current model utilizes community-based organizations (CBOs) who organize their constituencies. While MO4 suggests a specific sliding scale they allow each CBO to decide their scale and distribution as, “one design doesn’t fit all.” MO4 undertakes the “aggregating problem” and accommodates the different community groups the best they can. Our informant stated, “The only decision we make is in terms of what items we can give you in a share. We also believe that making your own decisions and having these choices are early

elements of sovereignty.” By the end of this year, they plan to have 32 community partner sites. In addition to the food access work they do in urban neighborhoods, they also have purchased land elsewhere in the state that will eventually be owned by the communities they work with. Our informant, the President and Founder of MO4, stated, “Everyone knows that MO4 is moving over to ownership by the community,” and, “poor people are a part of our governing structure.”

## Findings

The themes that arose in interviews with the four model organizations and through participant observation will be described below. These include: defining community-led, lack of engagement, the board, finding your assets, and scaling. Of these themes, defining community-led, finding your assets, and scaling were discussed by all the organizations to varying extents. The two themes that only applied to MO4 and CFP Inc. were lack of engagement and the board. As organizations that worked exclusively with lower-income consumers, MO4 and CFP Inc. experienced a lack of engagement by those consumers and both organizations had different relationships with their boards. Whether all of the organizations defined their community as consumers or producers impacted how they did their work and to what extent they included lower-income consumers in their models. The local assets impacted all of the organizations and how they did their daily work and how they planned to “scale-up” their operations or missions.

## Defining “Community-Led”

Slocum identified that using the term “food justice” and what it means to practice food justice is incredibly varied within the alternative food system (Cadieux & Slocum, 2015). Of similar note, defining “community-led” within a food justice context is just as varied. There were differences in defining the community each organization worked with and whether this included consumers, producers, or both. The extent of community involvement and ownership also varied.

Two of the three model organizations (MO2 and MO4) acted as an aggregator for CBOs or communities organizing their distribution systems. They delivered the food to the CBOs or communities who determined their membership, distribution systems, market set up, and payment systems. MO4 delivers shares of food to CBOs that have access to funding and organize their specific constituencies (formerly homeless, black, latinx, etc.). MO4 works with the CBOs to determine price, frequency, and how much is in the share. Our informant repeated often that one design doesn’t fit all in terms of the amount of food or prices of shares. This degree of flexibility does complicate the lives of those who work in MO4. Our informant noted,

We have these enormous design issues that complicates our lives but that is the way it functions. In that sense you are in control of what you want, you make those decisions, and we try to accommodate you the best we can. In most cases we can.

MO4 is more aligned with working with lower-income and marginalized communities and having those individuals be at the forefront of the decision-making. While the model of MO4 is similar to the wholesale ordering that MO2 offers its communities, MO4

exclusively works with marginalized communities and MO4 has flexibility in pricing that is not offered to communities that buy from MO2. Our informant noted,

Our traditional share is from \$15-21 if they don't change it. But if they can't do this we can't just raise prices. What we are doing is we find a way to get subsidies for that and a second thing we are beginning to launch is a community-owned donation program they are investing in.

Community ownership is the primary message that MO4 repeatedly sends to the people and organizations they work with. The racial and social justice context through which they operate places special importance on the radical notion of community and eventual land acquisition of the community involved with MO4. Although they see the immediate need for subsidy funding and the intermediary CBOs to access this funding, long term goals revolve around community ownership.

MO4 said, "we work for communities. We do not work for farmers." When their farmers had received a state grant to build a larger hub facility, they notified MO4 that their prices would be higher. MO4 changed whom they procured their produce from so they could continue to serve lower-income communities. This strain between farmers and consumers is clear only with MO4. All other organizations, including CFP Inc., included farmers and consumer communities in their mission and model, but most often aligned with farmers.

Both MO2 and MO3 worked more closely with farmers to increase food access for consumers. The sense of "community" or "ownership" on the consumer end was not the primary focus of these organizations. When explaining their different market outlets in lower-income or low fresh food access areas, MO3 stated, "We think of it as demand networks to grow our food hub and the produce auction." They stated that they have more

contact with the intermediary consumers, such as retail store owners and workers, who tell MO3 what they want. MO3 worked closely with their producers and the producer community, and they stated that ABCD was a part of their methodology. Developing the produce auctions was, “an idea that came from them. When we do that it seems to be the best success.” MO3 defined their food justice element as the farmer making a living wage, and, “when we take local food to places that wouldn’t have access we are making a more just system.” The community that MO3 worked closely with was producers, and this led to healthy food options for consumers. This rang true for MO2 (described above) as well as MO1.

MO1 was primarily devoted to helping local farmers and have more recently started to expand their mobile market. They had one mobile market stop in one low-income community they already established a relationship with. After planning and community meetings, they decided to expand and deliver to 9 other housing authorities in the local area. When describing the connection between the food hub and the mobile markets, our informant stated, “Our biggest interaction is that the mobile markets get all of its items through the food hub which supports our mission of helping local farmers get sales.” Our informant was the food hub manager. We were unable to speak with the employee whose primary job was to run the mobile market. According to our informant, the community advocates at the markets are not involved in the planning or decision-making that goes into the mobile markets. They act as support, offer feedback, and “help us get in with the community.” The mobile market employee acts as a wholesale buyer of the food hub. Specifics on the cost of produce or a sliding scale of payment was not discussed beyond the funded double dollars that was described above.

CFP Inc. relies on community involvement for every market. Community members and/or volunteers set up the markets, coordinate with the farmers on market day, and process the payments at the market. In addition to setting up the markets, the market space is a time for the community to come together and interact. At the annual leadership retreat with all the market leaders, the market is an “event” to look forward to and the conversations over food was a strength that many of the leaders voiced. The essence of the Power Market model described by one table of leaders at the retreat was the farmers, shareholders, and volunteers working to get fresh food to lower-income individuals.

CFP Inc. provides heavy operational support and is the fiscal sponsor of the markets. Their support includes procurement coordination, cash flow management, and payment system reporting, distribution logistics, online ordering systems, and market supplies and storage. Shareholder retention, management, and organization is also a responsibility that CFP Inc. helps with. Once a month, a designated shareholder called a farmer liaison will speak with the primary farmer to exchange any feedback for ordering or the food drop off logistics. At one point, there was a “forecast” event where the community would give their input for produce to be grown the following season. It is unclear if this is still a practice of CFP Inc. The market set up, sliding scale, and payment are the same in all of the markets (with slight variations). Due to the financial difficulties of CFP Inc. when they did not receive a large grant they normally do, many of the markets needed to be consolidated. This was a decision made by CFP Inc., and not the communities, although this decision was transparent. I thought that this consolidation

may impact the uniqueness of each market or hinder shareholders from attending since their community was now combined with another.

### Lack of Engagement

The two organizations that most prioritized lower-income community engagement and community ownership was MO4 and CFP Inc. Both have experienced times where engagement of lower-income individuals was an issue. Both also had issues with external, white and/or middle to upper-class people who want to volunteer with them or be shareholders.

MO4 explained that they “involved the community from day one.” The design that was initially built based on those community contributions did not work. Our informant stated that during their first year they wanted 66% of their members to be below the poverty line, but only had 10%. He said, “whatever works for lower-income, it works for middle-class too.” To change this they shifted to working with CBOs who worked with different marginalized communities. Our informant stated, “We decided to find a third party who could pay for the food for these groups. We worked with community-based organizations who had access to funding.” The subsidies required to accommodate lower-income individuals was a barrier that necessitated a CBO to act as a fiscal sponsor as well as a community organizer. Regarding the volunteers, our informant explained,

We waited a long time before we began to use volunteers because every volunteer that showed up was white. This brought us back to this servitude piece. Once we talked to communities about owning it and running it then that profile changed considerably. Our use of volunteers has been very selective. It changes the nature of the community ownership piece.

White volunteerism and community engagement have been an issue with CFP Inc. as well. While some of the Power Markets have a strong membership base where volunteers are also shareholders, other markets hardly have enough people to set up the market. This leaves a lot of work on the shoulders of those who work for CFP Inc. or for the volunteers or shareholders who are invested. Their frustration with these specific markets was voiced to the research team. There have been some cases explained to us where a volunteer comes who is not from the community and is described as white. This person is available to help with the markets when there is a dire need for a body to work. In some cases, CFP Inc. or the market site coordinator will turn these individuals away. In other cases, they have allowed it because they needed that labor and the individual seemed to be a good fit at the particular market they wanted to help with. In some markets, where CFP Inc. leadership has retroactively stated happened too quickly for them to handle, I saw uncomfortable dynamics between a CBO and the community and how it dealt with volunteers who came in from outside the lower-income communities and were often white.

A partner CBO of CFP Inc., here titled, Growing Roots (GR), acted as the fiscal sponsor of the two communities it worked with. Earlier in the year before my involvement, one of the three markets in my local area had been severed from both CFP Inc. and GR, for reasons far beyond the scope of this thesis. In short, far too simply, and to the best of my knowledge, there were differences of ideas between the community and the non-profits on how to run the markets. GR continued to work with two of the other markets in my local area. I volunteered at all three markets. The differences between the now completely community-led market and the other two were drastic. Although the

markets associated with GR did have community commitment and a local activist in their ranks, they felt much more formulaic and sustained by the non-profit as opposed to by the community. One market day (with GR), a deluge of white volunteers from a local church came to help at the market. This was coordinated with GR. There were at least 15 people, none of whom had been to the markets before, all of whom were white. My friend and I, who had been working with the markets and studying food justice and community development, explained to one woman who asked us, “what is food justice?” The non-profit director said they should all buy a share and tell their friends to come by and get a share too. I wondered how this would have felt for a community member who wanted to come to get their share without stigmatization and to see faces that they knew.

Many of the markets had been struggling to sell all their shares. At the end of each market day, there were always at least 10-15 shares left over. It was the first year for these markets (with GR) and they were still organizing and getting the word out. The few who were invested were also burnt out; I first attributed this to the “free rider” problem of cooperatives and thought that weak and strong social ties could help us understand why some individuals weren’t invested in the market. Maybe more time needed to be dedicated to community organizing so that real engagement and ownership of the markets was fostered. I was later told by an elderly woman of the community that these people just don’t have time that she (as a significant leader) did have. She was able to and wanted to take on the work, and it was okay with her the others didn’t want to or couldn’t do the same. This lack of engagement, for whatever reason, was prevalent throughout many of the markets and not only those in my area. At the annual leadership retreat with all market leaders from the region, a session was dedicated to learning what market

leaders felt was going well and what wasn't. Not enough volunteers, volunteers not being shareholders, lack of communication, and leftover shares were the most cited examples of things that made their lives more difficult at the markets. The flexibility of their system, such as with the sliding scale and paying biweekly, was championed at the leadership retreat. This same flexibility often led to frustration and uncertainty as an organization that needs to pay farmers for the food and suffers when there are leftover shares. The balance between being community-led, having more lower-income individuals than higher income, having a fiscal and site sponsor to help with market logistics, and the constraints of lower-income individuals were always in flux and difficult to maintain with all the markets.

The partner non-profit GR has since undergone an implosion and it is unclear if it will continue as an organization. There was a period of uncertainty and anxiety for the remaining two markets it was associated with. The community people did not know if they would have the money to continue market operations. I have since heard that both market sites are continuing without the Power Market trademark or CFP Inc. association. So much of their operations were managed by the GR non-profit that this upcoming season may be difficult for them, as it was for the single market that has been on its own for one year. It is interesting to note that the same tactic employed by MO4, i.e. using CBOs to organize specific constituencies, failed for CFP Inc.

### The Board and Funders

Three of the five organizations, MO1, MO2, and MO3, did not indicate any significant issues between their board and their operations or mission. These three organizations also do not operate primarily from a racial, class, and power lens to the

degree that MO4 and CFP Inc. do. MO2 did require all employees to take three racial equity courses during onboarding training, but the degree to which they work with lower-income consumers is less than that of MO4 and CFP Inc. and therefore I leave them out of this particular finding. MO4 spoke extensively about its funders and how it attempts to equalize power relations between those with money and power and those who do not. Tensions between CFP Inc. and its board seems to be growing.

MO4 spoke extensively about the importance of the funders “looking like the community.” At the beginning of their operations, MO4 ensured that the funders reflected the race of its communities. 71% of investors were black, 64% were immigrants, and 51% were female. They would turn down any investors “from the outside.” When elaborating on the community donation program they are building to subsidize the food, our informant explained, “one or two donors were interested in this and I told them from a power perspective that all donations have to be anonymous.” When explaining the role of foundations interested in their model, he said:

The foundations are coming around to the ideas and concepts we are pushing. They are still talking generally around impact investments or these different titles that they come up with. Many of us are talking about alternative economies and alternative ownership structures. Some of the foundations are beginning to nibble at that. They finally have community wealth in their vocabulary and have spent the last two to three years trying to define racial equity. These foundations are not risk-takers. They are talking about making a profit and doing good and this is bullshit. The whole group of us are trying to keep one foot in alternative economies and one in capitalism. It is not about walking away from one. Even the other requires the use of capitalism.

The mission of this particular organization is inherently at odds with the paradigm of “doing good” through capitalism. Coming together as a community and altering the ownership and power structures of the food system is more radical than some investors

may understand. This ability for MO4 to resist funding or entrenchment of misled powerful actors enables them to continue to serve lower-income people in a flexible manner. MO4, if it does engage in other wholesale outlets, only sells to buyers that serve marginalized communities. They do not sell to restaurants, businesses, or entities that aren't solely focused on lower-income people because they are not a part of MO4's mission. Having that revenue source detracts from their mission. This is a difficult game to play for many non-profits as financial viability enables them to continue their operations.

There have been comments from those involved with CFP Inc. that the board is not aligned with the original mission of CFP Inc. and the community empowerment that the markets can do. At this time, I do not have specific findings for how the board operates or who is involved and to what extent. I have heard of the pressure the executive director has been facing from board members to "brand" the movement. CFP Inc. has also shifted to working more with businesses as opposed to churches or community sites. One specific instance was setting up a market for a B-Corp organization who found out that many of its employees were suffering from food insecurity. It is unclear who has been championing this shift towards businesses that do not pay a living wage.

### Finding the Assets and Scaling

All four model organizations cited the need to work with the assets around their organization. Their assets included local universities with many eager student interns (MO2), a local culture geared toward sustainable and equitable food systems (MO2 and MO3), AmeriCorp (MO3), housing authority social networks (MO1), farmers eager to develop a produce auction (MO3) and CBO, NPO or governments partnerships (MO1,

MO2, MO3, MO4). Their geographic location was at times a crucial asset needed to fulfill their mission and “scale-up.” Their location at times restrained them.

The two organizations who spoke more extensively about their CBO, NPO, and government partnerships were MO1 and MO3. Both organizations had at one point or currently have an employee solely dedicated to partnership management. MO3 has an employee that is a “shared-use position” between itself and two other organizations. This employee also organizes partnership retreats and meetings. Our informant stated, “You have to support and fund that meeting space and time. It needs to be a funded project in and of itself.” They attributed their success and longevity (18 years) to the collaborative nature they cultivate with other organizations. They coordinate to such a high degree that they make sure each organization is filling a specific niche, so they strengthen rather than compete with each other. He said, “One reason we can get resources and leverage resources is the partnerships.”

As noted above, geographic location in a busy tri-city area with many university students learning about food systems was a strength for MO2. Within the same state as MO2, MO3 noted that its more rural location, next to a coast, where cities and land were much more spread out currently limited their ability to scale-up and make a bigger impact. MO4, located in a hyper urban location did not invest in any physical capital besides their workplace. They called themselves a “virtual organization.” On the other hand, MO2 explained that they were looking to find a larger space for the food hub. Both MO2 and MO4 aggregate food for CBOs, but MO4’s hyper urban location requires them to acquire the food differently.

Three of the four model organizations framed their success and sustainability in terms of financial viability (MO1, MO2, MO3) with the eventual goal of self-sustaining

without grant dollars or external funding. MO2 did note that they are shifting away from that goal and “continuing the non-profit mission” by not seeking to be completely financial sustainable without grants or funding. On the other hand, MO4 framed scale as to how their work changes the structural causes of food insecurity. In the short-term, this is done through monetary and physical investment from the community. In the long term, land MO4 has purchased will be given to the community.

As described in the methodology section of this thesis, CFP Inc. was working with the land grant state institution to expand Power Markets and create a model of replication so that small-scale farmers could participate in this social justice mission. As indicated by the language of the grant, farmers were the focus of concern and key to expanding this model so that more low-income individuals and families could get fresh food. When I first heard about the Power Markets and learned about the capacity and community building they were capable of, I developed an interest and bias for this consumer side of the model as opposed to the farmer’s side, though both are equally important. Over time I saw that the leadership, while still grassroots oriented and on the ground with the consumers, was shifting away from what previously seemed to be equally consumer and producer focused to more producer focused rhetoric and orientation. The rhetoric of the leadership within CFP Inc. had changed from community empowerment to *providing* fresh, affordable food access and *educating* the consumers on these foods. I do not recall a time where I heard explicitly about lower-income consumer empowerment or community building, although the “feel of the market,” was valued by

all. They were safe spaces where individuals engaged with each other through food and perhaps developed new relationships that would not have existed without the market. Food Justice Workshops were also offered by the non-profit during the offseason. But the “shouldering responsibility for delivery of human rights” through food was the burden of the non-profit (White, 2010) as shown by the logistical power the organization held. Identifying the community needs and capacities and whose job it is to ameliorate or develop them is a key question for organizations that work with communities. In the case of CFP Inc., the organization chooses to take on this responsibility.

Additionally, the split of one market, and then two others, from the network of Power Markets is worrisome. It could be a sign of “scaling up” too quickly and doing so without complete community engagement since a non-profit led the way. This distasteful dynamic between community groups and non-profits (whether CFP Inc., GR or both) highlights the power dynamics between fiscal power and “community empowerment” or “ownership.” All three markets in this specific area are now entirely community-led and are no longer associated with either non-profit. They are doing what I originally thought was the point of Power Markets and CFP Inc.; CFP Inc. would support communities starting their markets that were entirely led and operated by themselves. The unfolding of events showed that although the organization had “scaled up” by the addition of three new markets, this happened too quickly for CFP Inc. to sustain. It would be unfair to withhold the information that power dynamics exist within communities as well; this in many ways contributed to the tension in this area.

I began to question where I got the idea in the first place that the markets were empowering hubs for lower-income individuals. Perhaps I romanticized grassroots

organizing so much that I thought CFP Inc. was something more than it ever was or ever tried to be. However, I recalled that “food as a human right” and “activating community power” was clearly communicated by CFP Inc. This real-life example of a non-profit doing food justice through community empowerment reveals inherent pressures and decisions that organizations make when doing this type of work.

## Chapter 5: Analysis

It is important to recall that entirely community-led food justice initiatives were hard to find online, causing us to expand our search criteria to organizations that in some way incorporated similar ideology or practices to CFP Inc. Similar themes arose with all of the organizations, but the organizations cannot be compared on the same scale which I could compare MO4 and CFP Inc., i.e. a scale of practicing food sovereignty and community development as I have defined it above. Both MO4 and CFP Inc. displayed “radical” food sovereignty rhetoric through their website language and work primarily with lower-income communities, though I question if CFP Inc. always practices this ideology. Primarily market-based strategies for solving the problem of the current food system were present throughout all organizations but MO4. Four of the five organizations, under my analysis and with the data I have available to me, could be placed in the “liberal” category described by Zitcer (2017).

Three of the five organizations (MO1, MO2, and MO3) practiced food justice as a smaller part of the greater scheme of their entire organization. In some form or another, their food hub was able to make a profit in other ways such as wholesale outlets other than those which served lower-income individuals. MO4 and CFP Inc. were dedicated to lower-income individuals and focused solely on those populations, though 30-40% of shareholders were higher income. The extent to which each organization allowed community ownership over their food is up for debate, as is the distinction between being farmer-focused or lower-income community focused (Nelson & Stroink, 2014). The spectrum of practicing food sovereignty through a community development lens is also

just that, a spectrum (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Brent, Schiavoni & Alonso-Fradejas, 2015; Claeys, Hynes, Lamb, Short & Waites, 2012).

I was originally critical of CFP Inc. I felt that they had succumbed to mission drift and the persuasion to “brand” and “replicate” a social justice movement of poor people. It seemed that they failed to just do CCF and ABCD and used community engagement to do the labor required to put up a market. I thought that if the community ownership that was communicated by MO4 was done from the beginning by CFP Inc., they would not have had their concerns with community engagement or leftover shares. I was worried that they didn’t see this lack of engagement as a failure on their part to invest the time it took to do community organizing and create a culture of engagement (Bloemraad & Terriquez, 2016). This seemed to be a clear indication of a non-profit saving the day for poor people, but they needed those same people to work for free to operate the markets and were frustrated when this was not being done (Biewener, 2016). This labor and engagement were key for their viability. Over time, I eased my critiques and placed them within the broader constraints of all organizations that do this kind of work (Enderton, Bregendahl & Topaloff, 2017). Though I still critique the limiting neoliberal system and thinking that constrains organizations (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Allen et al., 2003; Guthman, 2008), placing alternative food initiatives in a binary system based on neoliberal market strategies or lack thereof does not give space for the constant evolution of these organizations or their freedom to produce their unique market system and diverse economies proposed by Gibson-Graham (Hill, 2015). This flexibility to determine new systems and modes of food procurement for lower-income individuals is conditional on deciding whose burden it is to bear (White, 2010).

A key tension when doing community-led food justice models with and/or for lower-income individuals begs the question: who is responsible for the delivery of human rights? (White, 2010) Many scholars agree that not only non-profits or only food hubs can fix our current food system (Hoey, Shapiro & Bielaczyc, 2018; Meenar, 2015) but they are integral to this alternative system (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011), particularly those that concern lower-income communities (Cohen & Derryck, 2016). Non-profits, CBOs, or NGOs are the fourth sector that provide services the government has decided to not give or have failed to give. Even these entities acting on behalf of poor people's food choices and food access is inherently disempowering, though there are many examples of non-profits that incorporate genuine engagement and democratic processes to truly include lower-income individuals. However, the individual's and collective's right to enhance their agency is difficult in the face of systemic constraints, such as the need to hold down several jobs to provide some kind of food on the table resulting in not enough time to do food justice. It is then on the shoulders of the CBO or non-profit to tackle the aggregation and logistics problems to get the food to the community; though this is not complete community empowerment or control over their food, at least it is something.

MO4's example shows that it is through the language and the message of the movement that can determine the degree to which it is empowering community development or not.

MO4 still relied on CBOs and the funding system that they exist within. The capacity of those partner organizations got fresh food to their marginalized constituencies. MO4 handled the problem of aggregation and recognized this as a short-term solution to a systemic problem of denied access to land and the means of food production. Their work was always contextualized with a backdrop of historical

Racism and rampant capitalism, and they understood that building true collective action is a revolutionary act in an individualist culture. Their uncompromising selection of board members and funders based on race and ideology has enabled them to continue their radical *movement* in a sea of liberal-disguised-as-radical *models*. The trajectory of the organization and that trajectory being clearly communicated to the community is what distinguishes MO4 from the other organizations. Another example of this communication and trajectory is Soul Fire Farm.

Leah Penniman of Soul Fire Farm explains the concept of *Ujamma*, or cooperative economics (Penniman, 2018). Soul Fire Farm uses a sliding scale of payment and delivers share boxes from the farm to 80-100 families in an urban community in New York affected by food insecurity. The “shared work and wealth” of cooperative economics and this mutual commitment creates meaningful relationships between the farmers, who are most often if not always people of color, and the consumers. Their framework is black liberation through land. Once Soul Fire farm had handled the farming and was able to maintain their commitment to food access, they expanded their operations to impact greater systems. Some of these programs included youth empowerment and organizing, *Black Latinx Farmers Immersion*, and regional organizing such as with the Freedom Food Alliance (Penniman, 2018). MO4 and Soul Fire farm recognize the important short-term solutions to food access with long term commitments to dismantling racism and systemic practices that result in food insecurity. Without this clear and long-term commitment and orientation, they simply maintain the status quo of food apartheid and do food security work without empowering people or changing the system.

Spreading a social movement to empower poor people is difficult to monetize and explain through numbers or statistics to a board that wants to brand a movement and scale-up their impact. My analysis of a CBO's ability to do community-led food justice and "scale" it up agrees with that of Brislen (2017). To summarize, "The ability to replicate a model is what makes the industrial agricultural system that we are fighting good and at what they do. Why do we want to be good at what they do?" (personal communication, 2019). Scaling isn't change. The one size fits all, efficient and technical solutions divorced from culture, history, and people is lamented by development anthropologists who study international development (Gibson-Graham, 2005; Li, 2007). Communities within the United States are also varied and need space and time to contribute to their unique solutions. My findings of this study confirmed that the variation of resources, land, people, their skills, abilities, and personalities determine the trajectory of organizations and their ability to expand. This uniqueness is not a weakness; it is what makes the "alternative" system and its emphasis on people different from the food regime. Our individualism, neoliberal ideology, and need to be quick and efficient and produce tangible results prevents us from doing anything meaningful or changing the system, thinking, and power structures that got us here in the first place. Communities need organizations that prioritize reflexive resilience in unique landscapes instead of dependency (Moore, McCarthy, Byrne & Ward, 2014). This resilience may be developed through organizational evolution that works on food access with an orientation and future focus on widespread collective action and momentous systems change.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

My conclusions and recommendations hinge on the notion of “scaling deep” and considering systems thinking through the use of Social Network Analysis (SNA) (Jarosz, 2000; Moore, Riddell & Vocisano, 2015). I do not imagine that this research will impact the loopholes and requirements dictated to 501(c)(3) organizations that can perpetuate power dynamics, such as requiring what is generally a wealthy board that makes decisions on behalf of poor people despite the intentions of a well-meaning non-profit executive director. I hope that further work done by practitioners and researchers can bolster the argument that scaling deep and social systems thinking can have a sustainable social impact to fulfill those requirements in an empowering way.

Moore, Riddell, and Vocisano (2015) argue that social systems innovations across scales require scaling out (‘impacting greater numbers’), scaling up (‘impacting policy’), and most importantly, scaling deep to create large systems change (p. 69, 75). Scaling transformative social innovation requires more complex systems thinking that moves beyond model replication or maximizing the number of individuals impacted by a product or service. Scaling deep is the changing of relationships, cultural values and beliefs, and valuing the hearts and minds of people so that durable change can be achieved (Moore, Riddell & Vocisano, 2015, p. 74). The language of ABCD and the CCF also seek to transform relationships, change the client-server dynamic, and include and champion the intellectual, human, and social capacity of all individuals who want to

transform their communities to create change. These processes take time, are intangible, and so are easily disregarded. This framework of scaling deep in addition to scaling out and up can be supported by SNA.

### Social Network Analysis

The connection between SNA, social capital, community development, and alternative food systems is growing but needs further contributions. The tendency for different entities within the alternative food system to succumb to the “only” bottom line of business and sacrifice the social bottom line is a strong one. Even if the social component is not sacrificed, there are examples of initiatives failing if they focus too much on them (Brislen, Barham & Feldstein, 2017). Studying the nature of relationships and communication channels within a regional food network allows understanding of opportunities and obstacles towards achieving a resilient, justice-minded food network (Jarosz, 2000). These networks could be visualized within a community, within an organization, between an organization and a community, and intra-organizationally.

This is not a comprehensive review of SNA, it is instead an introduction to its ideas and how it can be applied to alternative food systems focused on community-led food justice. A social network is the structure that appears when considering all the nodes, or actors, within that network and the relationships or ties that connect them. Networks can be determined based on friendship, kinship, acquaintanceship, or advice seeking to name a few. Furthermore, flows can be visualized and measured within these networks. Flows can be beliefs, attitudes, ideas, information, or physical resources such

as money or traded goods (Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2018). Communication channels such as email, discussions, or whom one collaborates with on projects can also be mapped. The structure of the network significantly impacts individuals within that network and the functioning of the greater network. How the network itself acts, such as its ability to innovate, foster creativity, improve efficiency, or create effective social movements is at least partially dependent on specific network characteristics (Burt, 2004; Hansen, 2009; Monaghan, Lavelle & Gunnigle, 2017).

Borgatti and Li (2009) explain that SNA applications can range from “hard” types of flows (materials and money) to the “soft” types such as sharing of information. A regional agribusiness network necessitates both types of flows as they are mutually dependent on each other. Although this research has a stronger emphasis on the “soft” types of communication flow and its potential to maintain and create collective empowerment and a more cohesive alternative food system, it is vitally important to understand potential applications of SNA on general business and supply chain outcomes since markets and food systems are inherently transactional.

The potential for increasing social capital so that the community may collectively work together for the interest of the whole is a relatively new but exciting bridge between the fields of community development and SNA (Balfour & Alter, 2016; Ennis & West, 2013; Lau, 2012; Sturtevant, 2006). Some early proponents of a networking approach to community development include Trevillion (1992) and Gilchrist (2004). Due to the research on networks and social capital, these early proponents saw that developing networks within communities could provide the environment from which collective action and development could then be forthcoming (Ennis & West, 2014). Particularly,

SNA can be a practical tool employed when approaching development from an Asset Based perspective. Disconnected parts of the community could be connected once visualized that they are indeed removed from key actors or organizations (Ennis & West, 2010). Additionally, increased trust and network strength as a result of community networking initiatives can be assessed with SNA (Ennis & West, 2013, Ennis & West, 2014). Considering a work community, community field mapping has been used to increase collaboration, identify key organizational members, and overcome innovation (Balfour & Alter, 2016).

Christensen and O’Sullivan (2014) explain that collaboration is often a key goal of organizations and community leaders for organization sustainability as well as spreading a greater social movement, and so they see that SNA can be helpful in program evaluation. To ensure that diverse stakeholders and community members were engaged through a project at the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS), SNA was used to, “identify gaps in their current relationships, and help develop and maintain these relationships” (p. 120). Christensen and O’Sullivan reflect on how this visual representation allows academic and lay audiences to easily see the change in the types of organizations that were involved in the CEFS network. She concluded, “the communicative power of the map transcended the evaluation report” (p. 125). Therein lies the usefulness of SNA in a community development context. In a world where showing tangible and numeric results are key indicators of success, and thus key determinants of further funding, SNA can be useful by making the intangible tangible.

There are undoubted challenges to bridging community development, food justice networks, and SNA. What has been done in organizational SNA research can help guide

the future of SNA for community development through food. There are three methodological constraints and one ethical constraint of SNA that I would like to explore. While they are common to all social network research, I would like to explore them and how they may be overcome in the context of a marginalized community and community-based organizations (CBOs). These constraints are:

1. A need for high levels of participation (80% response rate).
2. A need to bound the network.
3. Anonymity and confidentiality.
4. Who benefits from the research?

The problem of high response rate and network boundaries is an issue that all network researchers must overcome, but it poses particular challenges to those trying to do so with community organizations that work or exist in a nebulous “community.” Gilchrist (2004) explains that the potential for SNA in community networking initiatives is great, but problems around data collection have made it difficult to do (p. 33). If key actors are missing, a grossly inaccurate representation of the network could result. Kadushin notes that purely academic organizational research is rare since organization leadership often seek out SNA and expect a report which will inform their decisions, resulting in a consultant-client relationship (2005). Boundaries of the workplace are often simple, and the energy and buy-in from leadership can increase response rate. Community boundaries within an agri-food context can be fairly straightforward but attaining an 80% response rate could be quite a challenge. Since knowing exactly who is who is vital to SNA, anonymity is often a tricky subject, especially for institutional review boards. If a respondent chooses not to participate, they may still be a part of the research if other

respondents name them. Participants may also be able to conclude who is who even if a researcher deidentifies the nodes.

Kadushin (2005) notes that the prime beneficiaries of this research, as is the case with nearly all research, are the researchers themselves. Depending on how the analysis is used, who uses it and how they disseminate the information is an ethical question for the researcher. Communities have their own relationship and power dynamics. It is possible for the network analysis to expose hidden or silenced dynamics which some people may not want to talk about or want to be shared. While workshops or reflection on the network seems to most often be positive (Ennis & West, 2013; Pattison, Robins & Bates, 2011), and conflict is inevitable in community development, it is conceivable that uncovering power dynamics could be problematic. While it is possible to do purely academic research with these community groups and not disseminate the information, that would detract from the purpose of community development and creating more resilient community-based food systems. To overcome these various issues in doing SNA with community groups, I propose that participatory action research (PAR) can answer many of these questions and maintain the empowering spirit of ABCD and the CCF.

### Participatory Action Research (PAR)

PAR is a research approach where the participants take an active role in the planning and implementation of research methodology, data analysis, and data dissemination. The co-generation of knowledge used to implement an appropriate intervention is powerful, inclusive, and effective when done properly. Additionally,

collective processing and engagement with the research and with the data is an opportunity for stakeholder engagement, relationship building, and collective meaning and value creation (Dold & Chapman, 2012; MacKenzie, Tan, Hoverman & Baldwin, 2012).

The PAR approach requires initial negotiation of ideas and duties between researchers and participants and ongoing, frequent, and flexible communication throughout the process. Benefits and risks are honestly heard, discussed and negotiated. As one can imagine, the time and patience it takes to build trust and rapport is central to this research approach. Being a part of the community in a meaningful way prior to the research would also be beneficial as Grasseni did with her social network analysis on Italian Solidarity Purchase Groups (Hankins & Grasseni, 2014). SNA can be applied in many ways and there are many different analyses, and the community can decide which aspects of their network they want to understand with the help of the researcher or practitioner.

Perhaps it is decided that the researcher or practitioner would do the actual analysis and data handling, community members could help solve strategic barriers such as response rate and boundary specification. Their knowledge of their network and the power they have would create buy-in from other members and help delineate the most appropriate way to deliver the survey. Surveys can be completed in person, online, or via a phone interview. Different communities may have a preference for any one of these and can inform the researcher the best way to disseminate the survey. The researcher, acting as a facilitator and collaborator with a mind for the greater picture and details, can probe

and see if everyone who should be included is being included. Respondent-driven or snowball sampling may be appropriate.

As for confidentiality and anonymity, these issues must be described honestly and frankly to all potential respondents. In addition to considering individual benefits and risks of participating, how will the data be presented and how will the community benefit? The community may decide that generalized and anonymized results for the overall network would be useful; perhaps that analysis would help with program assessment for networking and social capital building initiatives. They may also decide that knowing individual brokers or powerful individuals will help increase inclusivity and can be used to bring separate clusters within the community together. Often is the case with SNA in managerial settings; the analysis helps identify specific people for promotion, coordination, demotion, or changing communication flows. The question of data analysis and dissemination, however, may be decided by an institutional review board despite the preferences of the researcher or community.

The researcher or practitioner being independent of a particular community or organizational network is also a strength, especially when considering “bypassing some of the issues of power and co-option” that are present when forming community coalitions or collaborating across organizations that have divergent values or competing interests (Ennis & West, 2013; Kadushin, 2005). This, perhaps, is the negotiated role of the researcher or practitioner for a community that recognizes that power struggles or difficult group dynamics hinder their network social capital or ability to work together. This agreement to work through conflict may be a key discussion point among the community in the initial steps of doing SNA in a participatory way. Perhaps, seeing the

bigger picture and how certain groups of people or organizations positively or negatively impact the overall structure and flow of ideas, support, and information will help them overcome those problems. Seeing the interconnectivity of all actors can help realign actors with creating a more just food system for all.

Another transformative engagement technique to consider would be to teach community members and organizations to do their network analysis or network mapping. Inclusivity, empowerment, and transparency are three characteristics of community mapping from a critical cartography lens that hopes to shift power dynamics historically associated with map making (Parker, 2006) and increase engagement with public policy (Fahy & Cinnéide; 2009). Asset Mapping is already a critical component of ABCD. Perhaps participatory network mapping methods aimed to empower individuals and communities could be further developed. Such participatory social network mapping has been done in community health initiatives geared toward the dissemination of family planning information in Benin (Igras, Diakité & Lundgren, 2017). Their design was made using Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) principles and techniques similar to PAR. Public health workers and social workers often use relationship mapping tools such as ecograms or genograms for individuals to identify ties that reinforce positive or negative behavior (Gillieatt et al., 2015). Tool books or workshops for a simplified version of network mapping that communities may use without a researcher or software exist such as with interview-based mapping tools (Schiffer & Hauck, 2010). Schiffer and Hauck (2010) identify other projects that used participatory ego network mapping in developing countries with limited technical resources (Antonucci 1986; Fitzgerald 1978; Hogan,

Carrasco & Wellman, 2007). Full network participatory mapping, as done by Igras et al. (2017), should be explored further.

## Conclusion

Organizations have a vital role to play as leaders in the alternative food system. Working to provide food security, though noble, ought to be recognized by organizations as a short-term fix. Without plans for greater changes, business models require food insecurity for organization sustainability. It is the future orientation of food security measures towards deeper systems change that leads the entire alternative food system to be able to scale deep together. Moving beyond superficial community engagement towards ownership and control of solutions and capital through democratic processes is quite revolutionary. Individual effectiveness, competition, and top-down control are hallmarks of traditional leadership strategies. Yet, collective leadership is far more effective than any individual contribution or idealized individual leader (Anderson & Adams, 2016). This is especially important to achieve change in food systems across scales, great distances, and most importantly within mindsets that have culturally been hardwired to seek profit, financial sustainability, maximize individual contributions, and replicate. This is also a culture that stigmatizes marginalized people as incompetent, lazy or those who want a handout.

Anderson and Adams (2016), experts on leadership in organizations, write, “as a leader, you cannot scale the organization until you understand and perform your role in developing other leaders” (p.24). I propose that scaling within any alternative food initiative or system ought to be scaling deep by focusing on changing the system and

thinking that led us here and developing more capable leaders to effect change. This cannot be done for people but by people. An organization registered as a 501(c)(3) has resources to direct to these people who can create change. The 501(c)(3) or business can use their access to resources, skills, and abilities to develop individual and collective development through food. Leah Penniman of Soul Fire Farm writes, “your organization programs should be designed to build and share power with people of color, not to ‘serve’ or ‘save’ us. Address the root cause of problems, recognizing that this will eventually mean your project becomes obsolete” (Penniman, 2018, p. 308). An immediate goal may be food access, but the greater goal is giving away power and not needing to exist as an organization.

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Teya Cuellar

EDUCATION

**Graduate student of Community and Leadership Development, M.S**

Expected 12/2019

*University of Kentucky*

**Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences (Neurobiology, Animal Physiology and Behavior)**

with a **Certificate in Religion and Conflict**

May 2017

*Arizona State University*

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

<i>Peace Corp Volunteer, Primary Education English Teacher in Lesotho</i>	<i>11/19-12/21</i>
<i>Research Assistant, University of Kentucky</i>	<i>08/18-07/19</i>
<i>Group Fitness Instructor, University of Kentucky Campus Recreation</i>	<i>01/18-07/19</i>
<i>Facilities Graduate Assistant, University of Kentucky Campus Recreation</i>	<i>08/17-09/18</i>
<i>Intern, World Affairs Council of Kentucky and Southern Indiana</i>	<i>05/18-08/18</i>
<i>Student Development Coordinator, Arizona State University</i>	<i>01/17-05/17</i>
<i>Facility Manager, Arizona State University Campus Recreation</i>	<i>08/14-05/17</i>
<i>Special Events Supervisor, Arizona State University Campus Recreation</i>	<i>05/15-05/17</i>
<i>Outdoor Trip Leader, Arizona State University Campus Recreation</i>	<i>01/17-05/17</i>

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Sun Devil Fitness Complex Inspiring Mentor Award 2015

SDFC Outdoor Adventure Rookie of the Year 2015

Sun Devil Fitness Complex Employee of the Month March 2016

Andy Hull Sunshine Foundation Scholarship recipient 2013

New American University President's Scholarship recipient 2013

100 Club Scholarship Recipient 2014