IS IT A QUESTION OF ALLYSHIP?: AN INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN INTERNS IN FOOD JUSTICE EDUCATION NON-PROFIT WORK

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Submitted to the Faculty of the
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in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
May, 2017

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am thrilled to have finally arrived at the moment for expressing my gratitude for all the support I have enjoyed throughout this project. I am grateful for the support and encouragement of my professors and mentors in the Social Foundations of Education department, and for the financial support through the OSU Distinguished Graduate Fellowship. They have provided me with excellent examples of what it means to be a scholar and an activist. I am especially grateful for the patient coaching and kind encouragement, as well as excellent editing skills of my dissertation advisor, Dr. Denni Blum.

I am grateful to my husband, Gene, for his unfailing patience throughout this project which has spanned several years and two states. He never doubted that I would indeed finish what I started, even when I did not have the faith to believe it myself. Thank you to the generations of strong women in our family who are my inspiration, especially my daughters who have been my best encouragers.

I want to say one more "thank you" concerning my work in "Capital City." As a new resident in this lovely state that I now call home, I was unfamiliar with the city and its many personalities. I am grateful to participants for their overwhelming kindness in agreeing to talk with me and allowing me to participate in their important work and their passion to make life better, and for teaching me to understand the city through their eyes.

Acknowledgements reflect the views of the author and are not endorsed by committee members or Oklahoma State University.

I am grateful for the introduction to so many of their favorite Capital City haunts that I would not have known about if not for the coffee shop/restaurant tour that was my research venue. I thank you.

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Name: SHARI ZIMMERMAN

Date of Degree: MAY, 2017

Title of Study: IS IT A QUESTION OF ALLYSHIP?: AN INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN INTERNS IN FOOD JUSTICE EDUCATION NON-PROFIT WORK

Major Field: EDUCATION

Abstract: Research indicates that food insecurity exists within a multi-dimensional intersectional system of oppression. Research also suggests that the work of nonprofit organizations intended to relieve suffering caused by food insecurity may exacerbate or perpetuate sexist, classist, and racist systems of oppression. This qualitative study was designed to explore the experiences of women working as interns or AmeriCorps members in food justice education; how an interest in food justice activism and advocacy emerged; and how that activist commitment was mediated through the social and relational interactions of the everyday work of food justice education. The research sample included 22 women working in food justice organizations in "Capital City," a Southern urban center in the U.S. Primary data collection methods included in-depth interviews, participant observation and a document survey, including a survey of online and social media sources. The data were coded through narrative analysis. Findings revealed that both formal and informal educational opportunities were instrumental in the emergence of an interest in food justice advocacy and allyship. Women extensively employed the use of social networks, mentors' advice, travel, technology and volunteer work to experiment with and sort through options when deciding upon a path to food justice work. Participants' food justice work provided opportunities to identify and understand gendered aspects of their work and that of constituents. Through their work, they formed a consciousness of privilege which was essential to social justice work and to understanding their own locations and that of other women within an intersectional matrix of domination. This knowledge aided in the growth of ally behavior, and contributed to successfully engaging children and youth in critical ecopedagogy for food justice education.

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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM OF FOOD INSECURITY AND FOOD JUSTICE WORK

It was a sweltering summer day in June in “Capital City,” a city in the American South, settled into the curve of a wide river. I was visiting the urban farm to observe a morning session of “Farmville” farm camp run by a local non-profit organization. Seated at a picnic table under a broad shade tree I took note of the landscape. The property was a public greenway, with a paved walking trail winding around toward a creek to the west through tall oak trees. Occasional pairs of walkers, single runners, or mothers pushing strollers appeared among the trees on the trail. The north end of the property was an urban farm, planted in rows of seasonal vegetables. Scattered picnic tables and wooden swings on roofed frames offered respite from the summer sun under huge trees. A heaping compost pile and a row of compost bins marked the northern boundary and a blue porta-potty sat at the southern-most side of the farm. A large storage trailer full of garden equipment with chocked wheels sinking into the soft earth opened onto a wood-chip parking lot. Due to the history of flooding, permanent structures were not permitted on the property, according to the agreement between the city and the nonprofit organization. Red and blue wheel barrows in a long line-up were connected to a post by a strong cable, not to prevent theft, but to prevent their floating away and becoming destructive debris in the next flood.

Before a recent historic flood, houses in this middle class neighborhood extended to this side of the winding street, where the land sloped down to a creek, a tributary of the river which runs through the center of Capital City. The flood was disastrous for this neighborhood, but it was not the first flood to inundate the area. Rather than dedicating funds to rebuilding again in flood prone areas like this one, the city purchased this land. A non-profit organization took over a portion of the park for their youth services camps and after-school agriculture and food justice education programs.

I observed a group of eight middle-school-age campers seated in the grass listening to a team of three high school interns explaining the rules of the game they were about to play. They were at the Impacts Station of urban farm camp, and the topic was the relationship between food insecurity and differences in transportation availability. Ana, a second-year high school intern, and a first generation immigrant, adjusted her hijab and lifted her long skirt so that she could settle on the grass behind some inattentive boys. Another high school intern, Maria, tossed her dark braids behind her shoulders and attempted to explain the rules of the game, which involved getting the most balls into a bucket at a distance from the group. Some campers were allowed to run, while others were required to “bear crawl” or “crab walk.” The campers appeared puzzled by the obvious inequity of this game, but attempted half-heartedly to do as suggested. Later the high school interns led a discussion of the game’s purpose, which was to illustrate how transportation differences among citizens in the city might affect access to fresh, affordable, healthy food. Two other groups of students were busy at the Nutrition Station and at the Growing Station, all led by high school interns and supervised by adult women who participated enthusiastically along with the campers.

Three unique sets of women worked together today to keep this camp running. Eight of the ten high school interns were female. Interns were selected through an application process advertised online and at their high schools. They attended training earlier in the spring and continued to engage in on-the-job training and reflection sessions before and after camp sessions. They led the daily implementation of camp activities, interacting with metro youth center groups that attended camp

once a week for six weeks. Several high school interns had returned for their second or third year of leadership.

Another set of three women were AmeriCorps members in their final months of a one year assignment with the nonprofit organization. They had spent months creating lesson plans, recruiting and training high school interns, and running after-school programs. Finally, four women were here because they chose to affiliate with this non-profit organization in order to complete internships that were required through their bachelor's or master's degree programs at local public and private universities. They contributed knowledge and ideas from their programs in nutrition and education. They managed volunteers, helped plan camp activities, participated as role models at camp, and kept the farm operating.

The narratives and personal stories of women who have served or are serving as interns or AmeriCorps volunteers in food justice education work formed the basis for this qualitative research study. I included the above description of work happening in one urban farm camp location as a sketch of the kinds of labor women who participated in this study had been doing in food justice settings. Various participants whom I interviewed also conducted research, surveyed communities, cared for gardens and livestock, and managed volunteers. Their collective goal in this work was to advocate for a healthier, more fairly accessible food system, often by promoting alternatives to industrial agriculture, such as community gardens or locally grown farmers markets.

The women in this study conducted their work in association with nonprofit organizations. A nonprofit organization is defined as,

> an IRS category, an official registration with the US government that allows, among other privileges, the accreditation needed to receive government funding, as well as the majority of funds available through private philanthropic foundations. In exchange, the grassroots [nonprofit] must adopt legally binding bylaws, form a board of directors modeled after the

corporation, and make its board minutes and fiscal accounting accessible to the public. (Tang, 2017, p. location 5328)

Each of the organizations, large or small, with which women in this study worked, had completed this extensive process to achieve 501(c)(3) nonprofit designation. The nonprofit designation lent legitimacy to organizations' work and fundraising campaigns in the eyes of churches or businesses that might consider supporting them. It also allowed donors to receive personal benefit from their financial support in the form of tax relief.

A typical entry point into full-time positions in nonprofit organizations was through internships or AmeriCorps membership. These were temporary, short-term work situations, in which women affiliated with a food justice organization for a brief period, usually a few weeks to a full year, and then moved on to other career pursuits. These short-term positions helped expand and maintain the footprint of a nonprofit within the daily life of the city. Often an AmeriCorps member or intern took on a specific project within the nonprofit, working for low pay, or no pay, to support the mission of the organization and the vision of its leadership.

Background of the Food Justice Movement

Food insecurity. Gottlieb and Joshi, writing in their 2010 account *Food Justice*, define a food system as "the entire set of activities and relationships that make up the various food pathways from seed to table, and influence the 'how and why and what we eat'" (2010, p. 5). Many researchers assert that this food system is inequitable at every juncture, from how people acquire and use seed, to how growers access land and treat agricultural workers, and even how individual households obtain the rudimentary staples of everyday healthy fare (Alkon, 2012; Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010; Kingsolver, 2007; Morales, 2011). Individuals or families that struggle to access sufficient food within this inequitable system are often labeled as food insecure, or "Lacking physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and

healthy life (Food and Agriculture Organization 1996)" (P. L. Williams, 2014, p. 275). In 2013, 33.3 million adults and 15.8 million children lived in food insecure households in the United States, according to an annual United States Department of Agriculture study (Coleman-Jensen, Gregory, & Singh, 2014). Food security is inconsistent across populations. In the United States, an average of 14% of households is food insecure. Food insecurity is more prevalent in households headed by single women (34.4%) and among Black (26.1%) and Hispanic (23.7%) households. Households in the South (15.7%) are more likely to be food insecure than in any other region of the U.S. (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2014).

Food insecure families worry about whether food will run out, affordability of balanced meals, reducing or skipping meals, or weight loss due to lack of funds to purchase food (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2014). Members of food insecure households often report choosing tradeoffs between spending limited resources for food and spending for other necessities such as medicine, health care, housing, utilities and transportation (Weinfield et al., 2014). Weinfield et al., (2014) conclude that the weak economy has increased demand for food assistance, such as the federal Supplemental Nutrition Food Assistance (SNAP), Women, Infants & Children (WIC), and the National School Lunch programs as well as participation in local charitable emergency food assistance organizations. By 2012, following the deep recession in 2008, 46.5 million people in the United States were living in poverty, "the largest number living in poverty since statistics were first published more than 50 years ago"(Weinfield et al., 2014, p. 4).

In the Southern state, where this study is based, families faire significantly worse than the national averages for food insecurity. More than 17% of individuals in this state are food insecure (compared to 14 % nationally), meaning that 1,107,820 individuals sometimes find it difficult to meet their basic nutritional needs for an active healthy life. The county in which "Capital City" is located has a food insecurity rate estimated at 15-19% ("Feeding America: Map the meal gap," 2016). In April of 2015 there were 1,216,681 citizens in this state enrolled for SNAP benefits. In fiscal year

2014, 649,935 children in this state participated in the school lunch program and 153,742 women participated in WIC statewide ("Food and nutrition service," 2015).

The historical relationship between race and agriculture in this Southern state is also important to understanding current food justice issues. By 1860, the state's 275,719 slaves represented nearly twenty-five percent of the total state population and were engaged in urban, rural and agricultural slavery, including virtually all job categories in domestic service (coachmen, maids, midwives, laundresses), manufacturing, mining, and milling (Goodstein, 2011). Slaves and free Blacks developed cultural institutions such as Black churches and (often clandestine) schools and musical traditions which continue their influence in the state today. In the era of civil rights demonstrations, prominent Black clergy provided leadership in non-violent resistance efforts throughout the state (Franklin, 2011). Into the modern era, race-based disparities in income and access to jobs and affordable housing continue to plague the "white supremacist capitalist patriarchal south," as cultural critic bell hooks (2000b) names it (p. location 2396).

Industrial agriculture and global food systems. The food system is problematic even for U.S. households that are food secure. In settings where agriculture is abundant, the globalization of industrial agriculture often means that huge federally subsidized monocrops such as corn, soybeans and wheat are not intended for local food consumption, but are natural resources used to supply global industrial food preparation (high fructose corn syrup) or to aid in the formulation of fuel (ethanol) (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010). Large corporations contract with farmers to raise livestock and poultry in Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). Animals are harvested and transported to industrial processing plants where they are shipped to grocery stores or fast-food outlets globally, far from their rural origins (Leonard, 2014). Thus, poor rural families may be physically surrounded by agriculture yet find it difficult to access healthy food sources and often rely on unhealthy options sold in convenience stores and fast food restaurants for local, accessible nutrition.

In urban areas as well as rural settings, lack of transportation contributes to difficulties accessing healthy food. Large scale grocery outlets demonstrate continued reluctance to develop in urban neighborhoods which house working-class or poor families, leaving residents to depend on a proliferation of fast food restaurants or convenience stores that sell very little fresh food. Given the segregated nature of U.S. housing, this means that low income people of color are most likely to live in a food desert. Native American reservations are another example of typical food deserts, where many miles can separate reservation housing from full service grocery stores.

Global corporate food interests expand fast-food and junk food into markets that had been dominated by indigenous or locally grown products (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010), allowing the sale of high-calorie, low-nutrition foods to outpace and often destroy indigenous products and markets. Beyond the concern of participating in "globesity" where the number of overweight adults now surpasses underweight adults globally, (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010), many are concerned about the chemical and even the genetic makeup of our food. By the year 2000, U.S. farmers were using more than 985 million pounds of chemical pesticides and herbicides, even though "twenty percent of these approved-for-use pesticides are listed by the EPA as carcinogenic in humans" (Kingsolver, 2007, p. 165). Ninety-eight percent of chickens in the U.S. are produced by large corporations, raised in CAFOs where crowded conditions and the overuse of antibiotics are the norm (Kingsolver, 2007, p. 91). In fact, Kingsolver points out that "Nearly three-quarters of all antibiotics in the United States are used in CAFOs" (2007, p. 91).

The agricultural picture in the state where Capital City is located is consistent with the larger food system. 67,300 farms in the state operated on 10,900,000 acres in 2014, with soy, corn and wheat being the most heavily planted, for an overall agriculture market value of over $3.4 billion. Only twelve percent of principal farm operators were female. Ninety-seven percent of farm operators were White, while one percent of farm operators were Black, and less than one percent were of Spanish, Hispanic or Latino origin (USDA, 2014). In the state as a whole—with a total state

population of 6.5 million in 2014—79% are White, 17% are Black and 4.9 percent Hispanic, meaning that people of color and women are sorely underrepresented in conventional agriculture. Consistent with most Southern states, global producer Tyson Foods Inc.'s operations have a significant economic impact in the state. Tyson Foods, Inc. paid contract farmers in the state more than $45.5 million in 2013. The global corporation employed 4,300 "team members" at three processing plants located in the state; their work contributing to Tyson's overall $34.4 billion in global sales in 2013 (Tyson Foods, 2013; "Tyson Foods: Our story, farmers," 2014).

Food system alternatives. What are the alternatives to these unsustainable and unhealthy food system practices? Local and community farms and cooperative gardens, some school nutrition programs, Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) and farmers markets, increasingly provide easily accessible alternatives (Alkon, 2012; Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010). Small farms are on the increase and many of these farms are committed to sustainable practices, rather than the chemical and petroleum-dependent practices on which industrial agriculture has relied since the so-called green revolution. Popular movies such as "Fast Food Nation" (Linklater, 2006) and "King Corn" (Woolf, 2007) and books such as Michael Pollan's (2008) *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*, and Barbara Kingsolver's (2007) narrative of her family's efforts to sustain themselves on a small organic farm in Virginia, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, have helped publicize the urgent need for alternatives to industrial agriculture.

Food justice. Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) characterize food justice as "ensuring that the benefits and risks of where, what and how food is grown and produced, transported and distributed, and accessed and eaten are shared fairly" (p. 6). Food justice advocates are frequently at the forefront of local efforts to address inequities in the food system (Alkon, 2012; Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010) through local and community farms and cooperative gardens, farm-to-school nutrition programs and farmers markets. Collaborative food justice efforts among municipalities, schools, universities, non-profit organizations and faith-based organizations offer resources in terms of land, technical know-how,

political clout and volunteer labor. A number of non-profit organizations target high school and university students and young people who live in food deserts or who are interested in activism in order to provide a venue for learning about food justice and social justice issues in general through educational programs. Often students participate as interns or volunteers in these programs, which usually involves a hands-on approach to creating local food spaces and connects educational goals with community action (Battisti, Passmore, & Sipos, 2008; Burns & Miller, 2012; Morales, 2011). Women typically serve as leadership in these nonprofit organizations offering food justice education (Sachs & Patel-Campillo, 2014), and interns and AmeriCorps members who assist with educational efforts are most often women.

A food justice approach is a powerful idea because it has the potential to "link different kinds of advocates, including those concerned with health, the environment, food quality, globalization, workers' rights and working conditions, access to fresh and affordable food, and more sustainable land use" (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010, p. 5). Identifying food system disparities as justice and equity issues allows a wide variety of viewpoints from multiple orientations to share a common language and to work together to create pathways to change.

Gender in the food justice movement. Some researchers theorize that gender is not adequately addressed in the current food justice movement and suggest a feminist perspective. Sachs and Patel-Campillo (2014) urge that "it is vital for gender to be placed at the core of solving hunger and malnutrition"(p. 410). Porter and Redmond (2014) comment that "experience and anecdote indicate that women predominate in U.S. community food movement action" and lament that "if women are doing their half or more of this food movement, then men are getting much more of the credit for and voice in that work" (p. 264). Worldwide "women, children, small farmers, and rural dwellers are most vulnerable to malnutrition"(Sachs & Patel-Campillo, 2014, p. 396), and in the United States, food insecurity is also unevenly distributed depending on gender and race with households headed by women carrying the heaviest burden (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2014) . Janet

Page-Reeves (2014) notes the often ignored "significant role of women in the provisioning and preparation of food [which] creates unique gender dynamics that are played out in relationships and activities within food insecure households" (p. 3). A food justice approach is useful for addressing inequity based on patriarchy, sexism, racism and class power (Sachs & Patel-Campillo, 2014). However, in current food justice efforts, "rhetoric and action aimed at undoing sexism in the work, including attending to gross gender disparities in food security, has largely been missing" (Porter & Redmond, 2014, p. 261). It appears that, despite the gendered nature of hunger and food insecurity, a sustained and thoughtful focus on gendered power and agency is missing within the broader food justice movement. The goal of this research project, then, is to understand the experiences of women who participate in food justice work and to examine how women come to a sense of justice in the context of food justice education. This study illuminates the ways that food justice organizations are moving women's needs, voices and outcomes from the margins to the center of consideration in their community efforts to change a problematic food system.

Intersectionality in food justice work. Collins and Bilge (2016) offer a description of intersectionality:

> Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves. (p. 2)

Intersectionality as a framework for critical inquiry is not static, but always under construction (Collins & Bilge, 2016). "Critical," in this study, indicates "criticizing, rejecting, and/or trying to fix the social problems that emerge in situations of social injustice" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 39). Critical praxis often accompanies critical inquiry, especially for researchers, activists or workers on the front lines of injustice who are *doing* the daily work of resistance. According to Collins and Bilge (2016), "A praxis perspective does not merely apply scholarly knowledge to a social problem or set of experiences but rather uses the knowledge learned within everyday life to reflect on those experiences as well as scholarly knowledge" (p. 42). Food justice workers not only offer a critique of food systems and food access, but food justice workers also actively pursue practical knowledge based on their everyday work of teaching or growing food, or interacting in solidarity with frontline community members.

The terms "intersectionality" and "matrix of domination" arise out of Black feminist thought, a paradigm for producing knowledge that is a necessary alternative to White, patriarchal, often capitalist systems of knowledge production from which Black women theorists have typically been excluded (Collins, 1991). Collins (1991) defines Black feminist thought:

> Black feminist thought consists of theories or specialized thought produced by African-American women intellectuals designed to express a Black women's standpoint. The dimensions of this standpoint include the presence of characteristic core themes, the varying expressions of Black women's experiences in encountering these core themes, the varying expressions of Black women's Afrocentric feminist consciousness regarding the core themes and their experiences with them, and the interdependence of Black women's experiences, consciousness, and actions. (p. 32)

In a research project embedded within the largely White spaces of nonprofit work and alternative agriculture (Alkon, 2012; Guthman, 2008b; Morales, 2011; Slocum, 2006), based on data supplied by

a majority of White women, what is the role of Black feminist thought in understanding their experiences? While White women who make up the majority of this study cannot participate in the "legacy of struggle" that Collins (1991, p. 22) posits as a core defining characteristic of Black feminist thought, they can, however, learn to recognize and acknowledge the historical significance and dynamic potential of Black women's resistance efforts based on an understanding of intersectional feminist tenets. Understanding the existence and power behind Black feminist thought enables White women to draw out their own standpoint which is also embedded in the same world, though differently positioned. Collins (1991) notes that "no standpoint is neutral because no individual or group exists unembedded in the world" (p. 33). The invisibility of White privilege becomes visible based on a careful consideration of other possible standpoints.

Participants might have denied reliance on stereotypes of Black Southern life, but some seemed surprised to find that they did not indeed live within a post-racial, post-feminist society as they might have hoped. They discovered that racism and sexism were alive and well, and that women immigrants, Black women, women in poverty were actively involved in a daily struggle for survival within a matrix of domination that included differentiated access to fresh and healthy food. Learning the contours of one's own oppression is a first step to comprehending how to engage in activism as an ally (Bishop, 2015). Women in this study combined concern about the lives of others with action intended to offer relief or create change opportunities. Intersectional feminism offers a lens for examining what happened when women entered the unfamiliar territory of other women's daily struggle; that is, other women who were differently positioned within a matrix of domination.

It is worth noting that, in my research experiences, intersectionality was not an unfamiliar term relegated to academic or theoretical realms. Rather, even young students used the term with understanding. I noticed the terms "intersectional feminism," "Black feminism," and "White feminism" in use on feminist websites and in feminist popular culture social media contexts constantly throughout the period of this study. When I was attempting to explain my research to a

group of inquisitive Black female high school interns at an urban farm camp, one recent immigrant from Africa said, “Like intersectionality?” I laughed and said, “Yes. Exactly like intersectionality.”

Researchers indicate that food insecurity is an injustice that disproportionately affects women and children, particularly women of color, women living in poverty, and families living in southern states. An unjust food system can be envisioned as part of the matrix of domination (Collins, 1991) in which intersecting systems of power and privilege work to oppress women differently at differing social locations within the matrix. Researchers also show that much innovative work is occurring within local communities with the objective of relieving the suffering of hunger and food insecurity and providing alternatives to a troublesome food system. However, the equation is not as simple as A + B = C, when

A = (women who are affected by food insecurity need help),

B = (women working through food justice organizations offer help),

and

C = (relief from the suffering of food injustice is the hoped-for outcome).

This is potentially a concerning equation because “A” typically includes women of color and poor women, and “B” typically includes middle to upper-class women who are most often White. Intersectional feminist researchers caution that actions meant to “help,” “save,” and “rescue” may be imbedded in the very same racist, sexist, classist oppressions from which the original food insecurity materialized (Boyd & Sandell, 2012; Guthman, 2008a; Slocum, 2006). For example, when an outside (wealthy, white, well-educated) group, which is itself unaffected by food insecurity, imposes “solutions” upon the (black or brown, under-educated, impoverished) community most affected by hunger without consideration of or interest in the intersectional oppressions underlying everyday activities such as procuring healthy food, then the solutions themselves may result in the perpetuation

of colonizing tropes of White privilege. This is hardly the outcome most well-meaning women, working earnestly as activists to end food insecurity, would advocate. An examination of the power relations inherent in decisions about who leads resistance efforts—populations who are indigenous to the injustice, or outside actors—and how ally behavior might impact power conflicts is key to this dilemma.

How, then, do activists address this disconcerting dilemma when both the problem of food insecurity and the proposed relief may be embedded in long-standing systems of oppression? This research project emerges out of that dilemma from the perspective of women doing food justice education work. This is not an evaluation or appraisal of the effectiveness of individual food justice programs administered by nonprofit organizations, or an assessment of the value or the significance of any individual woman's efforts. Rather, this study seeks to understand the viewpoints, beliefs, and aspirations of women on the frontlines of daily efforts to address an unjust food system through food justice education.

Problem Statement

Researchers indicate that food insecurity affects women, particularly women of color, and families living in the southern United States, disproportionately to the general population. Activists advocate expanding local solutions such as community gardens, farm-to-school programs, urban farms and youth agriculture programs in order to address problems with the food system, especially the availability and accessibility of fresh, healthy food in urban settings.

Researchers agree that the food system is based in multiple oppressions. But many intersectional feminist researchers also propose that food justice work intended to relieve the suffering of food insecurity may itself be embedded within and indeed may perpetuate hegemonic systems of racist, sexist or classist oppression. Locations of food security-related work may become White spaces dominated by individuals who have few ties to the frontline communities they intend to

serve. Researchers propose that systems intended to relieve suffering may serve to further marginalize affected populations rather than transform intersectional challenges.

If food insecurity exists within a multi-dimensional intersectional system of oppression and, simultaneously, the work intended to relieve suffering caused by food insecurity may exacerbate or perpetuate sexist, classist, and racist systems of oppression, then it is important to know more about the perspectives and motivations of activists (largely women) who do the daily work of food justice education. What do women doing the daily work of food justice education believe about their work and the ways that food insecurity can be addressed within a paradigm of intersectional feminist allyship and solidarity, if indeed such an approach exists? What do their stories about food justice education work indicate about what is happening at the intersection of injustice and activism?

Purpose of the Study

In this study I ask the following research question:

What are the experiences of women working as activists and advocates in food justice education?

Embedded in this broad research question are the following concerns:

1. How did an interest in food justice activism and advocacy emerge?
2. How is that activist commitment mediated through the social and relational interactions of the everyday work of food justice education?

How do participants frame their own work in terms of intersectional oppression and feminist allyship and solidarity? How does that framework change over the course of their work? This research is a feminist project in that the voices of the women who do the daily work of food justice education occupy the central location of importance throughout the research process. My goal in this work is to bring gender to the foreground along with class and race in considering injustice (Hesse-Biber, 2014b). Issues of intersectionality (K. W. Crenshaw, 1991) or the matrix of domination (Collins,

1991), which are foundational to understanding inequity in women's daily lives—particularly among women of color—form the theoretical core of this research.

Research Approach

My research questions are embedded in a feminist transformative justice approach. According to Frost and Elichaoff (2014), the priority of transformative justice research is "the furtherance of social justice and human rights" through the "greatest involvement possible of community members along with employment of multiple methodologies in ways that are culturally appropriate [to] ensure that an advance toward the realization of social change emerges from the research"(p. 65). I pursue these research questions through qualitative methodology in which I rely on in-depth interviews, direct observation and written documents as data sources (M. Q. Patton, 2002). The units of analysis in this study are the stories that participants tell regarding their own personal experiences and how those stories reveal the development of the participant's unique mindset regarding the work of food justice.

Rationale and Significance

This study emerged from a desire to understand how intersectional feminism might illuminate what is at work when women attempt to address injustice through their labor as part of nonprofit organizations. Knowing more about how women understand their own positionality as advocates or activists for justice and how that understanding is challenged and amended through daily labor may be essential for the ongoing success of food justice education work, and in other settings in which women wish to ally with other women to address injustice. Viewing food justice education through a feminist transformative justice lens places gender at the core of this social advocacy movement with the potential for women's empowerment in order to better address injustices and create change. Women's stories will contribute to the body of research on food justice by bridging the gap between

educational institutions, community organizations and individual women's hopes and dreams for a more just food system.

The Researcher

A focus on food justice education grew out of my own experiences as a public school teacher and administrator for more than twenty-five years. I am most interested in critical examinations of the ways that educational practice intersects with the lived experiences of girls and women. Kimberley Crenshaw's (1991) work on intersectionality or Patricia Hill Collins'(1991) presentation of the matrix of domination offer valuable critiques of institutional injustice as women experience it that is helpful in considering the boundaries of liberatory pedagogy. My personal love of the natural environment and respect for organic local food production also draw me to this research topic. At the same time, I am aware that not all women I will encounter as participants or leaders in food justice education share my same perspective, or my biases regarding the purpose of education and the value of a just, sustainable food system. There is a delicate balance in feminist research between opening pathways for participants' own meaning-making, and acknowledging the role that the researcher's experiences play in research design, implementation and in creating a final representation of members' meaning-making. Given that dilemma, I have worked to maintain quality research practices by triangulating data, interacting with participants at each key step of the research process, and using strategies such as memo writing and narrative analysis to move beyond my own experiences to faithfully represent what is happening with women in food justice education.

Key Terminology

Food Desert. An area of housing defined by two elements, "low income" and "low access." Low income is defined as a poverty rate of 20% or better. Low access indicates that "at least 500 persons and/or at least 33% of the census tract's population live more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store (10 miles, in the case of non-metropolitan census tracts)" (USDA, 2015).

Food Insecurity. "Lacking physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (Food and Agriculture Organization 1996)" (P. L. Williams, 2014, p. 275).

Food Justice. "Ensuring that the benefits and risks of where, what and how food is grown and produced, transported and distributed, and accessed and eaten are shared fairly" (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010, p. 6).

Food System. "The entire set of activities and relationships that make up the various food pathways from seed to table"(Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010, p. 5).

Preview of Subsequent Chapters

In chapter two I present a review of the literature, laying out where this study fits among other studies and defining the scope of the research. Then, in chapter three I describe, in detail, the theoretical perspective and methodology I used to conduct my research. In chapters four and five I present my findings based on participants' narratives. Chapter six is an analysis and synthesis based largely on an intersectional feminist theoretical lens. In chapter seven I offer conclusions and recommendations from my findings.

In the next chapter, I begin a review of the literature by placing women's charitable and relief work associated with agricultural and environmental crises within a historical framework.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In order to understand the food justice education work that women in this study conducted, it is first important to place the study in the context of other research. I begin by tracing the ways that researchers have understood women's relationship to the natural environment as a feminist issue. Then I present historical research concerning how race, class, and gender intersected to create differing responses to oppression at the beginning of the U.S. movement for "municipal housekeeping." Women's contributions to the rise of the environmental justice movement, and later to the food justice movement follow. Then I place this study within the context of current literature on food justice work and ally activism.

Women's Relationship to the Natural World as a Feminist Issue

A feminist issue is one that brings to light and helps create an understanding of the subjugation, oppression or subordination of women. Or, as Petra Kelly (1997) writes, "feminism is about alleviating women's powerlessness"(p. 113). For ecofeminists, nature is a feminist issue because understanding the subjugation and degradation of non-human nature helps to illuminate the subjugation of women (Mann, 2012; Merchant, 1995; Stoddart & Tindall, 2010; Warren, 1997). In other words, the sources that create oppressive or degrading conditions for the natural environment are often the same sources of oppression and subjugation in the lives of women.

Karen Warren (1997) envisions the focus of ecofeminism as it "arises out of and builds on the mutually supportive insights of feminism, of science, development and technology, and of local perspectives" (p. 4) as shown in Figure 1.

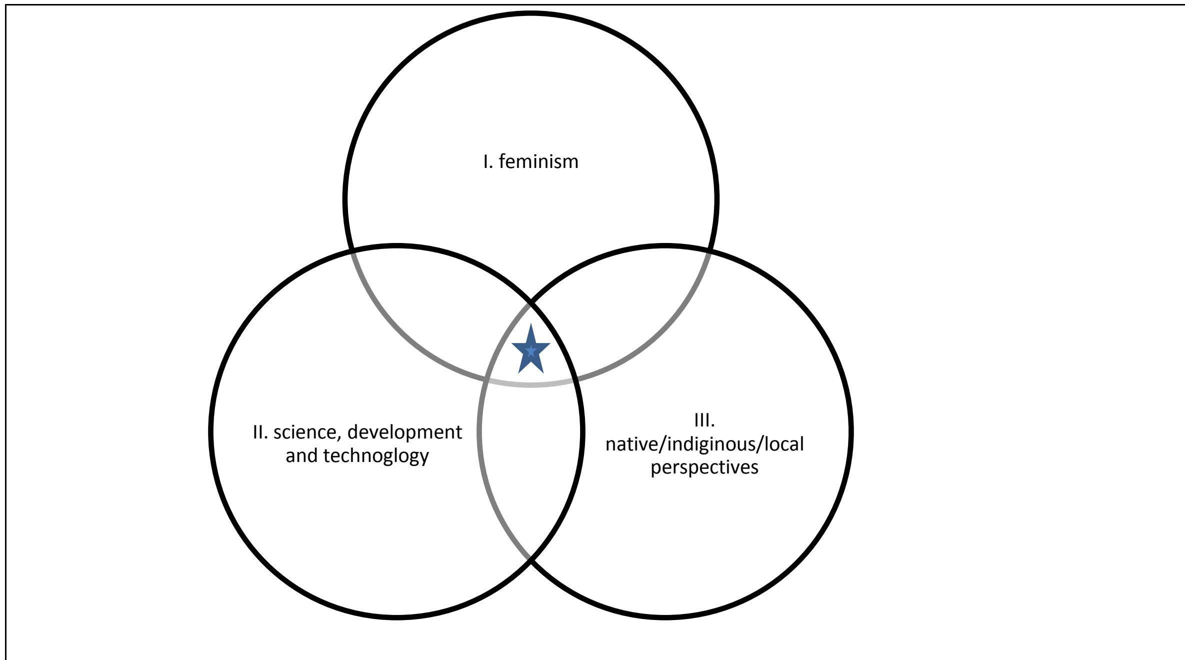

Figure 1 The Focus of Ecofeminism, adapted from Karen Warren (1997, p. 4)

Placing this study on Warren's framework, I view food justice from a feminist perspective, keeping the potential for subjugation of women at the forefront of concern (I), while considering the unjust development and technology of a global food delivery system (II) as viewed from the local perspective of families in Capital City neighborhoods where fresh, affordable food is often scarce or inaccessible (III). Many food justice organizations in Capital City and elsewhere, as foundational to their work toward transformation of the food system, connect circles II and III in the diagram, in that food justice organizations characteristically connect a local perspective to global food system science, development and technologies in order to disrupt the hegemony of the dominant system and create change. However, a feminist perspective (I) is often ignored or omitted. I add the third circle, seeking to link the voices and perspectives of women to the question of how food justice organizations address the injustices of a global food system as it

affects local populations, situating this study within an ecofeminist perspective, at the very center of all three intersecting circles.

It is problematic, however, to assume that the "feminist perspective" represents a single all-encompassing "woman's" perspective, as if such an essentialized perspective exists. Essentialism refers to "the belief in innate, intrinsic, or indispensable properties that define the core features of a given entity or group" (Mann, 2012, p. 175). There is not one set of characteristics that identifies a woman's, or a feminist, perspective. Instead, by adding "feminist" to the study of food justice work, I am adding a multitude of women's voices and viewpoints. The way that a woman interacts with nature, including how she interacts with agricultural and commercial food systems emerges in a fashion that is unique to her, depending upon how she is situated in the social, political and economic order of her daily life. Because of those differences, women respond to crisis, including the crisis of hunger or food insecurity, in varied ways with differentiated results. Patricia Hill Collins (1991) introduced the concept of the "matrix of domination," which could include an inequitable food system, and a woman's position within that system. Expanding on intersectionality theory, Mann writes that Collins uses the matrix of domination to argue "not only that people construct knowledge but that they do so from situated positions within different social locations in the matrix of domination and that these positions shape and influence how people view the world" (Mann, 2012, p. 182). Since one's perspective is partial and incomplete from any given social location, intersectionality theorists rely on "polyvocality" or the "inclusion of many voices and vantage points as well as the excavation or retrieval of subjugated knowledges as forms of resistance to dominant knowledges and discourses" (Mann, 2012, p. 182). Knowledge is incomplete, then, without the polyvocality of multiple perspectives, positions or locations, each perspective added to the other in a web, or quilt like fashion to create a more complex understanding.

An important goal of my research is to better understand how women working inside food justice organizations navigate their work in terms of their own positionality. That is to say, how aware are women of differences in perspective based on the interlocking and interactive aspects of the matrix of domination and their own location within it? I am also interested in how women comprehend the impact of positionality on the women they encounter through their work—their constituents, or participants in food justice programs. How does this understanding change as women go about their everyday work in food justice organizations? What are the mechanisms that encourage the expansion of women's understanding of intersectional oppression?

Intersectionality in Environmental Work

Susan Mann (2011) writes that ecofeminism "refers to the diverse range of women's efforts to save the Earth," especially as those efforts have created "new conceptualizations of the relationship between women and nature" (p. 1). Mann (2012) also points out that "ecofeminism is not a monolithic or homogeneous body of thought, but, rather, encompasses a diverse array of theoretical perspectives, discourses, and political practices," but the common thread tying these various perspectives is that "they link the domination of nature and the domination of women" (p. 66). The term ecofeminism was not coined until the 1970s by French writer Francoise d'Eaubonne who "called upon women to lead an ecological revolution to save the planet. Such an ecological revolution would entail new gender relations between women and men and between humans and nature" (Merchant, 1995, p. 6). However, environmental transformation had been a concern and subject for activism on the part of women at least since the industrialization of the late nineteenth century began to foul the air and water of America's cities (Mann, 2011, 2012). The variations in conditions which prompted activism among different groups of women, and the supports, constraints and consequences of environmental action diverge tellingly depending on women's position within Collins' matrix of domination, where race and class join gender as

interacting modes of oppression. The following comparison of environmental work by urban women's clubs at the turn of the twentieth century keenly illustrates this variation.

White women's clubs. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century left-liberal White suffragists worked in poor neighborhoods to provide childcare, health services and adult education, along with advocating for safer, healthier living conditions. They also collected data on water and air quality, sanitation issues and food safety and used the data to mobilize women activists in a movement known as municipal housekeeping (Mann, 2011, 2012). Mann (2012) cites the following examples of women who successfully advocated for environmental change in order to improve health conditions. Jane Addams, founder of Hull House, a Chicago settlement house for poor and working class families, led the Hull House Women's Club in researching and systematically studying the health hazards resulting from the city's garbage collection. Addams was the first female sanitary inspector for the city. Mary McDowell, a self-taught sanitation engineer, was well-known for her work cleaning up Bubbly Creek, a highly polluted source of city drinking water. Epidemiologist Alice Hamilton (1869-1970) provided scientific evidence that aided Hull House's fight against typhoid. Scientist Ellen Swallow Richards (1842-1911), the first female graduate of MIT, spent her scientific career creating environmental innovations such as stream-by-stream water testing and advocating for recognition of and changes in environmentally hazardous conditions that affected everyday life and health in the home and community. She is considered the founder of the municipal housekeeping movement (Mann, 2012).

Social mores in that time period dictated that the (White) woman's place was in the private sphere of the home, while men navigated the public sphere (the doctrine of separate spheres). How, then, did middle and upper-class White women defend such an expansion of their efforts outside the home? Mann (2012) writes that "women who participated in environmental activism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had to defend their activities as extensions rather than as rejections of the traditional roles of wife and mother" (p. 45). Their efforts to

improve air and water quality and to advocate for better health and city sanitation practices were considered to have direct positive effects on the cleanliness and health of the home and family, an appropriate sphere of interest for a woman.

Black women's clubs. Black women's clubs of the same era also undertook municipal housekeeping activities. They established child-care centers, medical centers to treat tuberculosis, and old age homes. They campaigned for neighborhood and home clean up and worked to improve the outcome of health issues caused by poor air and water quality and lack of proper sanitation (Mann, 2012). For example, in 1908 Lugenia Burns Hope organized one of the most notable efforts, the Atlanta Neighborhood Union, which included a nursery, a kindergarten, and medical services. Though similar to women's clubs organized by upper and middle class White women in their efforts to create a safer, healthier environment, Black women's clubs "had more serious problems to deal with than those of their white counterparts" (Mann, 2012, p. 49). The dangerously unhealthy conditions of segregated Black shanty towns, lack of childcare and poorly funded schools and hospitals meant that Black women's clubs had to focus on community development activities when government and social welfare agencies failed to provide much needed assistance, and excluded Blacks.

The contrasts of similar environmental work done by White women's clubs and Black women's clubs at the turn of the twentieth century are compelling and illustrative of the ways that intersectionality creates a framework for everyday knowledge production. Long before the use of the term "matrix of domination," it is clear that Black women's groups acquired knowledge from entirely different sets of interlocking experiences than their White counterparts. Their knowledge is hard-won despite levels of domination and social control that White women would not have imagined enduring or did not appear to be interested in understanding. Many well-educated Black women at the time such as Anna Julia Cooper and Ida B. Wells-Barnett wrote and spoke about the ways that "white people, including white feminists, were blind to the plight of African-

Americans, and they discussed at length the intersections of race, class and gender"(Mann, 2012, p. 164). They "highlighted the interlocking nature of the oppressions they faced and called on women's rights activists to take up the concerns of marginalized and subjugated peoples" (Mann, 2012, p. 168). However, this call to take up the concerns of the marginalized was not part of an ecofeminist agenda for many decades to come, as I will discuss below.

Late twentieth and early twenty-first century women environmentalists. How did women continue to experience oppression based on issues of gendered power into the mid and late twentieth century, as they persisted in their environmental work? Liberal ecofeminism is identified with the post WWII era when environmental concerns seemed to include the entire planet as industrial societies became more dependent on fossil fuels and mineral extraction. Liberal ecofeminists of that time period based their environmental activism on the belief that men and women were rational actors who could influence environmental issues through science and technology. Rachel Carson (2002) published her then-controversial book *Silent Spring* in 1962 which launched an environmental protest against the use of pesticides on crops and against the practice of spraying chemicals directly on homes and communities. The pushback from the strongholds of male-dominated science and technology was relentless, and often personal. Linda Lear (2002) relates how Carson's work was dismissed by powerful chemical industry leadership.

> It was clear to the industry that Rachel Carson was a hysterical woman whose alarming view of the future could be ignored or, if necessary, suppressed. She was a "bird and bunny lover," a woman who kept cats and was therefore clearly suspect. She was a romantic "spinster" who was simply overwrought about genetics. In short, Carson was a woman out of control. She had overstepped the bounds of her gender and her science. (p. location 163)

The chemical industry's first line of defense against Carson's well-reasoned, and scientifically supported work was to dismiss her as merely being a woman, someone whose feminine qualities negated the value of her education, research and skill as a communicator. Carson began to connect women's issues with environmental issues and to call upon women to take action. As Mann's (2012) research indicates, "Carson's role in mobilizing women for environmental activism in late modernity was similar to Ellen Swallow Richards's role in mobilizing the municipal housekeeping movement in early modernity" (p. 67).

Later in mid to late twentieth century, women became leaders in the antitoxics movement (Mann, 2012; Merchant, 1995) which focused largely on the health consequences of nuclear waste. Carolyn Merchant (1995) writes that "When radioactivity from nuclear power-plant accidents, toxic chemicals, and hazardous wastes threaten the biological reproduction of the human species, women experience this contradiction as assaults on their own bodies and on those of their children and act to halt them"(p. 7). Environmentalist Terry Tempest Williams (2001) experienced this biological assault as she was called upon to nurse her mother, grandmother and many other women in her family through sickness and death from cancer caused by radiation exposure from decades of nuclear weapons testing in her beloved Utah desert. Williams' acceptance of her prescribed role as a woman under the authority of her patriarchal religious upbringing initially prevented her from speaking out, since she was taught that Mormon women were to respect authority with quiet acceptance rather than questioning or protest. Williams eventually began to resist this patriarchal upbringing by publicizing the connection between nuclear weapons testing and the cancer deaths of so many women she loved, despite her own church culture that would silence or minimize women's voices and needs. Williams and many other women began to actively participate in protests and to appeal to lawmakers and policymakers.

White women's environmentalist groups successfully campaigned against testing or storing nuclear waste in their neighborhoods. But this Not in My Back Yard (NIMBY) approach was criticized "for rarely questioning in whose backyard the problem is eventually dumped" (Mann, 2012, p. 200). The "backyard" in which the problem was dumped was most often in neighborhoods occupied by working class or poor residents. This glaring inequality in quality of water, air and soil from one neighborhood to another, depending on social class and race became known as environmental racism, and became the subject for the environmental justice movement.

The rise of the environmental justice movement. Advocates of environmental justice pointed out that poor, working-class people and people of color are more likely to live under threatening environmental conditions. Women of color, at the forefront of the environmental justice movement, writing in the late 1990's and early 21st century, redefined what issues were considered environmental. While "mainstream environmental organizations spend most of their resources on wildlife protection, forest and park management and land stewardship" environmental justice advocates point out the neglected concerns to people of color such as "occupational safety, hazardous wastes, or incinerators and landfills" (Mann, 2012, p. 200). Environmental justice theorists Andrea Smith and Winona LaDuke indicate "how the twin practices of internal colonialism and institutional racism left people of color to bear the brunt of past and present injustices in the distribution of environmental risks and hazards" (Mann, 2012, p. 201). The internal colonialism and institutional racism that Smith and LaDuke describe continue to influence the ways that women of color interact with the environment. Writing about her own childhood, cultural critic bell hooks (2009) describes how she learned from her grandfather to "to see nature, or natural environment, as a force caring for the exploited and oppressed black folk living in the culture of white supremacy" (p. 42).

Critique of ecofeminism. Ecofeminist movements in the United States have been largely perceived as based on the leadership of White women and as addressing environmental issues

from the standpoint of relatively affluent White women's experiences (Mann, 2012; Merchant, 1995; Taylor, 1997). Dorceta E. Taylor (1997) acknowledges that ecofeminism has done much to bring attention to the ways that capitalist exploitation of resources is connected to women and nature. Ecofeminism has brought an important feminist perspective to the largely male dominated environmental movement. She notes, however, that ecofeminists, like other environmentalists have "done little to bring the issues of central concern to women of color (and men of color) to the forefront of the environmental dialogue in a consistent and earnest way or to make such issues a central part of their agenda" (Taylor, 1997, p. 58). In Mann's (2012) history of feminism she notes that "it was not until the late 1980s that a radical, multiracial, multiclass, grassroots, environmental movement—the environmental justice movement—arose" in which the "application of intersectionality theory to environmental issues is most visible" (p. 199). Agreeing, Taylor (1997) points out that "the environmental justice movement wages a struggle which is more balanced, with race, gender, and class forming the basic elements" (p. 65). This focus on intersectionality and polyvocality marked a distinct separation between the new environmental justice movement as compared to previous decades of ecofeminism.

The emergence of the food justice movement. The food justice movement, which grew out of the environmental justice movement (Alkon, 2012; Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010; Morales, 2011) emphasizes dismantling racism as part of its food security agenda (Morales, 2011). Alfonso Morales (2011) notes that "the food justice approach aligns movement organizations explicitly with the interests of communities and organizations whose leaders have felt marginalized by white-dominated organizations and communities" (p. 158). Because of ecofeminism's reputation as a movement dominated by White women's perceptions of the role of patriarchy in society, and centered on the ways that oppression plays out in White women's lives, many women of color were uninterested in identifying with an ecofeminist ideology, but instead focused on the

environmental justice and food justice issues that were important to a diverse array of communities of color and poor communities.

Women who participated in this study conducted their work within this historical context, even if they were unfamiliar with its particular stories. Reaching out to communities in need, especially where environmental or food system disparities cause harm to some communities and not others has gripped the imagination of women for generations. Women activists continue to struggle with issues of allyship within an intersectional feminist paradigm. Where patriarchy, systemic racism or classism or gender discrimination interconnect to undergird injustice, women have been bold to act, often in solidarity with communities who suffer on the frontline of injustice.

Current Studies Linked to Food Justice Work

The role of race in alternative agricultural practices. Exploring the role of race in food systems is a core element of current research on food justice work. Through surveys and interviews, Julie Guthman (2008b) studied the perceptions of managers of CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) and farmers markets concerning why a more diverse population did not frequent their markets. Guthman (2008b) concluded that most managers believed that their enterprises were "universal spaces that speak to universal values" (p. 392). Managers often invoked the language of "colorblindness" or indicated that lack of knowledge (about eating healthy, accessing markets, etc.) or not having the "right" values about food were barriers to participation. Guthman (2008b) concludes that "Managers portray their own values and aesthetics to be so obviously universal that those who do not share them are marked as other. These sorts of sensibilities are hallmarks of whiteness" (p. 393).

In an often-quoted theoretical paper, Rachel Slocum (2006) discusses the ways in which locations of alternative agriculture are often unexamined spaces of White privilege. Whiteness is

indicated when organization staffing is mostly White, when organizations answer to funders rather than to communities, and by claiming the good of self-sufficiency and community through urban agriculture, while ignoring the realities of racist, classist and gendered oppression in the food system. "But the answer to white anxiety is neither to castigate whites nor to help them feel good—both tendencies bring whites back to the center in unhelpful ways" (Slocum, 2006, p. 336), Slocum writes. She points out that gendered discrimination and classism also underlie many of the oppressive barriers in the food system. She suggests that being White needs to evolve to mean "being different in the world."

> Being 'different in the world' means that organizations with staff privileged by gender, class and/or whiteness learn how to be allies across difference in their work. Anti-racist practice would require nonprofits to know what issues are of concern to communities and then to evaluate whether these concerns are being addressed by their work. Organizations would then attempt through resource allocation, rhetorical practices, policy advocacy and so on to shift the balance of power toward historically oppressed groups in order to enable problem identification, leadership and solutions to develop within these communities. (Slocum, 2006, p. 340)

Racist practices in real estate lending and insurance (redlining), as well as White flight from urban neighborhoods play a role in creating food deserts in that large grocery retailers resist locating stores in less affluent neighborhoods (Guthman, 2008a). Alternative agriculture practices such as farmers markets, school and community gardens or Community Sustained Agriculture (CSA's), or even grocery outlets that specialize in organic produce are understood as White spaces, not only because of who physically inhabits these spaces, but also because they are typically associated with areas of affluence, and depend upon cultural norms such as valuing organic and locally grown produce, regardless of the added cost or inconvenience (Alkon, 2012; Guthman, 2008a; Morales, 2011; Slocum, 2006). Alkon and Norgaard (2009) note that even

though food justice “links food insecurity to institutional racism and racialized geography” and addresses those links by resisting corporate control of the food system, still, “sustainable agriculture scholars and activists have not yet understood the ways that race shapes a community’s ability to produce and consume food” (p. 300).

Blaming race and class for community health issues. Another current theme of food justice research explores the idea that some populations are more prone to obesity and other health-related illnesses than others, particularly women living in poverty, ostensibly due to an interconnecting matrix of pressures on their food procurement and consumption habits (Lee, 2012; K. S. Martin & Ferris, 2007; M. A. Martin & Lippert, 2012). Martin and Ferris (2007) conducted a survey study of 200 families living in impoverished neighborhoods in Hartford, Connecticut. The survey asked parents to report family demographics and experiences with food insecurity. Martin and Ferris concluded that adults who were food insecure were twice as likely to be obese than adults who reported no food insecurity. Being a girl and having an obese parent significantly raised the probability of the girl being obese. The authors noted that the high price of healthy foods as compared to easily accessible low-nutrition foods might be a factor in managing food supplies, which may lead to increased calorie consumption.

Martin and Lippert (2012) found that obesity is more likely to occur for women living in poverty (as opposed to men living in poverty), who are mothers (compared to women who are not mothers), who are heads of households, and who routinely experience food insecurity. Typical solutions include restricting the use of SNAP (food stamp) benefits to allow only the purchase of nutrient-rich food, multiplying the value of SNAP benefits at farmers markets, and teaching poor people how to cook and manage a budget (Lee, 2012). Many advocacy groups attempting to alleviate suffering from food insecurity frame their work on this idea that women in poverty are obese at rates higher than those in more affluent classes and that providing an appropriate food-

rich and exercise-opportunity dense environment would solve the "problem" of obesity within this population.

Jill Rowe (2010) reports on the results of the Obesity/Chronic Disease Connection Project (OCDC) conducted as a community-based participatory research project in the Mid-Atlantic states. Sixty-seven African American women participated in focus groups with the purpose of discovering attitudes and understanding among African American women about the connection between obesity and chronic disease. Rowe (2010) concludes that “Structural constraints that uphold legacies of disenfranchisement, environmental injustice, and segregation influence the food choices available in low-wealth communities. Furthermore, these factors continue to operate and are actualized through socially accepted norms of what behaviors constitute a healthy lifestyle” (p. 797). These vital factors should be considered when designing neighborhood-specific wellness programs that are culturally relevant.

Anna Kirkland (2011) brings a skepticism based on feminist ideals to the suppositions outlined above. She troubles the notion that creating an environment that encourages poor women to make more virtuous choices will reduce the suffering associated with poverty. Kirkland (2011) writes, "It has become common in progressive circles to lament that poor people are fatter than affluent people because they do not have access to fresh fruits and vegetables or safe outdoor spaces for exercise" (pg. 463). Much advocacy work is done based on this idea that women in poverty are obese at rates higher than those in more affluent classes and that providing an appropriate food rich and exercise opportunity dense environment would solve the "problem" of obesity among poor women. Kirkland is skeptical about all of the pieces of that feminist puzzle. First she debunks the idea that affluent people have proper discipline and control of their bodies and are less fat than poor people precisely because of that individual level of self-control. In fact, Kirkland debunks the currently accepted idea that children are fatter than they used to be, and that being poor makes them fatter and more prone to fat-related diseases, and that poor mothers (who

are fat) of poor children are causing this epidemic. She calls this "fat panic" and presents evidence that does indeed seem to refute the accepted norm.

Kirkland then interrogates the assumption that seems to underlie current cultural and policy "interventions" that Black and Latina women are either victims of environments that do not offer healthy lifestyle options or they are to blame for their own poor eating and exercise habits. She notes that, since data is not available, researchers do not really know what Black and Latina women eat, or whether they exercise. The un-interrogated assumption is that they must not be, or they would not be fatter than their affluent white, counterparts.

Kirkland takes feminism to task for jumping on this bandwagon on behalf of creating better lives for (unhealthy fat) women. She sees a dangerous precedent in isolating particular women, who truly are economically and culturally vulnerable for many reasons, to focus on intervening in their personal lives to the point of dictating what they can and cannot eat, or how they must move or not move. In fact, recent legislative changes have been made to restrict the selling of junk food in particular neighborhoods, or regulating what can and cannot be bought with government assistance dollars. Kirkland states, "I have yet to see upper-middle-class men discussed as a subpopulation of concern for obesity researchers" (Pg. 472). Generating the idea that a certain population is incapable of their own self-care creates a "swath of new areas in which a citizen can fail to live up to expectations" (pg. 478). Kirkland does not disagree that there are many reasons to value and promote healthy food options in communities where they do not currently exist. However, she admonishes feminists in particular to be wary that progressive programs that begin with promoting better health can "narrow to teaching correct consumption and lifestyle practices to the poor to make them less fat. Panicky thinking, misinformation, pity and disgust, and risk factor-focused interventions combine with genuine concern to make the environmental account rife with pitfalls" (pg.480).

Resisting state control in family food habits. Kirkland’s comments concerning the potentially heavy-handed role of government agencies in policing family food selections are

echoed by other researchers. Some researchers consider women's agency in providing healthy food for their families on a consistent basis (Carney, 2014; Dickinson, 2014; Mares, 2014; Page-Reeves, Scott, Moffett, Apodaca, & Apodaca, 2014). In an eighteen-month field study in Brooklyn, New York, assisting families with problems with welfare and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits, Dickinson (2014) found that, through control and shame, welfare agencies and emergency food suppliers reduce women's agency in deciding how to provision their households in ways that they feel are appealing and culturally appropriate. For example, the state's Work Experience Program (WEP) required applicants for welfare to work up to 35 hours per week, for 45 days before receiving benefits. They also attended mandatory job training and other appointments and often were required to submit to a home inspection by welfare employees. Failure to comply with any of these requirements, including missing appointments, carried the threat of sanctions, such as loss of benefits. The needs of mothers and children were not considered when assigning work or making appointments. Once applicants lost food and cash benefits, they were often forced to seek emergency food supplies, which typically meant accepting whatever food was available for hand-out. Dickinson (2014) writes, "If we take the right to food seriously as a substantive right of citizenship, then the restructuring of the Food Stamp program in the wake of welfare reform must be seen as a form of disenfranchisement for poor women and their children" (p. 79).

Teresa Mares (2014) collected ethnographic data in the Seattle area from 2005-2009. Her research focus was on drawing attention to "the myriad ways that gender shapes women's experiences in accessing, preparing, and sharing food and how power inequities unfold within and through women's relationships with food" (p. 49). Mares describes resistance efforts women employed in the form of pooling resources, eating in community, and gleaning from the waste in food service employment. Mares notes that, "These forms of individualized and spontaneous resistances, while indeed significant, are less likely to create transformational change than if they

were to be channeled through more collective and public organizational forms" (p. 55). Some writers dispute the commonly held notion that poor health outcomes (obesity and diabetes) or food insecurity can be attributed to poor women's lack of knowledge about nutrition or inadequate skills as cooks or shoppers (Dickinson, 2014; Rose, 2014).

The role of internships and allyship in feminist food justice work. Another strand of current research investigates the ways that White allies may undermine or enhance food justice efforts intended to relieve the suffering of frontline communities of color associated with food insecurity (Battisti et al., 2008; Boyd & Sandell, 2012; Guthman, 2008a; McIvor & Hale, 2015; Porter & Redmond, 2014; Slocum, 2006; Verchick, 2004). Boyd and Sandell (2012) published results from a study they conducted among women students participating in a required internship course in the Women's Studies program at San Francisco State University. The authors suggest that internships in nonprofit organizations provide "an opportunity to enact and embody some of the feminist principles and theories with which [students] have grappled in their other coursework" (p. 252). They indicate that the nonprofit industrial complex serves to redirect protest into service, especially for White service members.

Julie Guthman (Guthman) reports concerning her students who do field studies that "by doing this work, my students learn invaluable lessons about anti-racist practice that could not easily be obtained otherwise" (p. 433). Guthman suggests that organizations may need to shift from discussions of the sources and quality of food to activism around more systemic issues.

> Activists might pay more attention to projects considered much more difficult in the current political climate: eliminating redlining, investing in urban renewal, expanding entitlement programs, obtaining living wages, along with eliminating toxins from and improving the quality of the mainstream food supply. (p. 443)

While community and school gardens are enticing and attractive pursuits for White activists, these researchers suggest that a stronger commitment to pursuing the deeper injustices within food systems and efforts to align with the actual needs of frontline communities would better serve food justice outcomes.

Current research on ally activism includes men as allies in supporting undergraduate feminist pedagogy (J. S. Kahn & Ferguson, 2009; L. D. Patton & Bondi, 2015), heterosexual allies supporting LGBT communities (Ji, 2007), and White allies supporting communities of color (Case, 2012). Kim Case (2012) reports on a study involving two groups of undergraduate women who attended consciousness-raising groups with the purpose of elevating their awareness of White privilege, with the intended outcome to be better allies of communities of color. Kendrick Brown (2015) attempts to parse perceptions of differences between the terms ally, friend and activist among non-dominant community members. His study included 160 people of color who were enrolled in a small predominantly White university in the Midwestern U.S. who completed online questionnaires. Participants reported pivotal characteristics of friends and allies to be similar, including intimacy, reliable alliance, and emotional support. Brown notes that focusing on the non-dominant group perspective of allyship was important since they were the intended recipients of allies' actions.

Hunger research that informs the role of emergency food supplier. Other important sources of research are governmental and nonprofit institutions. Feeding America, with funding from private and public sources, regularly publishes studies intended to highlight the depth and complexity of hunger in the United States, and to report on emergency food assistance programs. Feeding America's 2009 report, *Food Banks: Hunger's New Staple* (Echevarria, Santos, Waxman, & Del Vecchio, 2009) uses national census survey data to better understand the number of people accessing emergency food systems, their demographics, the kinds of services they access, and how frequently they access emergency food. Why Hunger, a national advocacy

organization published *Cooking up Community: Nutrition Education in Emergency Food Programs* (Pascual & Powers, 2012) as a guide to creating nutrition education and cooking programs within nonprofit or governmental organizations that serve food insecure communities. The U.S. Department of Agriculture also publishes data on hunger in varying types of communities across the country. These studies provide an important context for who food insecurity affects and where food insecurity is most prevalent. Since reports are based on large-scale national survey data, the reports often fail to personalize hunger. Qualitative research based on in-depth interview or participant observation can fill in the rich details around the statistics. This study, in some respects, is intended to give faces to the raw data upon which much hunger relief work is based.

In this section I defined a feminist and ecofeminist approach to food justice work through a review of the literature. I identified ways that women have historically intervened in periods of troubling environmental degradation, and I traced a consistent thread of action-oriented intervention on the part of women and women's groups in attempting to create a safer, healthier environment. Through a review of the research I have illustrated that a discussion of women and the natural environment is multifaceted and complex and that considerations of intersectionality are essential when building knowledge about how, when and why women choose to confront injustice and oppression. This background provides a historical framework for my study of the experiences of women working in food justice organizations.

This research is located within current research concerns about the ways that food justice work may behave as an expansion of White privilege rather than supporting the direct goals of frontline communities, which are often communities of color living in poverty. Current studies illuminate important factors concerning the ways that unexamined assumptions about valuing healthy food or responsible food sourcing, or racially-derived theories about sources of food related disease, may interfere with comprehending the actual needs of communities, and prevent

acting in true solidarity with those who are differently situated within a matrix of domination (Collins, 1991). This project will fill in research gaps in understanding the ways that women develop an activist or ally mindset and how that mindset turns to the praxis of daily labor within food justice nonprofit organizations.

In chapter three, I will outline the theoretical perspective and methodology underlying the study. I will also detail the methods I used to conduct the study, and how I analyzed and presented findings.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on the stories that participants told regarding their personal experiences with food justice education, and how those stories revealed the development of the participant's unique mindset regarding the work of food justice education. I interpret participants' stories through an intersectional feminist lens. When I initially began my research, my broad goal was to understand women's experiences as participants in food justice education within community partnerships that emphasized food justice. I did not have an *a priori* concept of those experiences that I hoped to prove or support by compiling statistical evidence or by comparing participants' experiences to a perceived norm. Instead, I was open to the rich details that participants themselves employed to paint a comprehensive picture of individual experience. This research expectation is consistent with qualitative methodology. My research questions were "sufficiently open to permit inductive analyses based on direct observations," in contrast to a deductive approach which would require the "specification of main variables and the statement of specific research hypotheses *before* data collection begins" (M. Q. Patton, 2002, p. 56). This project was qualitative in that I sought to "understand the multiple interrelationships among dimensions that emerge from the data without making prior assumptions or specifying hypotheses about the linear or correlative relationships among narrowly defined, operationalized variables" (M. Q. Patton, 2002, p. 56). A qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because,

while I selected a research question, and conducted my investigation within a circumscribed social and geographic setting, the boundaries of human experience within that setting were not pre-determined.

Methodology

This research project can be described as experience-centered narrative research, or a study of "narratives as stories of experiences, rather than events" (Squire, 2008, p. 41). In experience-centered narrative research, talking about what is important to the narrator as "who they are" is key, rather than focusing on a simple accounting of an event. It is assumed that stories may change and evolve or have many meanings to the narrator as life events unfold to change his or her perspective. Experience-centered research also focuses on the relationship between storyteller and listener, or researcher and participant, and acknowledges the co-construction of narrative. By way of comparison to event-centered narrative, Squire lists the following examples of experience-centered narrative: addressing a life turning point; narrating the stories of living through trauma and its consequences; relating an imaginary scenario in which the participant places herself within past or future events. Experience-centered narrative could also be a biography, or life history. It might include interviewing more than one person concerning phenomena of interest to the researcher. Researchers may "draw in related materials, such as the larger cultural and national narratives about femininity, reproduction and political activism" (Squire, 2008, p. 43), as Riessman (2008) included in her study of the fertility stories of Indian women.

Experience-centered narrative research was appropriate for this project because I was interested in discovering how women's experiences organized, expanded, or authenticated their own thinking and action regarding social justice activism, within a food justice context. Interviewing multiple women who shared similar experiences filled in the rich details of their

everyday work, which simultaneously followed the contours of each woman's unique goals and personalities, while also creating shared boundaries based on similarities in setting, personal background, and the requirements imposed upon interns and AmeriCorps members. Including narratives that emerged from imagination or projection of possible experience was important because it was in such imagining that much of the work of stepping outside themselves to take on the suffering of others was accomplished.

Theoretical Perspective

This research is located within a critical inquiry framework which "keeps the spotlight on power relationships within society so as to expose the forces of hegemony and injustice" (Crotty, 1998, p. 157). The forces of hegemony and injustice, which this research attempts to expose, are embedded in the social systems surrounding an unjust and unequal food system. Frost and Elichaoff (2014) write that "critical theory seeks to understand how cultural dynamics interact to construct social systems." They add that "above all, critical theory aims to change practices by challenging assumptions and biases that obscure difference and diversity through the development of power relations"(p. 54). By seeking stories from women who were engaged in the day-to-day work of food justice education, I sought to gain a window into what women believed about their roles in food justice work and how those beliefs changed over time. In this research, I was not imposing my own vision for change or challenging assumptions that others made, as an outsider looking into the food justice education world. Rather, I offered a location in which women whose mission it was to challenge an unjust system through their everyday labor might have a voice. Participants indeed had much to say about how their own assumptions were deeply challenged through their work and how they envisioned a hopeful future. I offer their stories here.

This research is a feminist project in that I positioned gender at the center of my inquiry and continued to privilege women's voices and lived experiences throughout the research process (Hesse-Biber, 2014b). Participants, whom I interviewed, were women who have served as interns or AmeriCorps members in nonprofit organizations with a food justice education mission in "Capital City," a metropolis in the Southern United States. I often followed participants' lead in mapping out the terrain of such work, geographically and organizationally as well as philosophically. My focus was attentive to what participants themselves wished to express, and I continued to consider what was most important to participants as I interpreted and represented research findings.

In addition to privileging women's voices, I attempted to practice reflexivity as I considered my role as a researcher, a relatively affluent White woman, asking questions about food insecurity, a difficulty I have not faced for any significant period in my life. Hesse-Biber (2014b) notes that feminist researchers practice reflexivity in that the researcher considers how her own background, social location and assumptions may change the power balance that is always in play between the researcher and participant. The power relationships between women in food justice work were often a focus of conversation with participants, so, as a researcher, I found it necessary to constantly (re)consider how my relationship with participants, and my assumptions, might shape the conversation, or color my interpretation of their lived experiences.

Feminist researchers also aim to support social justice and social transformation; they are concerned with the ways that gender intersects with other identity standpoints, and seek to uncover subjugated knowledge (Bailey & Fonow, 2015; Hesse-Biber, 2014b). These goals are consistent with intersectional feminism (Collins & Bilge, 2016). An intersectional feminist lens interrogates the limited and partial framing of oppression in women's daily lives where, historically, White feminism has assumed that gender is the single defining element of oppression in a patriarchal society (Mann, 2012). Collins and Bilge (2016) identify the core insight of

intersectionality: "Major axes of social division in a given society at a given time, for example, race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and age operate not as discrete and mutually exclusive entities, but build on each other and work together" (p. 4). The food system in the U.S. can be understood as part of this interwoven matrix of domination (Collins, 1991) in which food access, affordability and quality are not consistent across populations, but are differentiated depending upon factors such as race, class, and citizenship status, as well as gender. An intersectional lens is important in investigating what is happening within this matrix related to the women and families that food insecurity affects most deeply. In addition, an intersectional feminist lens is essential in this research because there is often a racial and class divide between those conducting food justice work, and those constituents of nonprofit organizations for whom food access is an everyday struggle. Food justice nonprofit organization staff members are most often White, relatively affluent women. Constituents are often Black or Latino or immigrant women living in poverty. An intersectional feminist lens allows insight into the expanding and contracting power relationships that surround and infuse food justice work.

Research Methods

Data collection. I began data collection for this project in June of 2015 with a document study of public and online information about food justice organizations in Capital City. I chose Capital City because it was a near my home, and because initial online searches indicated the presence of a vibrant community of nonprofit organizations doing work related to food insecurity, food justice, immigrant resettlement, worker's rights, farm-to-table production, and sustainability education. Capital City is a fast-growing, developing city and a regional hub for commerce, entertainment and governmental functions.

Initially I was searching for small gardens in low-income neighborhoods that were managed and operated by women community residents. I wanted to understand what was happening in women-led local gardens that were created to alleviate food insecurity within their

own communities. That goal proved to be illusive, for reasons that will become evident in my findings and analysis chapters. Though, after months of observation and inquiry, I did find two such gardens. One was a garden run by sisters, serving a community of recent immigrants from the African diaspora. And the other was a community garden in an area of low-income housing north of the city largely populated by Black residents. I heard about these two gardens through word of mouth, and through a Facebook feminist collective group, which I followed online. By the time I located those gardens I had moved on to interviewing participants from other organizations and realigned the scope of my study to include only women working in food justice nonprofit organizations.

Using key words such as "community garden," "food justice," and "garden education" I searched for websites, Facebook pages, reports, news media stories and other promotional materials providing information such as the organizational mission and goals, the impact on the community, the background of key leaders, and fundraising and education efforts within food justice nonprofit organizations. This information provided a context that was essential for understanding women's stories about their involvement with food justice education. Several promising organizational websites were outdated, or seemed to be inactive. Later I learned that some of those organizations had closed or were in the process of discontinuing their services. Familiarity with these now defunct organizations was helpful because the names of these organizations appeared often in participants' narratives. Discussions about the closing of organizations helped me understand the fluidity of nonprofit organizations as they ebbed and flowed through the city's history, and highlighted the flexibility with which women were able to move from one organization to another within the food justice community, as some organizations closed and others expanded.

Eventually, I found several organizations which matched my criteria of engaging in some kind of garden or food justice education, and in which potential participants from the organization

responded to my initial email requests for an interview. The organizations to which I refer in this study are noted in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2 Organizations and Missions	
Organization	**Description and Mission**
Serve Capital City	A nonprofit organization whose mission was recruiting and deploying volunteers in support of church social services, civic organization outreach activities or the work of other nonprofit organizations. Until summer 2016, the organization's mission also included youth leadership development and sustainable agriculture/food justice education.
Farmville	Serve Capital City's six-week summer urban farm program directed by AmeriCorps members, who recruited and trained high-school interns to teach and conduct the daily farm camp attended by youth from local organizations.
Greenfield University Urban Farm	An urban farm including gardens, a greenhouse, and animal shelters (pigs, chickens and goats) on the campus of a small church-related liberal arts university located in an impoverished neighborhood near downtown Capital City. Summer camps for youth emphasize creating sustainable agricultural opportunities within an urban setting as an alternative to unhealthy, unsustainable industrial agriculture.
Capital City Fresh Food	A rapidly growing nonprofit organization located in a relatively wealthy section of Capital City, with the mission of gleaning/growing healthy food, cooking fresh, healthy, appealing meals and delivering them to other community action organizations such as adult education centers, youth centers, after-school programs, etc.
New American Gardens	A small nonprofit led by sisters who were immigrants from Northern Africa with the mission of creating and maintaining community gardens run by other immigrants. Gardens were located in a working-class neighborhood.

Serve Capital City was a nonprofit organization that specialized in matching teams of volunteers to nonprofit organizations, churches, and schools serving a variety of areas of need in the city. In recent years they had launched an extensive youth leadership effort through after-school programs and summer day-camps . The most involved program was "Farmville," a six-week summer urban farm camp organized by AmeriCorps members. Serve Capital City hired,

trained and paid local high school interns to run the camp. The camp was located on a tract of land south of the downtown area, which had been repurposed for a neighborhood park after a historic flood inundated the area along a winding creek. I interviewed ten women who had served as AmeriCorps members at this organization, or who had completed the requirements for a university internship in cooperation with the organization. Their internships were associated with a bachelor's or master's degree from three different universities in Capital City; two private and one public. I conducted participant observation at after-school programs on the urban farm on three afternoons during the spring of 2016, and during one week of summer camp in July of 2016. I volunteered at the urban farm on one occasion during the fall of 2015, and then attended two garden leader training meetings in the spring of 2016.

I interviewed three women associated with a summer urban farm camp located on the campus of "Greenfield University," a private church-affiliated institution near the city center. Two of the women were summer interns at the farm—one high school and one college--and one woman was a part-time employee. Through e-mail communication with John, who initiated the campus urban farm, I arranged to observe farm camps in the summer of 2015 and 2016.

I contacted other interviewees through email addresses published on organizational web sites, or through suggestions from other interviewees in a snowball sample. I began asking respondents specifically for suggestions for Black, or Latina women who were doing food justice work, or perhaps women who were recent immigrants, whom I might interview, since most initial respondents were White. This specific inquiry led to a somewhat more diverse participant sample. My difficulty in finding a diverse population of interviewees illustrated the tendency for nonprofit organizations to be White spaces in terms of staffing; a theme I will return to in later chapters.

I interviewed one member of a county extension program who was managing a county-wide farmers market, teaching cooking classes, and helping families connect with the federal

food stamp program. While her work was certainly food justice work, I chose not to interview any other government employees. I also chose not to interview teachers or school officials who worked with garden programs as school district employees. This is because county government offices and school district operations have very different social and organizational structures and different philosophical goals than nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit organizations seemed more agile and responsive to the mission of food justice work, as envisioned by local leadership. With that agility and responsiveness comes a measure of fragility, as well, in that nonprofit organizations did not always have the undergirding support structures that government and school organizations enjoy. Therefore, I felt that the ties between staff members' personal goals for improving community quality of life through food justice work and the everyday world of their labor might be closer to the surface in nonprofit organizations than in more bureaucratic operations. This was, at the time, an admittedly unexplored assumption founded only on my own observation. Nevertheless, in order to narrow the scope of this research I decided to limit my investigation to women working in nonprofit organizations.

I chose to focus on those serving as interns and AmeriCorps members in nonprofit organizations. I found that many nonprofit organizations assigned the day-to-day work of planning garden education and running camps and after-school programs to AmeriCorps members, who served in ten-month rotations. Completion of at least a bachelor's degree is typically required for entry into AmeriCorps service. Members receive a stipend of $1200 per month and earn a small school-loan forgiveness award at the end of their service. One AmeriCorps member told me that they were not considered employees, but full time volunteers. Their positionality was emphasized when, as one AmeriCorps member said, they were encouraged to call one another "co-servers" and not "co-workers" when speaking to the general public about their work. Interns from colleges and universities usually contacted the organization of their choice and arranged to participate in a project over the weeks required by their academic

programs. They were not paid for their labor. Farm camp high school interns were hired by nonprofit organizations to help run summer programs. They usually received a stipend for participating. These low pay or volunteer positions formed the core of laborers conducting the everyday operation of urban farm camps and after-school programs. I decided to limit my interviews to women in these categories, rather than interviewing a range of staff members in a hierarchy of organizational leadership, since the social locations of interns and AmeriCorps members within organizations were similar to one another and would therefore serve as a more level basis for analysis.

I conducted semi-structured interviews, lasting from thirty minutes to one hour, with twenty-four women. I then transcribed interviews into a verbatim written account. Participants ranged in age from eighteen to fifty-five years old. Interviews were an ideal research strategy for this project since members were willing to participate in an extended conversation about their personal experiences, giving a more nuanced, richly detailed portrait of unique social structures that might otherwise remain hidden. Feminist researcher Sharlene Hesse-Biber (2014a) notes that "As a feminist interviewer, I am interested in uncovering the *subjugated knowledge* of the diversity of women's realities that often lie hidden and unarticulated" (p. 184). In particular, in the in-depth interview, the researcher "seeks to understand the 'lived experiences' of the individual," and is "interested in getting at the 'subjective' understanding an individual brings to a given situation or set of circumstances" (Hesse-Biber, 2014a, p. 189). During in-depth interviews, with remarkable clarity and openness, participants filled in the details of their daily experiences of participating in food justice education. They described their motivations, concerns and doubts about their work, as well as their hopes and apprehensions for the future of the food system, and concerns for those experiencing food insecurity

As a qualitative researcher, important data also emerged from my own active participation in the field of interest. Patton (2002) notes that there are limitations of relying on

data collected from what people say, as in an interview format. He advises, "to understand fully the complexities of many situations, direct participation in and observation of the phenomenon of interest may be the best research method" (M. Q. Patton, 2002, p. 21). Over fifteen months I kept field notes regarding my visits to urban farm camps and after-school programs. I composed memos, and updated a research journal to include information I learned through volunteering and through casual conversation as I visited camps and gardens. I returned to organizational web sites and social media sites regularly to read the latest postings and note changes in personnel or programs.

As part of my initial planning, I received IRB approval to invite participants to post on a Google forum where I envisioned discussions might develop concerning their work and food justice issues in general. However, no participant ever posted on the site. This may have had to do with the complicated ways that some email servers deal with the Google forums format. I chose Google forums because it is a simple, visually attractive, and easy to use format. However, Oklahoma State University's student and faculty email service does not permit joining such forums through students' G-mail identities. This is consistent with other researchers' experiences (Im & Chee, 2006) in that the complexities and protections in place for campus communication systems limit and restrict access to the constantly growing variety of computer applications available to users outside the academic enclave. So, in order to invite students to participate, I created a separate G-mail identity and sent invitations to participate through that email, after having described this option to participants during interviews. This complicated the invitation/response equation considerably. Participants may have simply not been interested in the posted topics. Or they may have been too busy working outdoors in gardens and on urban farms to have time for online interaction. For whatever reason, this means of data collection was unsuccessful, and I discontinued my efforts to use it.

Data analysis. I examined the experiences of women working in food justice education through narrative analysis. Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) find stories helpful in negotiating meaning around food justice;

> Food justice provides a set of stories and a different type of narrative that has been used as an important tool for identifying strategies for change throughout the system, from farm to table. These stories help show where and how such change can become possible while also exploring the barriers that have been erected to prevent change. Food justice can mean very specific arguments about what's wrong, who is most directly affected, and how to change the food system. (p. 224)

While Gottlieb and Joshi perhaps use "story" as a broad term for the unique components of food justice efforts, I solicited the actual stories of individuals to whom food justice had become an essential life focus. As part of a semi-structured interview protocol I asked women three main questions:

1. How did you come to be doing food justice work?
2. What barriers have you encountered to accomplishing your work or what barriers have you noticed that constituents encounter to accessing fresh and healthy food, especially where women are concerned?
3. What are your goals for the food justice education work you do?

The first question lent itself to the telling of a narrative, often episodic in nature, moving through a sequence of events in the participant's life story. Women filled in details by explaining their thinking behind their decisions, or describing their reactions to life events. Where this detail was missing, I followed up by asking, for example, what influenced them to make that particular class, or seek out that particular job or internship. Since college educational programs/majors regularly appeared in the narrative, I asked participants to expand on how they came to the

decision to follow that unique course of study. Interviews were co-constructed in that I followed my broad questions with more specific inquiries based on participants' responses. More than a few times, the participant commented that she had never connected those parts of her narrative before, or that she had never before verbalized those thoughts aloud. In those moments, the act of verbalizing her life story allowed the participant to uncover connections that, previous to the interview, had been unrecognized.

Answers to the second and third questions often began as a list of barriers or goals. Then participants sometimes used narrative to expand upon how they came to believe something on that list was valid. For example, in describing Kayla's goals for students in a drop-out prevention program during her AmeriCorps service, (developing leadership skills) she told a story detailing how students initiated and completed an entrepreneurial project. These stories provided a wealth of data about the experiences of women working in nonprofit organizations focused on food justice education.

Thematic analysis of a narrative. In thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008) "what" is being said makes the story the unit of analysis as a whole, rather than focusing on individual elements of "how" or to whom, or for what purpose a story is told. Using thematic analysis, "data are interpreted in light of thematics developed by the investigator (influenced by prior and emergent theory, the concrete purpose of an investigation , the data themselves, political commitments, and other factors)" (Riessman, 2008, p. 54). Riessman (2008) advises that narratives cannot be seen to arise whole as a presentation of the narrator, as if the narrator has consciously selected a fully formed piece from a repertoire, inviting scrutiny as to the story's already worked-out origin, events and significance. Instead, co-construction "is vividly at work; topics and meanings are negotiated in dialogue between teller and listener" (Riessman, 2008, p. 40). The framework of questioning that I designed for interviews created a specific perspectival entrance to the topic of food justice work which the storyteller may have assumed demarcated the

expected boundaries of the story. Stories rarely remained within those expected boundaries, however, since participants' stories and my follow-up questions often led us into interesting and unexpected territory.

Over several months, I examined narratives through at least three rounds of narrative analysis for broad themes. Rounds of analysis did not necessarily have a beginning, middle and tidy end. Rather, the work of exploring participants' meaning and intentions was often messy, repetitive, and unfruitful. Several times in the analysis process I shut down a line of thinking when I realized the theme I was exploring reflected more of what I felt was important as a woman interested in food justice work, than what the specific words of participants warranted. I experimented with color coding on Word documents, with making notations in text boxes that I added to transcripts, and with copying and pasting segments of text onto spread-sheet pages. In the end, the most fruitful means of working with data was to physically cut out portions of narrative (with scissors and a paper cutter) and sort (and re-sort) them into stacks based on themes I thought most clearly represented participants' meaning and intentions.

It was important to me to maintain the integrity of complete story lines within one individual's narrative rather than pulling isolated words or phrases from narratives across many participants. Riessman (2008) identifies this practice of preserving extended accounts as the unit of analysis as a hallmark of narrative study.

> This difference is perhaps the most fundamental distinction: in many category-centered methods of analysis, long accounts are distilled into coding units by taking bits and pieces—snippets of an account often edited out of context. While useful for making general statements across many subjects, category-centered approaches eliminate the sequential and structural features that are hallmarks of narrative. Honoring individual

> agency and intention is difficult when cases are pooled to make general statements. (p. 12)

Since honoring individual agency and intention was a priority in my analysis, I began by considering the unique pathways that participants traveled to begin their first assignment in food justice work. I called these "origin stories" and pieced together all sections of their narratives that addressed the origin of their work to form a traceable path. While I did not take segments out of the context of individual lives to pool them across participants, I did look for similarities and differences in the ways that participants came to be doing their work. I noticed the following themes: 1.) the influence of friends and family, 2.) seeking healing and better health and 3.) engaging in education and service opportunities. These are the themes I will expand in findings chapter four.

Chapter five findings emerged from analyzing participants' comments on what they believed to be barriers to accessing fresh and healthy food for women in particular, and barriers to success in their work with nonprofit organizations, including food justice education, their association with nonprofit organizations, and their efforts to work as allies with women from frontline communities. Emergent themes included: Discerning gendered aspects of food justice work, collaborating with the "nonprofit industrial complex", grappling with privilege and teaching youth and children.

It is worth noting that the various contexts of this study greatly influenced the ways that I understood and analyzed content within an intersectional feminist paradigm. Participants' narratives were told within the unique contexts of the places and situations in which their lives unfolded. Geographically, participants came to Capital City from both U.S. coasts and from many locations in between. Economically, they shared similarities in the context of middle-class, to upper middle-class family life. Educationally, they pursued a broad range of degree programs

from English, to engineering, to sustainability and divinity. Acknowledging the context of their narratives was important to understanding what pressured and what elevated their motivations and actions. For example, the pressures of deciding one's future in the context of choosing a college and a major—a narrative many participants shared—is very different than the context of how a young single mother living in poverty in Capital City might address questions about her own future and that of her children.

My reading and analysis of those stories also existed within a unique context, perhaps unprecedented in recent history. As the political events of the U.S. presidential campaign and election unfolded in 2016, in which Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton became the nominees, feminist voices began to vehemently call out nominee Trump for perceived anti-woman behaviors and policies, and to celebrate nominee Clinton as potentially the one to break the nation's highest glass ceiling. Feminists did not universally support Clinton, nor did they speak in one voice on many campaign issues, of course. Consequently, on social media outlets and news media channels women (and men) spent many months of the campaign season and into the post-election period discussing the meaning and goals of feminism, and, in particular, the ways that the ideals of intersectional feminism were either being ignored, trampled, exemplified or (at long last) elevated. My social media feeds—especially a local feminist collective Facebook group, and, later, the nation-wide Facebook group "Pantsuit Nation"—were filled with accusations, arguments, illustrations, home-made graphics and discussions about the definition of intersectional feminism and how those tenets were playing out (or not) on a national scale. With this daily diet of controversy, argument and attempts to pursued or educate one another about intersectional feminist roots and goals, there is little question as to how my attention was then drawn to consider how intersectional feminism played out in the stories of women working in food justice education, in which I was so immersed over those fraught months.

Evaluation Criteria for Qualitative Research

Im and Chee (2006) cite four elements of evaluation criteria, based on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985), which are appropriate for establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative studies. Those elements are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility, or confidence in the truth of the data, can be confirmed through such practices as triangulation, member checks, prolonged engagement in the field, and checking for disconfirming evidence. Dependability indicates the data is sufficient to support conclusions, usually over time and across researchers. Confirmability refers to the neutrality of the conclusions, or the degree to which the research conclusions appear to be based on the data presented rather than upon any bias or preexisting conclusions that the researcher may have. Transferability refers to the degree to which the research conclusions may apply to other settings or communities.

I attempted to build precautions into my work. Rather than rely on one source of data, I collected data from several sources, including individual face-to-face interviews with interns and AmeriCorps members working in food justice organizations, and a document study of print and online information surrounding the mission and work of the organizations themselves. I also wrote memos and field notes based on participant observation, in which I was on-site with participants as they conducted their everyday work in the garden or classroom. The purpose of seeking data from these diverse sources is to triangulate information which forms the basis of theory. P atton (2002) indicates the value of triangulation. "Studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method (e.g. loaded interview questions, biased or untrue responses) than studies that use multiple methods in which different types of data provide cross-data validity checks"(p. 248). Using multiple methods also deepened my understanding of the experiences of those working in food justice in ways that a single method of data collection might not have provided. While most of my focus was on connecting trends and themes that emerged through the various data sources, acquiring data from multiple sources

allowed me to seek disconfirming examples as well, and to dig more deeply into themes by investigating obvious outliers or contrary evidence.

Since I examined data through narrative analysis I turn to Catherine Riessman for her insight into creating trustworthiness in research work. According to Riessman (2008), when considering a narrative project, two kinds of validity are important—the validity of the story told by the participant, and the validity of the story, or analysis told by the researcher, based on the participant's story. Validating whether or not a participant's story is "true" or factual may be beside the point, unlike an historical account which may require correspondence to general perceptions of historical events occurring alongside the narrative, or in which the life story is embedded to be perceived as trustworthy. My purpose, however, is to understand the internal journey of individuals who were grappling with the injustices of an inequitable food system, and to somehow faithfully represent that journey to interested readers. I did not expect participants' stories to represent well thought out, linear, or "accurate" narrations of their internal experiences. "Narrative scholars would generally agree that a narrative is not simply a factual report of events, but instead one articulation told from a point of view that seeks to persuade others to see the events in a similar way" (Riessman, 2008, p. 187). Or, in other words, "verifying the facts [is] less important than understanding their meanings for individuals and groups"(Riessman, 2008, p. 187).

As far as establishing the trustworthiness of my interpretations of participants' narratives, Riessman (2008) offers the following rich example, which I worked to emulate:

> To support theoretical claims, students must demonstrate how they developed and/or used methods appropriate to their research questions, epistemologies, and situated perspectives. Students need to document their sources, and bring the reader along with them as they uncover a trail of evidence, and critically evaluate each piece in relation to

> others. From the cumulative evidence, the student can then construct an interpretive account of his or her findings, storying the stories collected. (p. 188)

Creating an "audit-trail" through journals, audio and visual recordings and transcripts, memos and field notes helped me document the thinking processes that resulted in conclusions and theory based on the data I collected. Bringing the reader along in a transparent manner through that process was an important challenge.

Limitations of the Study

Sample size, lack of diversity within the sample in terms of race, educational status and class, and the specificity of the geographic setting in this study limit generalizability across populations. Since the research sample consisted of a majority of White women, some key voices were missing from the work. Although analysis in this study will validate researchers' claims that alternative food spaces are often White spaces (Alkon & Norgaard, 2009; Guthman, 2008a, 2008b; Slocum, 2006), a broader range of participant demographics such as race, class, citizenship, or educational status could reveal additional complexities in food justice work that failed to emerge in this study.

Data is based on extensive semi-structured one-time interviews with participants, for the most part. I did engage in multiple conversations over several months with Ella, Tori, Nora, Jessica and Bailey during participant observation sessions in their work settings at an urban garden/farm and in a pre-school garden program. The other interviews occurred as stand-alone exercises, produced and recorded in a singular moment in their lives. Follow-up interviews, or contact over time might have revealed nuances or complexities in women's expressions of their experiences that went unnoted in single interviews.

Participants in this study worked within the nonprofit sector. Further investigation would be warranted within school programs or government organizations that also employ women in

teaching a critical ecojustice pedagogy, or other pedagogy based on the tenets of sustainable agriculture with a justice emphasis. Informal settings where agriculture and education merge, such as churches, neighborhood associations and community gardens would be important fields for investigation, especially those under the leadership of populations most affected by food insecurity, or food justice issues.

Ethical Considerations

Diane Wolf   writes that "the most central dilemma for contemporary feminists in fieldwork, from which other contradictions are derived, is power and the unequal hierarchies or levels of control that are often maintained, perpetuated, created, and re-created during and after field research"(p. 2). According to Wolf (1996), inequities in power can occur based on differences in positionality between the researcher and the participant in terms of race, class, educational status, geographic location (urban or rural, for example). Power can be abused through the research process itself in the ways that participants are engaged or exploited and the means used to gather data about other humans' life experiences. The post-fieldwork process of a researcher declaring conclusions based on others' lives, and the very act of representing others' experiences has the potential for diminishing the contribution of the participant and exaggerating the influence of the researcher.

I admire and attempted to emulate some of the ways that Lather and Smithies handled these issues of power as they researched and wrote their study of women who are HIV positive, *Troubling the Angels* (1997). Concerning the decision-making process throughout the research project Lather and Smithies write;

> For this study, we promised the participants that they would be our editorial board. This meant getting a first draft to the women, meeting with them to hear their reactions, and then returning to our book, to revise in light of their feedback. (p. 215)

As the research process unfolded, I attempted to be vigilant for ways that I could hand power back to participants in terms of how the research process was designed, how I drew conclusions, and how their stories were theorized and represented. For example, in writing up findings I chose to publish extended sections of the verbatim transcripts of narratives participants related to me, set apart from my comments in text boxes displaying the participant's pseudonym. This was done to allow the reader to "hear" the actual stories of the narrator, rather than depending upon my summaries or interpretations. The reader might choose to read all text boxes from one participant, and could, therefore, gain a strong sense of the overall story the woman wished to portray in her narratives.

I begin chapter four with findings exploring how women's interest in working in the food justice nonprofit arena emerged. Then, in chapter five, I trace the ways that women began to reexamine their own privilege and to reimagine the role of allyship within food justice work.

CHAPTER IV

TRACING PATHWAYS TO ALLY ACTIVISM IN FOOD JUSTICE WORK

In this study I ask the following research question:

What are women's experiences working as activists and advocates in food justice education?

Embedded in this broad research question are the following concerns:

1. How did an interest in food justice activism, advocacy and allyship emerge?
2. How is that activist commitment mediated through the material, social and relational interactions of the everyday work of food justice education?

In chapters four and five, I present findings based on semi-structured interviews I conducted with twenty-four women who have served as AmeriCorps members or interns in food justice nonprofit organizations. Participants worked and lived in a Southern U.S. city called "Capital City." I also include data from participant observation I conducted as a volunteer in urban agriculture programs in Capital City.

Women's narratives may be understood more completely within the context of a whole person, over the course of the successes and failings of months and years, and not necessarily as

isolated moments to be pulled out of context and examined for the uniqueness of the moment. The fullness of the whole of a woman's life provides context for any individual narrative. With that assumption in mind, in this section I mark women's narratives by setting them apart in clearly identifiable text boxes, separated from my commentary. The reader thus might choose to scan through the page as laid out, or, as an alternative, read the complete narrative of an individual woman across pages by scanning through named text boxes. In this way, I hope to allow the reader the option to hear participants' voices as they tell their own stories in a complete stream without the interruption of my voice. The narrator, the reader and the researcher comprehend these narratives from our own unique perspectives, which enriches the harvest of meaning gathered from the page.

In this chapter I present narratives that account for common crisis points or sources of enlightenment that influenced participants' decisions to embark on their pathway of food justice activism and allyship. What were their influences or motivations? How did they move through their personal and educational lives to arrive at a desire to become an ally alongside frontline communities in food justice work? How did formal and informal educational opportunities emerge out of their day-to-day experiences? I will present three broad themes from participants' narratives:

1. The influence of friends and family
2. Seeking healing and better health
3. Engaging in educational and service opportunities

Each story is unique, but the selected narratives also embody experiences that were, in some ways, similar to other participants.

The Influence of Friends and Family

Many women immediately identified their geographic and social locations during childhood or youth as a starting point for their extended narratives describing how they came to be working as interns or AmeriCorps members in food justice education. Six participants identified growing up on farms or with parents who were active gardeners or who took conservation seriously in everyday practices as essential to their adult understanding of food as an important justice issue. One participant began with the years she spent as a child with her family on Salvation Army assignments throughout the Midwest. For two participants, there was a significant contrast between childhood family food habits in which convenience and cost were key indicators of food choice, and their adult lives when they began to value freshness and nutritional content.

The example of friends: "It must have been the quality of my friendships."—Grace. Kayla, a White woman in her mid-twenties, suggested a coffee shop and café on the east side of Capital City. We met there on a Thursday afternoon after she finished her work day at a nearby state agency. The mid-summer afternoon was cool enough to choose outdoor seating on the large patio. Kayla spoke enthusiastically for close to an hour, answering my questions thoughtfully, and often pausing to consider how to describe her experiences or more clearly relate the intentions behind her actions. She began her narrative by identifying the habits she developed as a child cooperating within her family's food routines; habits that were not what she as an adult now recognized as healthy.

Kayla *I was born and raised right here. I would say that growing up I lived in like a very typical middle class household. My father worked late, and my mom went back to school when we were kids. And we didn't have really much time set aside for meals particularly,*

And my mom didn't really care about (I don't want to say that...) She didn't, she didn't feel passionate about cooking. And she didn't have a great understanding of nutrition,

So we just ate a lot of brown foods. That's what I always say, I ate brown food! And foods out of a box. Like it was fried pork chops and Velveeta out of a box like every night. Which was awesome as a kid. It was delicious! But I was not healthy. You know…I wasn't healthy. I didn't know it at the time at all. The only vegetable I'd seen was like a green bean wrapped in bacon basically. Because that's good Southern cooking.

I was just like fine with that.

Kayla placed herself in what she described as a typical Southern middle-class household. Mealtime nutrition was not as high a priority as convenience since both parents were often out of the house. Her mother, who was the primary caretaker responsible for food preparation, relied on Southern standards such as a typical dish in which green beans are slow-cooked with bacon, and on easy recipes that combined convenience foods without regard for overall nutritional value.

Kayla began to feel a shift in her values around food through the influence of friends and mentors outside her immediate family during high school. In a high school environmental science class, Kayla found a framework for ideas that had already begun to emerge within her thinking.

Kayla *And then in high school I took an environmental science class. I had always kind of been an environmentalist, but I wasn't like equipped with the knowledge of why I was an environmentalist. So that class really sealed the deal for me. And I remember reading about the amount of land it took to raise one cow, and how much produce you could grow on that same amount of land.*

And that was like I'm done! I'm a vegetarian. I'm done! And of course my vegetarianism was like grilled cheese and maybe a sprig of broccoli every once in a while you know. I was like I'll just eat bread now. Because I didn't know. I didn't know. Nutrition education was so…[pause] not present in my life growing up or in school.

By the time Kayla was in high school she began to care, at least in a broad sense, about environmental injustice, but she felt ill equipped to make a personal stand on environmental

issues. Her high school class filled in some of the structure around her own ideas about problems within an industrial food system, so that she felt empowered to make small sacrifices, such as declaring herself a vegetarian. Kayla acknowledged that during that time period she barely understood vegetarianism in any complex way because so little information about nutrition was within her reach through daily home life and through school programs. So she took action within the framework that she understood at the time.

Kayla introduced influential college friends into the narrative.

> **Kayla** *And it just happened that I fell into a group of friends that was really interested in nutrition and health. I remember seeing what my friends were eating in the mess hall. You know, salads and, like, other colors than brown!*
>
> *And then I look down and it's like corn and rolls and fried chicken. I was like, wait a minute! This is why I am how I am. I'm different all of the sudden, you know?*

In her early college years, this interest that would later become Kayla's passion was still in emergent stages. Through the example of friends, she was suddenly aware that her way of eating, that she carried with her from her home experiences, was not the only option available.

Kayla's college friends became interested in volunteering at a local community garden, so Kayla joined them, not having any previous experience in growing food.

> **Kayla** *And then my friend group got really interested in volunteering at a community garden down the street. I had never touched a plant before. I mean I love the outdoors. But I had never gardened before.*
>
> *I went with them one day, and I was just overwhelmed with how sensory the garden was and how much energy that I felt in the garden, and how good it felt to get my hands in the dirt.*

She was pleasantly surprised at her own emotional reaction to working in a garden. Kayla continued her story with a specific sensory moment.

Kayla *And then towards the end of the work day my friend was like "Oh come over here. You gotta check this out." And I went. It was an asparagus bed. Asparagus--I now know--takes between 2 and 6 years to really mature and get to where it's edible and tasty. And this, it was huge. Huge! Still to this day the biggest asparagus that I've ever seen.*

And she was like "Do you know what this is?" And I'm like "I have no idea!" She told me it was asparagus, and was like "Here, just snap off one of these little ends and eat it."

So I did and it was like nothing I had ever tasted before. It didn't taste like any of the asparagus I'd eaten before when I'd eaten some of it from a can in a casserole you know.

That was a moment when I was like, this is awesome! It sealed the deal for me loving gardening. So I kept going back.

This story was important to Kayla because it was the first time she associated social and sensory enjoyment or pleasure to caring for the earth, and to growing and eating home-grown food. Her educational pathway led her eventually to focus on nutrition education in college. Kayla described the reasoning behind translating her own enjoyment of gardening and nutrition into a pressing desire to share her passion with children.

Kayla *My experience in the garden that one day with the asparagus made me realize like that if I hadn't been privileged enough to, to go to college, to know how to apply to college so that I could then be accepted and then offered financial aid, and the list goes on and on and on back until like day ONE of my life, you know? If I hadn't had that opportunity then, what are the chances that I would have run into this extraordinary passion that I have for food education and nutrition education? And so I took that and felt like at the time it was my responsibility to get younger kids connected to that sense of pride that can come with gardening and that can come with agriculture so that they don't miss it later on in life like I could have easily.*

It is noteworthy that Kayla did not initially focus on food insecurity as a reason to join an AmeriCorps agricultural program. Instead, she expressed a compulsion to introduce children to agriculture in order to foster a sense of pride, or self-worth. That is what she did not want children to miss out on.

After college graduation, Kayla joined a Food Corps branch of AmeriCorps and spent a year teaching low-income youth and children about agriculture in urban settings. Later, she

returned to Capital City to work for a government agency implementing farm-to-school programs.

Growing up with agriculture: "My father was a heavy gardener."—Harper. Several interviewees located themselves in agricultural settings as a child or young person. None of the women I interviewed were living on a farm at the time I spoke with them. Each had migrated to Capital City from locations as far away as New York state and California, or had returned to Capital City after living elsewhere for a time. However, many carried with them the physical and emotional memories of family members who had made agriculture or garden maintenance a central focus of the family early in their lives.

Riley's story was unique because she first became aware of the problem of food insecurity within her rural community while still a young student in her local high school in Oklahoma. Riley, a thirty-year-old White woman, told me her story over Skype from her current home in Chicago. Like Harper, she began her narrative by locating her childhood and youth in an agricultural setting.

> **Riley** *I grew up on a farm in Oklahoma. I think it's just something that my parents have always instilled in me. When I was in the 8th grade my family had a ton of extra produce. We just had an overabundance from our garden that year.*
>
> *That was the summer our small town grocery store shut down. It wasn't that we couldn't support it; although I wonder, now that I know more about business, I wonder how we ever did support it, because it's not a huge market! But he just decided to retire and there was nobody to fill his shoes. So the grocery store shut down, which meant that a lot of senior citizens in our town could not get to the nearest grocery store. For my family that's only about 15 miles. For some people that could be 30 miles depending on what part of the community that they live in.*
>
> *So we started donating our extra produce to the senior citizens center there in town, because we knew that that was a location that they could get to. They felt comfortable driving, because a lot of them couldn't drive the 30 miles. It was a huge realization for me to see that it was a need and that people just loved it.*

Riley described the values that her parents instilled in her through sharing food out of the abundance of their Oklahoma family farm in response to a sudden food crisis in their community.

Riley understood this time period as an awakening to the social relationships that created food distress for some community members. Through her parents' influence, she learned how food insecurity affected the young as well as the old in her community.

> **Riley** *When I came back to high school that next school year there were kids that had been completely malnourished. (Pausing as her throat catches.) Sorry, I get emotional.*
>
> *They didn't have school meals over the summer. And not having access to that grocery store really made a huge difference. There were kids that came back to school that couldn't play sports, or their stamina wasn't what it had been.*
>
> *And I was fortunate too that my dad is a school administrator so I guess I was more privileged to conversations in our house. I think that also pointed to the fact that I had an awareness of what was going on [with food insecurity] as a high school student. And so, that was my story from 13, 14 years old.*

Everyday conversations in her home with her parents allowed Riley a window into the lives of other students who were suffering from the effects of food insecurity. Her father's role as a school administrator and her mother's interaction with students as a home economics teacher placed them in close contact with many other families in their community outside of their normal social circles and allowed them to participate in the struggles of others. As a young high school student, Riley took the suffering of community members seriously. She became emotional as she talked with me, and paused in her narrative to regain composure since the memory of others' suffering still affected her. That year Riley mobilized her high school's Future Farmers of America (FFA) group to respond directly to this crisis.

> **Riley** *It became a project. I actually took it to my FFA chapter that same year and proposed that we begin growing vegetables instead of flowers in our greenhouse, and donating that produce to the community. And that's a program that we still do. So that was kind of the catalyst to many years of volunteering at the food bank.*

Riley put a very personal face on the general crisis of food insecurity happening in her town. She knew the stories of the elderly residents and the young high school students who were suffering. So she felt that leading her FFA chapter to ally with food insecure community members was an

action that would have real benefit for local families. Her leadership in the local FFA chapter led to full time employment after college with the national FFA organization. There she continued to build a concern for food security into her everyday work with student leadership development and curriculum.

> **Riley** *I worked for the national FFA headquarters for four years. I did a lot of student leadership development and a lot of that centered on, as the quote-unquote future farmers of America, how are we going to feed the world? A lot of the curriculum that we developed centered on food security.*
>
> *And so it was a natural fit for me as I went into grad school to begin thinking about "I'm getting this degree in organizational development. But what did that look like in the context of food security? And how can I apply that in a nonprofit setting?" And so it was a perfect fit.*

When she arrived in Capital City for graduate school, Riley relied on the peer network within her graduate program to help her connect to the local food bank in a new and unfamiliar location.

> **Riley** *I did an internship for the summer while I was in grad school [in Capital City]. And I wanted to do something specifically with the food bank. The food bank was not looking for an intern. And [the university] did not have connections to the food bank necessarily. I just made a phone call!*
>
> *And one of my peers in my grad school program knew a guy who knew a guy who worked at the food bank.*

Riley used her agency and discretion to focus her master's degree internship on food insecurity relief work by contacting the local food bank in an unfamiliar city and volunteering to complete a project they had in process. After completing her master's degree, Riley returned to Oklahoma to work full time for the regional food bank where she served as a community liaison to connect the interests of food-insecure Oklahomans to legislators responsible for local, state, and national policy. Later, Riley began writing agriculture curriculum full time for a company contracted with agriculture-related corporations and governmental agencies to create youth programming.

Like Riley, Bailey first learned the importance of sharing food with those in need as a child, working alongside her parents on the farm. Bailey, a White woman in her early forties, spoke with me at a small coffee shop near her home on the east side of the city, in neighborhood

that was undergoing rapid gentrification. The spacious coffee shop was one of several specialty restaurants and shops that had recently opened along a busy, winding, two-lane thoroughfare. I also observed Bailey as she taught lively preschool garden lessons at a neighborhood center. And I kept up with the rapid growth of her new nonprofit business through updates on her web site. Bailey began her narrative with her first encounters with sharing food from the family farm.

> **Bailey** *I grew up on 72 acres in ______ County. It's near the [state] border, and it was rural. And it was a choice my mom and dad made. My dad was not a farmer, but he went and taught himself how to do it. We had a 3 acre vegetable garden and a 2 acre stocked lake with blue gill and catfish. He was just really all about homesteading, before it was kinda a thing. He taught himself how to do it. It wasn't altogether organic, but it was largely.*
>
> *So we'd have these huge vegetable harvests. I can remember just days of canning, where like the kitchen was covered in tomatoes, right? So but even with all that canning and cooking and freezing we still had a ton. I don't even know how the idea came about. We loaded my dad's orange Chevy pickup truck, 70s era pickup truck, with all of these extra vegetables and took it to subsidized housing in ____, the county seat.*
>
> *Boy we were met with skepticism! Like the largely low income people of color were like "What do you want?" And we were like "Nothing, we have more than we can eat! Go get pots, pans, bags, and we'll share it with you."*
>
> *But that early skepticism soon grew into a trust and a friendship. Like we played with the kids from those apartment complexes, and they came to kind of look for the orange truck. We only did this for a couple of summers but it was an amazing experience. And then like reflecting on it, I was like it was an amazing example of the power of fresh food to bring people together. So that's kind of my earliest memory of it.*

From her parents, Bailey learned the value of sourcing the food on their table from their own land and labor. Once they finished the hard work of canning and freezing to fill their own pantry, they set out to share the surplus. She understood these early experiences as pivotal to her belief that food was powerful to bridge gaps between class and race and to create community. This experience was the closest her family could come to sharing the food from their own table. They chose to share the fruit of their labor and the benefit they received from their land by loading up the family pick-up truck and taking food to strangers, in an informal gesture of solidarity with those in need.

After some years of travel and living outside the United States, and after finishing her bachelor's degree in art and design, and master's degree in outdoor recreation, Bailey came back to her home state and began serving as an AmeriCorps member for Serve Capital City. She described the early days of trying to put together a youth-focused service program.

Bailey *When I came on as an AmeriCorps member they were like "ok, we want volunteer engagement with elderly people, people with disabilities, and children." I spent like my first week there kind of like researching all this and then I went to my director and was just like I can't do all of this in one year. And she's like "ok, pick one." I'm like, done. Children. You know because that was just an affinity group for me.*

We started a service learning program with young people there. And then as a staff member, I was asked to sub for my supervisor in a neighborhood meeting, and I went and heard reverend _______ talk about food security, and it's the first I'd heard of it. I was blown away. And I mean, he's a reverend, so he had a nice little cadence about him, but I just wanted to stand up and say amen, to everything he was saying!

And I went back to my supervisor, and I'm like we have to do this. We have to be a part of this conversation because it's big, you know, it's coming. So he let me be on this sort of founding working group for food security partners.

The local clergyman's presentation about food insecurity in Capital City was an important moment in the development of her commitment to food justice work. From that encounter, Bailey could sense that an important movement was stirring in Capital City. She wanted to be in on the ground work that was the beginning of organizing community partners to address food insecurity.

Later, as the mother of a young son, Bailey began to contemplate the importance of teaching children how to connect to the land and grow good food. She experimented with garden education programs for children and youth by working with a local community center and, eventually, she opened a new nonprofit organization that now sends garden education teachers into preschool programs in many of the city's public schools.

Another participant who began her narrative with her family's agricultural roots was Sophia. I spoke with Sophia during a break in a summer urban farm camp taking place on the campus of a local liberal arts college where Sophia was a student and a farm intern. We took refuge in an air conditioned classroom for a few minutes, since the afternoon temperature was a sultry ninety-five degrees. Sophia had stayed on campus instead of returning home to the West Coast for the summer. She began her narrative with the farm setting that was her home before coming to college.

> **Sophia** *I grew up kind of like on a cotton farm. We grew a lot of vegetables, raised our own animals, had a lot of fruit trees and stuff. And I didn't really realize that other people didn't do that! So I was like "oh yeah, look at what we got! It's all of our home grown food." And people are like "what..?"*
>
> *So as I was growing up, I was really into that.*

Providing food for the table from homegrown gardens, orchards and livestock felt so natural to Sophia that she did not realize it was unusual, or distinctive in any way. She felt pride in her family's food habits, once she understood how unique they were, but she did not immediately connect these practices to questions of justice. Sophia identified a trip to Thailand on a church mission trip as the beginning of her understanding of injustice and activism.

> **Sophia** *And so then when I was sixteen I went to Thailand and I did a missions trip with my church. We built a well and planted some coffee trees. We went with a mission that works with Burmese refugees there, and helped them to, instead of selling their kids to human trafficking, or getting addicted to drugs, they gave them jobs, and this coffee business that they started where they grow the beans there and then bring them back to America to roast, or to sell. They roast them there.*
>
> *So then one night on the town we saw a lot of human trafficking victims. And I had never seen that before first-hand. And so I was like "Why are all those girls up here so pretty?" I was like "Wow, what are they? Are they like models or something?" And they were like "No, those are like, going to have sex with people."*
>
> *And I was like "I kind of want to change that."*

Although Sophia was aware of the problem of sex trafficking, she did not recognize it when she saw it first-hand in Thailand. Her goal on the trip was to support an existing missions

organization in Thailand with their everyday work. It was a moment in a side trip to town that Sophia confronted sex trafficking firsthand. Sophia immediately felt that she should take some action in response to what she saw.

Sophia began researching human trafficking when she returned home with the goal of becoming involved locally. She eventually connected her new interest in social justice to plans for college. Over a period of months, she searched the internet for college programs with a social justice emphasis and she consulted with her aunt, who shared Sophia's interests. Sophia was elated to find a program at "Greenfield University," in Capital City, that appeared to reflect her interests. She decided to make a college visit and brought her aunt as a participant in her decision since Sophia saw her aunt as an example of someone whose "life purpose" was similar to her own. During the visit she spoke with John, the manager of an on-campus urban farm.

> **Sophia** *And so then I got to talk to [the farm manager], and hear about the environmental program because I had mentioned that I kind of grew up on a farm. And he told me like about the farm, and what they do.*
>
> *I was like "oh, this sounds perfect." So, I didn't really know what I wanted to do with justice issues... But like, work with women. Or people of color. And people of like, in lesser situations than us.*
>
> *So he explained it and I was like "This is awesome".*
>
> *So I started to do that. I listed as an environmental justice minor, or something. So then I started to learn a lot from him. And yeah, it's been great.*
>
> *I've figured out, kind of like, this is what I was meant to do. I just didn't have the pieces there yet.*

Sophia had only a vague idea of what social justice programs might entail. She had thoughtfully considered several educational possibilities, but she made solid connections during her college visit between the program offered at the university in Capital City and her background on the farm in California. She was excited to put the pieces together and to formulate and solidify what she identified as her life purpose, and to move the trajectory of her studies and her career toward social justice work. Sophia became a valued intern at the urban farm program on campus,

helping with the greenhouse, gardens and livestock and assisting with youth camp programs. She began to connect with nonprofit organizations in the city, such as an assistance program for homeless individuals, who were interested in opening a garden education program within their existing mission.

Service as a family way of life: "My parents work for the Salvation Army."—Olivia. Olivia, a White woman in her late twenties, and I sat on upturned buckets on the grass in the shade of a small tree during a break at a large organic garden north of Capital City. The garden was part of a cooperative venture associated with a for-profit restaurant and meeting space and a nonprofit organization employing adults with disabilities. The whole enterprise was housed in a refurbished old school house on several prime acres a few miles from downtown Capital City. This neighborhood in which the garden was situated had fought to maintain its rural character and resisted development through uniting in political action and maintaining strict rules for any new enterprises that sought to purchase land here.

On the sunny summer day we interviewed, Olivia was organizing a group of volunteer youth who were participating in a week-long "hunger and homelessness camp" through Serve Capital City, in which campers investigated these themes by visiting sites of nonprofit work happening across the city. Nine campers spent the morning harvesting carrots from the large garden. They later packed food boxes at the local food bank.

Olivia commenced her narrative with her family's long association with the Salvation Army.

> **Olivia** *I grew up all over the Midwest. My parents work for the Salvation Army. And the Salvation Army is really big on social services, and community involvement, and supporting people that need help. So I kind of grew up with that bend I think. Just I've always kind of been asking like how to help people around me. You know like, I've kind of always wanted to identify just naturally people that were in need.*

Serving in the Salvation Army allowed her family to enact their values including a desire to serve others, the importance of community involvement and the care and support of people in need. Olivia identified this caring ethic as something that became part of her own values when she chose a college major.

> **Olivia** *So I went to college. And I've worked in Salvation Army camps all growing up, or went to them. And then worked at them when I got old enough. And so I really like outdoor work. So then for about, for most of my 20s I worked in outdoor education. That was my degree; it was camping ministries and outdoor education. So I taught kids about nature. It was basically a recreational management degree.*

Olivia attributed her initial interest in serving others to her parents' example, but eventually those values became her own. She found that she enjoyed outdoor work and was able to combine her love of service with her love of the outdoors through an outdoor education degree. When I spoke with her, she was helping to build a new program that allied volunteers and farmers with the city's food bank emergency food recipients. Through the farm to families program, volunteers helped harvest and glean crops that were then donated to the food bank, or purchased at discount prices. This program kept food bank shelves stocked with fresh food. Olivia often educated teams of volunteers about food insecurity and the mission of the food bank as part of her introductory presentation.

Seeking Healing and Better Health

For a few women in this study, actions intended to seek relief from emotional distress or to foster physical well-being were integrally linked with their agricultural work.

Seeking relief from emotional distress: "I started to garden in my yard and that was very therapeutic for me."--Piper Clara, a White woman in her fifties, served as the volunteer team leader during my first experience volunteering at the Serve Capital City urban garden. I arrived at the farm on a sunny afternoon in September for my two-hour shift. The urban farm was

a five-acre tract not far off the freeway in south Capital City in a middle class/working class neighborhood of single family homes with large yards and well established trees. At a small signpost I pulled down a hill onto a grass and gravel track that led past an open storage container full of garden tools. I parked on the grass to the left of the drive. To the right were long garden rows. Straight ahead was a wall of native shrubs that served as a riparian buffer for the small creek flowing through the neighborhood. This was my first day here, but I returned to this urban farm many times to participate in and observe after-school and summer youth programs and to interview interns and AmeriCorps members who kept those programs, and the garden itself operating.

Clara opened the work session by gathering our small group of volunteers at a picnic table under a tree and relating the history of the farm and its contribution to relieving food insecurity in the community through youth education and service. Four volunteers were high school students who needed service points which their school required, and the other four were adults taking a few hours on a Sunday afternoon to work for their community. We wrote our names on brightly-colored duct tape name tags. The adults introduced themselves by their names and occupations. After the introduction, Clara assigned the volunteers to pull tall weeds at the end of long vegetable rows and to replenish the soil with compost from the pile. Clara was everywhere at once, her high energy level apparent in her fast movements and animated conversation with the volunteer team.

When I eventually sat down with Clara for an interview at a coffee shop near her home weeks later, that same high energy level was immediately apparent. Clara began her narrative with a series of life events occurring in rapid succession. The combination of these events caused a profound crisis.

Clara *I was on active duty right after 9/11. I was actually called up twice. Then I stayed on active duty as a reservist going contract to contract. So it was like a permanent temp, working special projects and things like that. And I was in human resources and I didn't really like it. And I made Chief.*

After that long and that kind of a commitment I learned two lessons: One is an institution doesn't really have corporate loyalty. I was a civilian and that was a great thing. And it ended up that I thought I was gonna get promoted because I was doing a specific job. But what I didn't realize was that they were gonna make me the assistant to the person that they hired. So I wasn't gonna get the pay raise.

So I was a little like, Oh well. And my husband was working part time at the time. He was a consultant working for himself. I told him, wherever you can get a job, I'll move to. He just happened to get a job [here].

And when I moved [here] I was lost. I was completely lost.

Clara began a series of attempts to find something fulfilling and interesting to do as a second career; something that would also offer relief for depression. Noting that she had always enjoyed gardening, Clara joined the local Master Gardener's program. Then she attempted to leverage an interest in cooking into a culinary career.

Clara *So I had won a contest for a do-over recipe that was a Paula Dean Chocolate Lava cake recipe which was just a DISASTER! Too much eggs and butter and added sugar. And it got accepted at Clean Eating, it won their grand prize at Clean Eating magazine for low fiber and lower sugar. It was delicious.*

And so I thought well, maybe I can turn that into school. And so I tried a semester at the Art Institute. And I HATED it. You want me to chop carrots into fine little things? I didn't like it. I was the queen of my kitchen. (laughter) And I was in school with 18 year olds. And they were leaving hot pots on the stove and getting cut. We would spend the entire time scrubbing pots. And I was like, you know, I freely admit that I need to scrub pots. I'm trying to learn something here. And it cost me $5000 a semester! So I opted to leave there.

After leaving the cooking school, Clara eventually found an online certification program in holistic health and nutrition that interested her. She began volunteering at the Serve Capital City Urban Farm in order to fulfill course requirements for this program, and found that she loved the work and especially the educational aspect of the farm.

Clara *And then that turned into this amazing volunteer program. Which I just COULDN'T stop volunteering! We were talking about food systems, and we were talking about food justice, and we were talking about education, and all this stuff. And I was working in the soil and eating fresh vegetables and things like that. And I was like, this is OK, this is what I want to do.*

By the end of her first year volunteering, Clara earned an award from the non-profit organization for her dedication and service. Volunteering also led to a friendship with a Serve Capital City staff member who helped Clara find a college program to enroll in.

Clara *It was a casual conversation just a little over a year ago, November of 2014, I was talking to _____ and I was like, my son just graduated and had gone off to California. And I was like I'm SO depressed. What do I do?*

And he was like, why don't you go back to school? And I was like yeah, I know. But I've been looking and [this university] is this, and [another university] is this and da,da, ta,da., and you know I was looking like online, and that's not really what I want. [He said] Why don't you look at [my university]? And I was like what did YOU take at [your university]? He was like, Sustainability! And I was like WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY THAT BEFORE? (laughter)

Clara identified the work she was doing in Capital City--volunteering at the urban farm and learning about food justice at the university—as her second career. In her 30-year first career in the Coast Guard she earned the rank of Chief, a rare accomplishment for a woman. Clara valued the benefits offered as a result of her Coast Guard service, including the education funding. She had failed to complete her bachelor's degree before the benefit ended initially. However, after the terrorist attacks on New York on 9/11 she was called back up to active duty. Educational benefits were reinstated through a revision of the Montgomery GI bill, according to Clara, for those who were called back to military service. She saw this as an opportunity to complete a college degree she had started many years earlier at a California junior college, and a way to find meaningful focus in her daily life.

Clara *And [the university has] an outstanding veterans' support group. And I can use my VA benefits. The sustainability program is what interested me. They do have an environmental agriculture piece. It's basically a biology degree. They let me transfer a previous degree I had.*

At the urban farm, Clara recently took on the responsibility of handling the volunteer program, in which individuals and groups signed up to work at the farm. She also created a section in the garden that was accessible to individuals in wheel chairs by building raised beds set on a gravel pathway. She continued to unite her university studies, her interest in helping veterans and her dedication to the urban farm as the interconnected, meaningful focus of her energy and attention.

Jessica, another interviewee who made a mid-career shift, found emotional solace in food justice work. I met Jessica, a White woman in her fifties, at a summer youth program on the campus of “Greenfield University,” a local liberal arts college. She was helping to facilitate a week-long camp in which junior-high students visited the on-campus farm and participated in a combination of hands-on farm and garden work, and classroom learning. Each day the campers cared for the farm animals, (goats, pigs and chickens) in their fenced area and in a brand new barn. They created “lasagna gardens” in which they layered card board, compost and soil, and then planted vegetable seeds. They also worked in the campus garden and in the small greenhouse, and they learned bee-keeping skills. As they went through their hands-on lessons, the instructor John led conversations and discussions about the difficulties built into industrial agriculture methods which he presented as unsustainable, and a contributing cause to the injustice of food insecurity. He often taught by proposing an agricultural problem to the ten or so students and then helping them unravel the difficulties and possible solutions through dialogue. At one point in a lesson, John jumped atop one of the greenhouse tables in order to reach the best strawberries growing overhead. He tossed these treasures to students who gave thoughtful responses to the dilemmas he presented. Jessica worked with several high school and college interns to keep activities running smoothly.

On a cloudy December day, I interviewed Jessica at her log cabin-style home in a rural area not far from the city. I parked at the end of a long driveway that wrapped around to the back of the house, near a chicken coop and a fallow, fenced garden. Jessica greeted me at the back

screened-in porch and invited me in past a rabbit hutch and some potted plants. We settled in her living room, surrounded by antiques and pictures of her family. When I asked her to trace the path that led her to be working at the college farm she began with how she ended her first career as a therapist.

> **Jessica** *Well I was a counselor for a number of years working with sexually assaulted children. So that was my primary focus. And I really was so passionate about it. And so emotionally I'm a highly sensitive person, which makes me a good therapist, but doesn't always make me good when I have to confront perpetrators or that kind of thing. So I really came to a point where I was burned out. I just got to the place I didn't want to do court anymore. I didn't want to go with that side because there's a lot of injustice in that system as well. And so I resigned my position and chose to stay home for a while until I could kind of get my bearings again and decide what I'm doing for the rest of my life.*

Jessica realized that she could not continue the high emotional stress of her work with sexually assaulted children. So, stepping completely away from that work, she began a period of introspection to rediscover what might be meaningful to her, outside of the field to which she had dedicated so much emotional energy. She began to "unbury" interests she had from many years ago.

> **Jessica** *And in that process I began to rediscover who I was. Because I was so focused that really everything I did in my life had to do with my work. And so I got to where I didn't know what I liked. I didn't have hobbies. I didn't read anything but what had to do with sexual assault or with therapy. And so it was in the journey of rediscovering myself and my own passions that I kind of unburied umm… from the time I was in seventh grade, I had wanted to live in a log home. And I wanted to have chickens. And I did garden off and on when my kids were young. But we typically didn't have a lot of property. And we would be considered low income for many years, working non-profits.*

Jessica joined the county Master Gardener's program, at first to learn "how not to kill things." Then when the program required forty hours of volunteer time, Jessica began to work with her nephew John who ran a small on-campus farm at Greenfield University. An interest in his work coincided with other interests she maintained and developed around various expressions of injustice.

Jessica *So I started volunteering there. And at the same time, I think all this kind of coincided, but even before I resigned my position I was always into the injustice of sex slavery because that was kind of the area I was working in. But also other injustices. So I began to find videos, documentaries on coffee, on chocolate, on sugar and it's like those things were really upsetting to me. So I'm like Ohh, I consume this stuff! Ok. Sometimes you can be passionate about something and you want to rescue, you know free children or whatever, but you just kind of feel like, well I live here in America and how can I have an impact at all?*

Having an impact was important to Jessica, but her research on injustice issues such as those around growing coffee or chocolate left her wondering how to put her concern into action. Then, listening as John taught his young students about the difficulties with the food system during farm camp, Jessica began to formulate an interest in food justice work.

Jessica *So understanding, and [John] was a huge key to that, because as he taught students, I'm learning too as a volunteer. We watched videos at the camp, and as he was teaching middle schoolers and high schoolers. So I learned more and more not only our food system not only in the United States, but worldwide, and so that kind of converged together, in my passion, especially for children and women, which has been my area. And then my own joy and pleasure of growing food. And so I think it all kind of merged together umm and then I got hired there.*

Jessica began working part time for the university, helping to facilitate programs and projects on the campus farm. For her, the Master Gardeners program, a short-term community education opportunity, served as a catalyst, in that it not only improved her skills as a gardener/farmer, but it also helped connect her to a farm community through required service hours. Working at the farm became Jessica's new passion that brought together her own interests in gardening and farming and her desire to make an impact on issues of injustice in her city. Shortly after she started volunteering she began teaching bee-keeping and food preservation to her young students as well as helping facilitate fundraising efforts such as an annual barn dance.

Seeking improved family and personal health: "I was getting more concerned with my weight and my eating habits."—Lilly. Other participants connected their own health concerns, or concerns for family members' health to the emergence of an interest in

food justice work. Lilly and Ava, both Black women in their early twenties, selected the Farmville program at Serve Capital City Urban Farm as the second of three rotations in their summer internship program through a state college nutrition bachelor's degree program. During the time that I observed their work, they were engaged in their community service rotation at the farm, which was sandwiched between a clinical rotation and a food services rotation in a school or institution.

On the day that we met, they were participating along with fifteen or so high school students from a city youth center who had just arrived for their weekly Farmville morning rotation. I observed Ava at the "nutrition station" where a group of students were scraping and roasting freshly-picked corn in an electric skillet combined with spices and ricotta cheese. As they worked, she led a casual conversation about the nutritional value of their snack and about food groups in general. In the distance I could see Lilly working along a long garden row with campers in the "growing station" picking corn and browsing through the mid-summer vegetables and herbs, pausing occasionally to taste-test a vegetable or herb fresh off the garden row. Later they would join the "impact station" to participate in a lively game intended to illustrate differences in access to transportation in Capital City, and how that might affect food access. At the end of the rotation through three stations, each student team was given five minutes to invent an impromptu group cheer, in a lively competition for the spirit stick for the day. The "cheer" turned into full-fledged, rowdy, dance chant routines complete with choreography and humorous lyrics. Lilly and Ava had the difficult job of judging the spirit stick winners.

After the noisy, lively competition ended, while adult sponsors shepherded campers to their youth center vans, I sat down at picnic table under the shade of a large oak to talk to Ava. She found their way to a nutrition program partly because she wanted to address personal or family health issues. Ava described her decision-making process, when it came to selecting nutrition as her college course of study.

Ava *Well when I first came to [the university] I didn't decide on a major. I was undecided for like the first year and a half. And like I said, growing up I was athletic. I used to do gymnastics for like 16 years. So I was always aware of the physical like input and how much work I had to do to you know, maintain my body and be healthy. But once I quit and started gaining weight and everything else I got the idea that the physical input is not just the only thing that is important, and that the nutritional intake is even more important probably than the physical activity. So that kind of caught my interest, as well as like my family's health.*

A lot of my family members are diabetic. And most people believe that it's inherited and it's really just bad food habits that are passed on generation after generation. So I've been kind of helping my grandma there. And my aunt. And my mom is borderline diabetic. So I've been helping them with their diet. And my brother was diagnosed with leukemia two years ago, so he's cancer free now, which is great, but um, you know it kind of gave me an opportunity to help him take a shift in his diet as well. And it changed the whole household.

Ava became concerned about her own health. As an athlete she had long been aware of the benefits of staying physically active. During her first years of college, she began to synthesize concerns about not only the “physical input” but also the “nutritional intake” required to stay healthy. In addition, she began to work closely with family members whose health issues could be successfully addressed at least in part through healthy eating. As a Black woman, Ava was familiar with the negative impact that diabetes has had on the Black community and the various theories on how to improve health outcomes. She purposefully connected her educational work to personal and family nutrition needs. These interactions with her family, which Ava saw in a positive light, combine with an educational program that looked promising. Ava summarized her enthusiasm for her chosen program.

Ava *It was pretty cool. Just being able to help people close to me and then the benefits that I see within the changes that I made for myself just got me interested in food. Ok, well, if I can you know, make this small difference, imagine what I could do out in the world, basically.*

In this college program, Ava saw not only benefits for herself and her personal health, but also a way to help others. It had been gratifying to help her family members through their health crises, and, in her imagination, she extended that out into a larger world where she might have a positive influence on the care of others.

Clara, Jessica, and Ava encountered an emotional or physical health crisis in their lives, or the lives of family members. The search for of healing led them to educational programs that engaged them in learning about food or food production, and also required that they participate in service opportunities. The path of self-discovery led outward, toward service alongside community members.

Engaging in Education and Service Opportunities

Women often attributed the origin of their interest in food justice activism and allyship to transformative moments in an educational setting such as a high school or college class or informal community education venue.

The impact of educational opportunities: "He took us to places in my own community that I never have even known existed."—Nora. I contacted Ella, Nora and Tori, all White women in their early twenties, through their email addresses posted on their employing nonprofit organization's website, which also indicated their AmeriCorps assignments. All three had been hired for one-year AmeriCorps assignments to work on some aspect of the nonprofit organization's youth development and urban agriculture programs, including coordinating with a Capital City high school to develop an urban agriculture program and build a greenhouse, running after-school and summer urban farm camp experiences, and developing youth service opportunities in the city. I met with each of them for interviews in the organization's hilltop downtown headquarters overlooking the river that winds through the city.

Ella opened her narrative with the influence of a high school teacher.

Ella *It was really in high school when I started reading a lot. I started reading the writings of social justice advocates and activists. And it happened to be around food . And they were food activists and fighting the food system. And I was like, oh this is something I've never really thought about before. My world of food before that had been so diet driven and so processed foods. So much of what women face, like limiting calories and all these silly restrictions.*

And so I started reading about the food system. And I was like, I have never really thought about where food comes from. I just go to the grocery store and pick things up and think I'm eating healthy, but that's the extent of it. This very confined definition. I started reading about them and was like, this system's really messed up! I want to learn more.

I think there was definitely one teacher in particular that I remember gave me some of Vandana Shiva's books. He was like you should read this. And he connected me to a local farmer. So I went on and volunteered with him for a little bit. And I was like, Oh this is amazing! And I think after that it was more self-exploration.

Ella was introduced, as a sixteen-year-old, to the work of Vandana Shiva, an Indian physicist, writer and activist famous for her concern about what she saw as the undue control of agricultural giants such as Monsanto on seed and crop production. Through her reading and her teacher's influence, Ella began to unravel the interconnected threads of injustice that intersected all aspects of the food system. Her teacher also helped her connect to a volunteer position with a local farmer; the first of several agriculture-related positions—paid and volunteer—in which Ella has participated.

Over the months of this research I continued to talk informally with Ella and observed her work running the Serve Capital City urban farm camp and after-school programs at the farm. In the early spring months I found her surrounded by teenagers, unearthing the remains of turnips and parsnips that had survived the cold in the ragged winter garden rows at the urban farm. They washed the vegetables at a garden hose and sliced them at a picnic table so everyone could try a sample. On one Wednesday afternoon, ten junior high students from a school program for recent immigrants gathered around a picnic table to play a game in which they guessed the differences between renewable and non-renewable resources. When they grew restless with the discussion, Ella sent them running across the grass to find various items in a kind of scavenger hunt. They

brought back a handful of compost, or a tiny strawberry, jostling to be the first to skid to a stop and hold their find out for Ella to judge.

Ella's AmeriCorps responsibilities on the urban farm ended in late July 2016, just as summer farm camp concluded, and she found full-time employment at another nonprofit organization in Capital City that served fresh meals to community groups. She explained her goal in this next step.

> **Ella** *I want to go wider, and figure out who's doing what. What are all the issues? How can we form connections with each other in all of this and create a community that's willing to work on all this together?*

She is committed to creating connections and working in community to help decipher the very foundation of food justice issues.

Connecting to food justice through service opportunities: "Community service was a really positive outlet for me."—Willow. Faith, Willow, Valerie and Maya became interested in food justice advocacy and activism by taking part in service opportunities. I spoke with Faith, a Black woman in her late twenties, by Skype from her mother's home in Chicago, where Faith was visiting. Faith began her story with the fellowship she was awarded directly after graduating from college.

> **Faith** *Well I started my career, graduated from college in 2009 from ___ University. And was a Bell Emerson National Hunger Fellow for a year. Umm, I don't know if you're familiar with the program, but it's based in Washington DC and you spend six months in a field placement with a food justice organization doing on the ground anti-hunger work. And six months in DC doing anti-poverty related policy work.*

Her six months of on-the-ground anti-hunger work brought her to Capital City. She was assigned to work with a nonprofit organization with the purpose of improving capacity to deal with food deserts, and empowering local residents to address food insecurity. She worked with the

nonprofit and community members to focus on improving transportation, to advocate for locating grocery stores in food deserts, and to improve the quality of food offered in local corner stores. Faith remembered her interest in accepting the fellowship centered on not only the possibility of participating in important anti-hunger work but also her excitement about living and working in Washington DC during the first years of President Obama's administration.

> **Faith** *You know I think it was less about the policy issue of food justice in particular. I knew that, coming out of college I wasn't sure if I wanted to do more grass roots nonprofit work, or if I wanted to, you know, live the dream and move to DC and do policy work (laughter). Which like, 2009 was like a very interesting point, right? Because, President Obama had just been inaugurated. There was this new kind of wave of energy happening in DC. This kind of youthful energy. And so the dream job was for people to move to DC and kind of live it up there.*
>
> *So one of the things that appealed to me about the program was, one, I knew that I was really interested in anti-poverty work, and that food seemed like a really interesting entry point into a broader conversation around that work. And, two, just the experience of do I want to [do policy work] and this was like one year, the year after I graduated from college, or do I want to do more grass roots based work? And so this fellowship appealed to me for that reason. And, basically it was one of the only job opportunities I had coming out of college. It was my top choice. So when I got it I was like, "done"!*

Faith decided to accept the fellowship when several interests converged: an interest in food as an entry to anti-poverty work, the enticement of living in Washington D.C. during the early years of President Obama's presidency, and the need for employment after graduation. The second half of the fellowship took her to Washington to do policy advocacy work.

> **Faith** *And then I went to Washington DC for six months and was doing some work on child nutrition policies so in the time that Michelle Obama launched her "Let's Move" campaign. And the child nutrition reauthorization was up and so I was working for the National Conference of State Legislatures, which is a really weird place to sit in DC since you're representing like states interests; (laughs) that sort of child nutrition debate at the time which was fun.*

Faith has worked one-on-one with women in Capital City to help them get connected with SNAP benefits. She worked alongside small grassroots groups organizing for change through a nonprofit organization in Capital City. And Faith took on broader anti-poverty issues at a

national policy level in Washington D.C. After her fellowship ended, Faith returned to Capital City to complete a master's degree in Divinity. As part of her educational program she combined an interest in the role of the church in anti-poverty activism with her continuing interest in food policy and advocacy. Her master's degree studies and her personal work with nonprofit organizations influenced her decision to found a nonprofit organization in Capital City that focused on opening pathways for people of faith to impact issues of justice, peace and compassion through storytelling and through spiritually motivated action. As a Black woman, Faith also sought, through her nonprofit organization, to create a space where other women of color could learn to tell their own stories, and could find healing from the wounds of generations of oppression.

Chapter Summary and Discussion

The women in this study come to their work from a variety of geographic and educational backgrounds, yet they shared a common vision of food production and access as a justice and equity issue. They also shared a drive to engage in the daily labor of justice as activists, advocates and allies. By working with local non-profit organizations, they engaged in contention around food practices and policies with the intention of creating change. At a memorable point in their personal narratives, each of these women came to understand food-- access to food, availability of food, the production of food--as a social justice issue. Many expressed that realization in terms of an epiphany, which then served as impetus for action.

In this chapter I have asked how an interest in food justice work emerged. For some, the interest emerged through the examples of friends and family. By living or working alongside others who were engaged in local food production or social justice action, they had the opportunity to observe what that work might entail before committing to the work themselves. Kayla, for example, learned about home gardening through college friends and roommates. Riley

and Bailey learned alongside family members. Observing others as they worked often nudged a nascent interest that lay ready to be nurtured into reality. As Kayla said, she knew she was an environmentalist. She just didn't know WHY she was an environmentalist, until she could observe the "why" in friends' actions and through the guidance of a teacher. Sophia said something similar, "I've figured out this is what I was meant to do. I just didn't have the pieces there yet." The journey of putting the pieces together depended upon a strategic use of resources, the ability to notice and capitalize upon important moments when they arrived, and a dependence upon connections to caring people at every juncture.

For some, the drive to participate in social justice work emerged through their own or a family member's physical or emotional pain or ill health from which they sought relief. Women in this study revealed an active search for answers to very personal questions about dealing with depression, disorienting life changes, and family or individual illness. They were willing to take a small hopeful step toward the chance that something might make a difference. Jessica and Clara began volunteering in urban gardens when mid-life career changes created a disorienting and bewildering vacuum for using their considerable ability and experience in meaningful service. Ava began a search on her own for how better nutrition might improve her well-being or the well-being of an ill family member. Finding a way to actively engage in community work was an important element of their search for better health.

All of the women in this study converted educational opportunities into action. Whether the educational experience was a local Master Gardener's class, an online certification course in holistic health and nutrition, a university study-abroad course, or an environmental class or engineering seminar that exposed students to social elements of their community they had not understood before, every participant related transformative educational experiences. These formal and informal educational experiences were important because, from them, women gained a richer understanding of the natural environment, an appreciation of the deeply differentiated ways that

food resources were allocated, and a sense of what it might take to re-form their inclinations to offer charitable acts into the enactment of true allyship.

These incidents along the path to embracing food justice work should not be understood as entirely serendipitous occurrences. Their paths were open or closed at particular junctures based on the delineated contexts of their lives, to a great extent. All of the participants in this study were raised in American, English-speaking, middle-class relative prosperity. None had experienced hunger or real economic deprivation. The experience of living on less than minimum wage as an AmeriCorps member was, for some, the first, and maybe the last, entanglement with making real sacrificial economic choices. They were surprisingly mobile and geographically agile, coming to Capital City from as far as upstate New York and California's central valley, or moving in and out of the state multiple times over a short time period. Higher education was a given. And for at least five participants, it was the requirements of a prestigious graduate school program that brought them to be working in low-income housing projects on the north side of Capital City.

The turning of their gaze outward toward social service was embedded in the context of their lived experiences as well. Clara's prospects were changed when the U.S. went to war after the terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Center on 9/11. She was called back to military service, which also reopened the possibility of education funding, starting a succession of decisions, some of which were false starts, but culminating in a degree program and volunteer experience that have changed her life trajectory. Faith graduated from college at just the moment when the first Black President moved into the White House. So her decision to take on social justice work through a fellowship that would take her to Washington was impacted by what she saw as a hopeful political climate. Riley was already an active member of the national youth-based agricultural organization so prevalent in rural high schools, Future Farmers of America, when she realized the severity of the food crisis in her community. It was a reasonable next step

when she urged her FFA organization to take a role in the crisis and helped reconfigure the group's goals to meet a local food access emergency.

All participants chose to lend their labor to the nonprofit sector in an era in which nonprofit organizations have taken on much of the responsibility of caring for the poor, for immigrants, and for children while the government's neoliberal political and economic policies have eliminated or reduced supportive social programs (Ahn, 2017; Smith, 2017), or tied assistance to excessive controls on families' everyday decisions, including the choices of what food to put on the family dinner table (Dickinson, 2014). Joining a nonprofit as an AmeriCorps service member or an intern was not always a direct and obvious path. Friends or family provided inspiration by suggesting AmeriCorps service, or, for some, AmeriCorps or a fellowship were the most accessible job openings after college graduation for women interested in social justice issues. University social-justice programs regularly utilized internships as part of their educational efforts to connect students with the people whose lives were directly impacted by food insecurity, poverty, or discrimination.

Participants had considerable social capital at their command when making decisions about college majors, or job applications, or whether they could move half way across the country to fill an opening in a nonprofit organization in an unfamiliar city. Sophia and Jessica employed technology to search the internet for information about sex trafficking or unfair labor practices in growing coffee, for example, as they began to pursue a wider interest in social justice issues. Ava and Lilly strengthened an emerging interest in nutrition education by connecting with professors or the department head who suggested internship opportunities. Six women reported experiences during international travel that fundamentally changed their beliefs about hunger, racism, agricultural practices, or sex trafficking or the ways that nonprofit or international development organizations carried out their missions. They were quick to connect revelations from those experiences with goals for their work in nonprofit organizations.

Their stories were filled with struggle and hope and aspiration. Where they were seeking direction or purpose in life, these participants reported finding a path that was satisfying, or at least a way that opened in a promising direction. Participants' narratives also revealed a desire to take the wisdom or excitement that they have gained and to return the energy back to a community where they might serve in a useful capacity. However, as I will illustrate, their narratives are not without tension. Nonprofit work intended to address socially constructed injustice such as food insecurity is often a colonizing space built upon tropes of White privilege (Guthman, 2008a; Slocum, 2006). This was not lost on interviewees in this research project. Many women reported wrestling with new understandings about how their own privilege impeded or impacted their work. The emergence of a consciousness of privilege and its impact on social justice work was often in tension with the everyday work itself. In *Dynamics of Contention*, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2010) suggest that actors involved in contention are not "neatly bounded, self-propelling entities with fixed attributes, but socially embedded and constituted beings who interact incessantly with other such beings and undergo modifications of their boundaries and attributes as they interact"(pp. Kindle locations 759-760). Indeed, women's narratives revealed constant modifications of the boundaries of their understanding of racism, sexism, or class privilege. As they interacted with others in their everyday work, they encountered new conflicts in their own emerging understanding of the meaning and intention behind the work itself and what it meant to become an ally alongside (or behind) frontline communities. In this chapter I offered the narratives of how women became interested in entering food justice activism and advocacy. In the next chapter, I will recount participants' narratives that illustrated how an activist commitment was mediated or transformed through the social and relational interactions of everyday work as interns or AmeriCorps members associated with food justice nonprofit organizations.

CHAPTER V

CHALLENGING BELIEFS AND TROUBLING POSITIONALITY THROUGH THE DAY-TO-DAY WORK OF FOOD JUSTICE EDUCATION

In this chapter I address my second research question which is as follows:

How is an activist commitment mediated through the material, social and relational interactions of the everyday work of food justice education?

For participants, the process of developing a philosophy or unique mindset about social justice work continued and was mediated by the day-to-day interaction on the job. Women challenged their own beliefs and troubled their own positions in justice work as they interacted with people, organizations and systems. Through everyday labor, they develop nuanced philosophies about their work, particularly about their role as allies to other women in frontline communities. They learned to think differently, and thus to act differently. In this chapter I present participants' narratives within four themes that illuminate their experiences while enacting everyday work:

1. Discerning gendered aspects of food justice work
2. Collaborating with the "nonprofit industrial complex"
3. Grappling with privilege
4. Teaching youth and children

Discerning Gendered Aspects of Food Justice Work

Women have a conflicted relationship with physical labor: "Women have less of a sense of ownership and confidence in manual labor."—Ella. Themes that emerged concerning gendered aspects of their work were the conflicted relationship participants had with manual labor, the oppressive role that physical labor played in the lives of women constituents, and the gendered qualities of inadequate urban transportation systems.

Participants noticed a conflicted relationship with physical labor as they conducted agricultural work. On the one hand, women felt a sense of pride in their ability to manage the rigors of physical labor that were required to maintain a large urban garden or farm. On the other hand, some women were intimidated by learning new skills requiring manual labor or the use of unfamiliar tools. Daisy, a White woman in her mid-twenties, discussed this quandary with me over lunch one unseasonably warm fall afternoon. I had signed up through an online volunteer system to work in the community garden where Daisy was a part time manager. Previous to this work, she had served as an AmeriCorps member with two different assignments including Serve Capital City, where she helped write the curriculum for the first Farmville season. Daisy's small stature and slender frame belied her ability to complete the hard work of urban farming. She described what it was like to first realize she had the physical capacity to complete strenuous farm and garden work.

Daisy *When I first started working on these farms for like one week at a time I felt strong. I think that that is definitely a gendered, thing because, I think like not being told that I was strong that often. I feel like I was lucky to have parents that did tell me I was strong, but to do something with my body where I felt strong was a really great experience. Physically strong. Like knowing I was fast. Because I was in production [in] small organic farms, and so feeling that I was strong and fast made me feel good.*

The experience of feeling confident about strenuous physical tasks seemed new to Daisy, and it was a positive sensation. Daisy explained that finding the clothing and gear she needed to accomplish her work was also difficult.

> **Daisy** *Oh man, the tools are just like not made for my body and so it's extra hard to use chain saws in particular. Like the chain break is too far from my hand. Or finding protective gear that is fit for my body, it's really hard.*

Daisy felt frustrated by her struggle to find appropriate work clothes and tools, since work pants, boots and tools were typically sized for men's larger hands and frames. She seemed to experience pride in overcoming those obstacles to complete routine chores.

While Daisy enjoyed employing the physical strength required to be a successful urban farmer, Ella noticed a mental hesitancy among women and girls in attempting new physical tasks, especially those involving the use of unfamiliar tools. Ella worked with many high school interns, both young women and young men as the AmeriCorps member directing Farmville in its last summer associated with Serve Capital City, and she had worked on a large organic farm prior to her AmeriCorps service. She noticed that male workers often attempted new tasks with confidence, whether or not they have the actual knowledge required to complete the task successfully.

> **Ella** *I've noticed just over the course of working in agriculture related things, a big thing I've noticed even in myself, women have less of a sense of ownership and confidence in manual labor, especially in using tools. Especially on the farm that I worked at. But I feel like I've noticed it even just being out on the farm with youth. And seeing, there are definitely exceptions to this for sure. Some of the girls are so gung ho about it. But I feel like there's a timidity. Boys are like "Let's do it!" and less concerned about quality or making sure they know how to do it. It's just like "go!" And the girls are like, "How do I do this?" Especially with any sorts of tools or power tools. They are very much like "Oh I don't know how to do it."*
>
> *I've also talked about this with a lot of people because it makes me so frustrated.*

Ella was perplexed that women (herself included) assumed they needed more instruction or knowledge ahead of the task and seemed less willing to engage in manual labor with confidence and a sense of ownership. In contrast, Ella saw that men and boys were perhaps less concerned about the quality of the outcome before they jumped into the task, whereas women assumed that the process and method of applying the tool might be critical in producing desirable results. She also intimated that women were less willing to boldly occupy agricultural spaces and confidently engage their bodies in manual labor.

Physical labor is a barrier for constituents' ability to participate in alternative agriculture: "I still spent two hours on grocery shopping once a week"—Grace. The rigors of demanding physical labor was a detriment to maintaining productive gardens for constituents, according to participants, because women constituents often engaged in strenuous physical labor at their jobs, while also caring for their households, and thus had little energy left over for the hard work of a garden. Daisy bore witness to this difficulty when she worked for a time as a hotel housekeeper. The physical cost of hours of uninterrupted, back-breaking labor, in exhaustion, injury and wear-and-tear on the body was a reality that many women working in factories and hotels were forced to endure. Daisy also encountered the unsupportive attitude that corporate hotel management showed toward her once she was too badly injured to keep working.

Grace, an intern at Farmville, described the potential physical labor and time involved in food procurement and preparation.

Grace *There's SO many barriers, right? So time is a HUGE one. So if I'm a single mom, and I'm working two jobs, like what I used to do when I lived in a neighborhood that only had liquor stores and you know fast food and barbershops essentially were the only commerce in the area, is I would walk a mile and a half each way to go to the produce store.*

And I was like, well, I'm a student. I've got a job. I don't have free time. I make this work! You know. But also I was carrying groceries for one person. I still spent two hours on grocery shopping once a week. I'm able bodied and I was able to make that walking commute, And not to mention, I spent the amount of money for one week of groceries for myself that I imagine many families spend on their entire families.

And then I take the time to cook it for myself from the whole food. Which is also very time consuming. For me I'm going to make myself a quick dinner means I'm going to spend 45 minutes probably in the kitchen between prep and clean up.

So all of those things, at like a very superficial level, are already inaccessible to a single mother with lots of kids who just simply doesn't have the time, the finances to make that work.

Grace was aware of her privilege as a single woman without children, enjoying the ability to consume fresh, local, healthy produce, even though it was costly in time and labor as well as money. She imagined placing a single mother surviving on a low income in this same scenario and acknowledged that physical labor might present too significant a barrier for women differently positioned than she to enjoy the same fresh food.

Quinn, a White woman in her late twenties, served as director of agricultural programs for a refugee resettlement organization. I contacted her through her email on the organization's web site and we met for our interview at an African restaurant she recommended. Quinn served previously as an AmeriCorps member in an environmental corps, and worked in an organic garden. Later she came home to Capital City and interned at a community garden. Then, in collaboration with women from two other nonprofit organizations, Quinn was able to open a garden program within one of Capital City's refugee resettlement agencies. When the resettlement agency closed in 2016, Quinn moved the garden program into one of the organizations with whom she originally collaborated. Quinn tied language and cultural barriers to the intersectional obstacles women faced in their working lives.

Quinn *I think that for the women that I work with there are a lot of layers of barriers, so many have different literacy levels in their own languages, as well as English. And in the particular context of accessing fresh food through growing it outside of our program, I don't think that there's anything that could meet them where they're at. I think transportation is a huge problem. And just having the responsibilities at home that many of our, most of our participants who are women are mothers, I don't think that they have much time to at least access a fresher, more organic. But money is definitely a determinant.*

Language barriers created difficulties for securing employment. Many of the community gardeners she knew found work at food processing plants, factories or hotels. These locations were often distant from inexpensive housing areas, so transportation was a "huge problem" layered onto the problem of language. Quinn noted the importance of locating community gardens near the neighborhoods and homes where gardeners lived, since they were already spending valuable time commuting to work and caring for their households.

Jessica, who worked part time at Greenfield University's urban farm, connected the lack of adequate child care to women's intersectional barriers concerning labor.

Jessica *I guess as a therapist, I'm a farmer and therapist both, but I've worked with families that came from other countries. They would be educated with college degrees and yet they're working maybe three jobs and typically those jobs are low paying and even lower because they're either not here legally or they're still working to get their visas or whatever.*

So I think because women are impacting their entire families, and so often they're having to work a lot way beyond the hours that most of us would typically work. And so not only are the kids either having to go with mom to work or being kind of the oldest watching the younger ones which isn't always that safe.

Jessica employed her therapist mindset to consider the experiences of immigrant women and the intersectional obstacles to gaining and keeping adequate employment. The lack of adequate, affordable childcare exacerbated the simultaneous burden of labor outside the home and household responsibilities. International inconsistencies in job credentialing systems meant that even well-educated immigrant women might find themselves limited to doing manual labor for low pay.

Inadequate transportation is a gendered issue: "Capital City's public transportation system is still based on a 1960's model."—Faith. Faith identified inadequate transportation as a gendered barrier to accessing fresh and healthy food for women living in public housing.

> **Faith** *There's a couple of intersectional challenges facing just poor communities in general in [Capital City]. One is that the rapid gentrification and development of the city are leaving a lot of people behind, pricing a lot of people out of particular neighborhoods. So it's like in [a neighborhood of public housing], which is one of the neighborhoods that in 2009 we had identified as being a food desert, is now kind of being encroached upon by this movement in [a neighborhood experiencing rapid gentrification]. Right?*
>
> *I think for women in particular, women of color more specifically, I think in low income communities in public housing---most of the organizing I was doing was in public housing projects---one [barrier]is transportation. [Capital City's] public transportation system is still based on a 1960's model in which like black domestic workers were taken from the inner city and kind of parceled out, to places like ___ or ___[well-known wealthy neighborhoods] to work in white folks' homes. And we've never really changed that, or really adjusted our public transportation system.*
>
> *So a trip that in a car to the closest Kroger to [a public housing project] would take MAYBE 10 minutes in a car, ends up taking three hours round trip for somebody living in [those apartment complexes]. I don't know if that's a woman-specific challenge necessarily, but when women are predominantly heads of households in those communities, or are disproportionately taking on the burden of providing for their household, doing the shopping, etc. it becomes a very gendered issue.*

Bus routes in Capital City, according to Faith, were still based on an outdated concept of Black domestic workers traveling to work in White homes, rather than considering current citizens' transportation needs within a very different economic model. As heads of low-income households, and the ones most often tasked with food provisioning, women might be better served with updated routes that made direct connections between low-income housing and full-service retail centers or places of employment. Maintaining a commitment to urban low-income housing, much less affordable, practical transportation, was a challenge for city government in the frenzied real estate market that Capital City was experiencing where entire neighborhoods of subsidized apartments were razed to make way for more upscale, lucrative (to private investors) housing options.

Riley's research, conducted while serving as an intern in her master's degree program at a local food bank, revealed another transportation issue related to the structure of the city's roads and bridges. She discussed her findings related to a zip code that included dense public subsidized housing.

> **Riley** *And the main one was that [zip code] is completely separated by a river from the whole rest of [Capital City]. And there's just two bridges that cross over that river. And I don't even know a how many mile stretch. It was unreal. I could not believe. It was literally like we are RIGHT on the outskirts of [Capital City], you can see downtown, and there's two bridges that get there. And on the zip code side of those bridges there was ONE grocery store. And it wasn't very accessible.*

Transportation options and the mapping of roads and bridges, or pedestrian walkways within Capital City affected the everyday work of women, often creating barriers to conducting household business in a time-efficient and cost-efficient manner, especially for women who did not own private vehicles. Participants recognized these difficulties as food justice issues because they had very real effect on the already overly labor-intensive lives of women constituents, and negatively impacted the quality of food constituents could secure while also conducting other day-to-day business since full-service grocery outlets were typically not located near areas of dense publicly-subsidized housing.

Collaborating with the "Nonprofit Industrial Complex"

Participants in this study conducted their food justice work within the auspices of nonprofit organizations. Learning to navigate the nonprofit world meant learning the power structures that supported or inhibited various visions of how justice work was to be conducted, including interns' and AmeriCorps members' own emerging understanding of justice work. One activist group, Incite!, defined what they call the "nonprofit industrial complex" as, "A system of relationships between the State (or local or federal governments), the owning classes, foundations, and non-profit/NGO social service and social justice organizations"("Beyond the

nonprofit industrial complex," 2014). Participants encountered these interconnected systems mainly through the ways that decisions filtered down to the everyday work they were tasked to complete. Rules or parameters, expectations and common practices concerning how they were to conduct their day-to-day business within the nonprofit organization might have originated in the funding guidelines of foundations that were several steps removed from the intern facing a student across a garden row. In this section, themes emerging from participants' comments include low pay, short-term assignments, restrictions on land use, and the burden of fundraising. That list should not indicate that participants only had criticism for their employing organizations. For the most part, participants reported finding enjoyment or fulfillment, or enlightenment through their labor. However, they were not unaware of the conflicting ripples that sometimes disturbed the smooth-running surface of nonprofit governance and everyday activity, and the ways that interacting with the nonprofit affected their personal lives and their own philosophies about their work and their understanding of the intersectional barriers which constituents regularly confronted.

Low pay: "That would probably be what would put me over the edge if I didn't have [SNAP benefits] unfortunately."—Nora. Several women mentioned low pay as problematic. Nora was completing an AmeriCorps membership working with Serve Capital City in collaboration with a local high school to create an agricultural program and build a greenhouse. She pointed out that the SNAP benefits she received while she was an AmeriCorps member were essential to being able to survive on the low monthly stipend.

Nora *It’s very humbling. I have downsized my belongings by probably half. And being an AmeriCorps member, you’re eligible for being in the SNAP program. And that’s been very eye opening for me. The process was crazy to get it, but I definitely see the immediacy of it is. I probably wouldn’t be able to… that would probably be what would put me over the edge if I didn’t have that, unfortunately. And [participating in SNAP teaches] you not [to] judge people who are in this situation. Because I’m in it now and I understand the decisions you have to make when you don’t… if you can go to the grocery store. So I think that’s part of the learning experience and definitely think it’s on purpose, beyond the fact that they don’t want to pay AmeriCorps members as much. They kind of want you to learn and be on the level of the people you’re serving.*

It appeared evident that Nora, like most participants, had enjoyed relative affluence until she joined AmeriCorps and learned to live on the $1200 monthly stipend. The decisions about what to pay AmeriCorps members, the length of their tenure, and what other benefits to provide service members were made at the federal program level, as part of the conditions of accepting funds. Accepting organizations were required to commit to administering the program as prescribed by the funding organization ("AmeriCorps," 2017). Nora’s experiences made her keenly aware of the limited choices facing women living on low incomes when it came to food procurement. She learned to appreciate the levels of frustration and humiliation that many women endured while navigating the troublesome governmental channels for gaining food benefits such as SNAP or WIC.

Olivia grew up in a family that served in the Salvation Army, so she was resigned to the low pay that seemed inevitable when working in the nonprofit social service sector.

Olivia *But as far as like will I always work in general in ag, food justice things, non-profit work, I love it, you know. And I have that perfect personality that's ok being poor if I'm doing something I believe in you know. <laughs> I've learned to be very frugal. But um, I've worked jobs for money instead and been miserable and so I think [staying in nonprofit work] is a good fit for me.*

Olivia learned to be frugal as a means of compensating for the low pay. She contrasted working at unsatisfying jobs that were more lucrative financially versus a low-paying yet meaningful or fulfilling job. She identified herself as a person who was accepting of low pay as long as the work was something she believed in.

Learning to survive on an AmeriCorps stipend or on school loans or part time work during graduate school required some creative effort at times. After one interview, two AmeriCorps members were thrilled because the table of food that had been offered to board members before their meeting was still available. They set off together, laughing at their own excitement and eagerness, to graze from the table and stock up for future meals.

Quinn enjoyed the boon of free room and board through a church-related organization she had worked for at one time.

> **Quinn** *So in 2010 I moved here to intern with the [Capital City Cooperative Ministry] which at that time was a food bank that had several different missions and I got to be the one and only farm and food systems intern. (Was that a paid internship?) No it was not, but I did have free room and board, so it's great because that's where I still live. (laughter)*
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> *The organization had made a relationship with a family who purchased property in an agriculturally developing area of [Capital City], called _____. Several years back, and I think several times over, that area has fought against commercial development, so it was really neat when I sort of moved into that space. I moved in as several farms were beginning in that area. A lot of young farmers were getting established. And so my role there was to manage a half acre garden and to work in town at the smaller community gardens they had and work at a market. I learned a lot and got connected to a lot of different things through that.*

The housing market in Capital City was exploding, with houses in previously affordable neighborhoods being bought out by developers at a rapid pace. So access to free room and board was something Quinn cherished. This unique opportunity for free housing helped her negotiate the difficulties of low pay, especially while she relied on multiple part-time jobs. The opportunity for free housing was not available to just anyone who needed a place to live. In fact, Quinn was able to navigate and employ considerable social capital by connecting church social justice programs, neighborhood goals for expanding yet controlling agricultural activity and her own education and previous work experience to secure this housing opportunity.

Women's experiences living on little income as AmeriCorps members or graduate students helped them connect to the everyday dilemmas of women living in poverty. Riley

narrated an incident that helped her connect with the ways that some of the women visiting the food bank might think about spending their limited food budget. She was discussing why constituents might walk past a fresh spaghetti squash available on a food bank shelf in favor of selecting something from the collection of canned goods.

> **Riley** *And I'm like, OK until probably 18 months ago I didn't know how to use that! You know? (laughs) And I grew up in a home where A. we farmed and grew all sorts of things and then B. My mom is SO adventurous in trying new foods.*
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> *And I think it was kind of eye opening for me too at that point to realize that that's a special luxury. I was in graduate school when I was doing all this I was broke. I mean I had zero money. And when I would go to the grocery store, when I would see things like a spaghetti squash or an acorn squash, I had to weigh like, do I want to pay money for that, not knowing if I like it, even though it might be a cheaper produce that's on sale that day or whatever?*
>
> *And I remember thinking to myself well I'm not gonna BUY that, because I don't know how to prepare it. Or I don't want to waste my money on something I may not like. And it hit me that that is such a luxury that higher income people have, that we don't even think about. I can pay a couple extra bucks to TRY this item. Low income people can't, when your budget is so tight.*

Riley employed her brief experience of having little to no income during graduate school to understand that spending precious resources on "adventurous" food items or experimenting with new recipes might be considered wasteful for a woman living on a limited income.

Bailey related a conversation with a mother of one of her preschool garden program students that confirmed the important role a garden program might play in solving the sort of dilemma Riley introduced.

> **Bailey** *And a mom came up to our facilitator there and was just like "I just want to say thank you for this." She's like--- I'm gonna tear up talking about it too because it's one of those like side effects we didn't quite anticipate---where she's like "I wanted to try kale, but our food budget is so tight, I couldn't get it and them not eat it. I just couldn't risk that." She's like "And so you gave it to me, and we like it. And we have some to take home and have it again."*

Bailey paused to process the emotion as she described this conversation. She found this moment so powerful because it was evidence that the work she was doing had real impact on the quality

and variety of food a low-income family was able to enjoy. The mother's comments to Bailey indicated that nutrition and thrift were perhaps not as important in decisions about what foods to buy as the sometimes finicky tastes and preferences of children. Bailey noted that children did not have buying power, but they did have nagging power, or, I would add, refusal power, which translated to a controlling stake in what their caretakers purchased at the grocery store. Introducing new foods or recipes to children or even adults in environments where individuals' food budgets were not impacted helped expand the range of healthy food staples within a household.

There were several discussions during interviews about whether urban farming could lead to additional income, or at least might relieve the food budget for low income families. Jessica made the question personal by attempting to assemble and manage her home garden in a manner that might be replicated by anyone living on a minimal budget.

Jessica *I don't feel like I could totally feed myself if I had to be totally self-sufficient. I think I spend too much. Kind of like the book the $60 dollar and something tomato. I forgot the name of it. It's hilarious. It's a great book. And I don't spend that much!*

What I'd like to do is to work in such a way, not only in my own home, but at [the university farm] so that anybody can recreate what we do. In other words, guess what, the neighborhood doesn't have a grant, to do X, Y, Z. I would love to have goats here. But I don't have a fence. How do I afford a fence? So it's that kind of thing. And my husband's asking me questions like, Ok are these goats just for pets like your rabbit? (laughter) Or, you know, are they gonna bring in income at all?

It's like my chickens. They pay for themselves. They didn't for the first couple of years, because I had to have coops built and that kind of thing. They're not free range either, because they go get in my neighbor's yard.

So I created that whole garden out there but, you know, can I live off of it all year? So I have to live very carefully. I can't go out there and buy hundreds of dollars' worth of soil to put in there. So it's like I learned lasagna gardening, so now I'm like any time I find sticks, every time I empty the rabbit hutch pan in the bottom, it goes in there.

So, it's like, I want to more and more be conscious of what this is costing me, and could someone that has even lower income duplicate what I'm doing, and, and survive on it?

Jessica was aware of the popular narrative in alternative agriculture that encouraged growing food on urban lots. Since she found it difficult initially to create her home garden spaces on her family budget, Jessica seemed doubtful that a woman living off of an income lower than hers could manage the start-up costs for a home garden, or for keeping chickens in a backyard coop. Nevertheless, it was important to her to try to enact the values she touted, even in her own backyard.

Though interns and AmeriCorps members endured the low wages with good humor and creativity, they were keenly aware that, for them, this was likely to be a unique, short-lived time period in their lives, unlike many of their constituents for whom poverty would be a lifelong struggle. They would, in all likelihood, return to their middle class or upper class world with little negative affect.

Short term assignments: "So you build these relationships and then you leave."—Daisy. AmeriCorps memberships were typically ten-month assignments. Internships were measured in weeks, rather than months. Eight women I interviewed were active as AmeriCorps members, or had served in some aspect of AmeriCorps service previously. From the perspective of an intern or AmeriCorps member, the transitory nature of their tenure suggested that outcomes from the investment of their labor might not be stable, but easily lost in the transition.

Daisy commented on what she understood as an organizational deficit and a barrier to completing organizational goals when AmeriCorps members rotated in and out of nonprofit positions at a swift pace.

Daisy *Well it's the one year structure. And some AmeriCorps members only stayed for like 6 months. So one year structure with a high turnover rate because you're a professional volunteer. And you're not paid well.*

And I think that one of the bigger problems too with having AmeriCorps members is there's no institutional knowledge that happens. So you build these relationships and then you leave.

I think that like, something that's really beautiful about doing food justice work is that it provides stability, like you grow in the ground every year and you learn from that process and it's stable.

And when you have an AmeriCorps member come in for one year and then they leave, you know, I see one growing season.. It's never gonna work! It's never gonna be sustainable because there's no way to transfer knowledge.

And that's what the really beautiful thing about growing is like you can own knowledge that you have and give it to other people and share it with other people.

Daisy shared her disappointment and concern about the critical need for stability to foster sustained growth in the organizational mission. When interns or AmeriCorps members worked on a particular project, often in cooperation with outside organizations such as schools or youth centers, and that project was interrupted in mid-development and handed to a different AmeriCorps member because workers arrived and departed in ten month installments, Daisy believed institutional knowledge and precious time building relationships was lost.

Daisy *I think that community growing presents its own challenges specifically. You have to be doing a lot of like tending to relationships. It's very easy if you have a farm where you can bring in volunteers to do it all, um, but I find that the group is only as good as the community that we're building. And it's messy.*

I mean a lot of refugees work places like the Tyson chicken plant. They might be cleaning houses. And so that's a barrier to being able to support yourself [if] you're working long hours and you're physically exhausted. I think that if we had more time--if I had more time-- then we would be able to build those relationships more.

Daisy echoed other participants' concerns, noted previously, about the physical cost of women working long hours. The labor required for daily survival created exhaustion, and also inhibited women's ability to maintain relationships in the communities where they lived. Daisy was one of several women who suggested that one solution to the inherent instability of the AmeriCorps model was encouraging the emergence of leadership among frontline community members.

Community leaders would take over the long-term management of a community garden, for example, and the associated nonprofit organization could deploy AmeriCorps members as allies to help community members meet their goals. This would not be an easy task given the difficulty of constituents' exhausting schedules working long hours at jobs, in childcare and in home care tasks.

Nora also viewed turnover as a potential barrier to implementing a successful school greenhouse program at a local high school.

> **Nora** *I think turnover of AmeriCorps members every year will probably be a really big barrier. I'm going to do as much as I can to persuade a more permanent position to oversee this because I think it's a big investment. The greenhouse is a big investment. The program will be a big investment. And I think a lot of teachers are maybe used to seeing outside parties come in and start something and not finish it. And so I don't want that to happen. That's my biggest fear.*

Nora mentioned the seeming futility of spending grant money to build a greenhouse only to let the program falter due to institutional turnover. She also noted that maintaining consistency was important to community relations, in that schools were relatively stable environments but outside groups working on specific programs within schools tended to come and go, leaving unfinished projects behind. This may cause an element of cynicism or distrust between teachers and the organization, if teachers saw limited follow-through.

Daisy and Nora's critique would seem to be borne out in the urban farm camp situation at Farmville, which concluded its final season the summer I followed it. From the time three AmeriCorps members were hired in the fall, until early spring when camp preparations were at their most intense, the two regular staff members, who had been directing youth programming and who held the institutional memory of the programs, resigned their positions and left the nonprofit organization. As I understood the developments, those positions were not filled, and, in fact, the organization chose to end the youth camp programming that they had been running for

about five years in order to focus more on their organizational mission of matching volunteers to nonprofit and governmental organizations. Although the AmeriCorps members I spoke to certainly understood the greater good of the organization, they still felt the let-down of being the crew that ended what they clearly felt was a valuable and valued program. They felt the urban farm camps they facilitated were well-run in the end. However, there was some frustration during the months-long planning stage, since they were working from written records and lesson plans, without the benefit of daily conversation with someone knowledgeable about the previous years.

Not all participants viewed the short tenure of their internship or AmeriCorps membership as a deficit. Besides fulfilling a desire to serve their communities, most AmeriCorps members and interns were looking for job experience and life experience that could be helpful in boosting their careers, or getting a foot in the door as regular employees of social service nonprofit organizations.

> **Nora** *I've done a lot of job searches and people require all this two-year experience in the field. And I'm like "Where do you get that?" And so AmeriCorps is a good way for people to gain more responsibility in a role and get some background. And we all have our own things that we do and so I can say that I manage this project and can say that I engage these volunteers. And so, I think as a résumé builder and, honestly, as a life experience of living close to the poverty line.*

Each of the AmeriCorps members had specific responsibilities associated with a unique project such as developing curriculum, creating and implementing youth service opportunities, or managing volunteers. So, Nora suggested that, despite the low pay and short tenure of the assignment, they might use that experience to develop a marketable resume. Participants entered their service year to support people who lived in communities where food access was a problem, through the mission of the nonprofit they chose. They also considered their work to be an important step into a permanent position in a nonprofit, governmental office or private business.

Restrictions on land use: "We don't own our land right now but I think that would be just an amazing thing if we collectively owned the land."—Daisy. After a major flood of the city in 2010, large stretches of land where houses had been inundated in previous flood incidents were condemned for continued use for housing. On several of these river and creek-side plots of flood plain, the city allowed nonprofit organizations to manage community gardens. Daisy, who managed a small community garden run by two African immigrant sisters, was concerned about what happened to small, less well-funded community efforts when city workers decided gardens were an eyesore, or nuisance. Daisy explained her concerns.

Daisy *I think that also community ownership of the land is just so important, but it all comes back to owning land. We don't own our land right now but I think that would be just an amazing thing if we collectively owned the land. That would be a really special thing, and would allow for resiliency for a lot of programs or community gardens.*

It's like if the city owns your land---we're so grateful to have this land---but like if someone else owns the land something could always happen to it. It's like community gardens being razed to the ground. That's often a race thing. It's usually going to be the neighborhood of color growing projects that are eliminated because I mean like the small picture is that they say it looks messy, you know. Or they're unsafe or you can't go hanging out there at night or something like that. It's like people were hanging out in a garden at night? That sounds great! <laughs> I mean you don't see pretty gardens outside of White private schools leveled.

Daisy alternated between gratitude that the nonprofit organization had free access to city land and worry that city officials might decide to "clean up" areas that looked messy, or unkempt, as gardens often did in and out of the growing season, by eliminating the garden altogether. Small garden plots were unique to the cultural background and preferences of the gardeners/farmers, often featured make-shift trellises or stakes, and were unsecured, since the organization could not afford fencing. Daisy feared the razing of their work. She saw this as a race-based way of policing city property. She had noticed that attractive gardens located in affluent neighborhoods associated with schools serving largely White populations were not razed indiscriminately as sometimes occurred in low-income neighborhoods. Daisy saw collective ownership of property

as a solution which would provide opportunity for empowerment and resiliency as the group grew and experimented with new methods.

Clara also commented on the consequences of using municipal land according to the rules delineated by the city, rather than owning the land. She noted first of all that the city did not give away the use of prime property.

> **Clara** *And the tough part is that in the urban area they don't give away good land. They give away dirty land that has had industrial waste that nobody can grow anything on. And that is how the urban farm came to be. And I'm ok with that. And so it's tough enough to farm anyway. And if you're having to deal with grants and people supporting you and non-profits, you know [Serve Capital City] has that BIG umbrella that covers that, which is great. And that's a wonderful place to be.*
>
> *But if they're in a metro park then that allows them only to work in a very specific educational kind of setting. There are other models to choose from.*

The economic reality was that the city would most likely allow nonprofit organizations to use land free of charge because it was too "dirty" (possibly from toxic waste) to use for other purposes. Clara also commented that land use rules allowed educational activity, but not necessarily the entrepreneurial endeavors that she thought were important to community development. For example, the nonprofit that she volunteered with allowed workers to give away produce to students who visited from local youth centers, or to organizations that focused on food security. However, the rules did not allow for the sale of garden products, even if they were produced through an educational program run by students. Clara saw this as unfortunate since funding was always a challenge and nonprofit organizations relied heavily on grants and donations. In her estimation, loosening the rules for nonprofits to sell the products they produced might ease the funding burden.

Even for those who were permanent, long-term residents of Capital City, and who owned their own property, city rules precluded or limited some types of agricultural endeavors.

Clara *Yeah, and I don't know if I would be able to produce enough. I can't legally farm in my home. I can hang out in the backyard and feed ourselves because of the rules of the hobby farms in [the state]. $5,000 dollars is all I can net. So it could cost me $10,000 dollars. So I wouldn't really be making money on it. And I can't have chickens because of my homeowners' [association agreement].*

By the rules of Clara homeowner's association, she could not raise or slaughter chickens on her own property. Most families affected by food insecurity in urban areas did not own enough property to house animals. A ceiling on profits generated from a hobby farm also restricted land owners from making enough income to truly address food insecurity.

Participants found that the communal sharing of land for garden spaces through a nonprofit organization, whether on donated land, on city land or on land owned by the organization, was a viable alternative to citizens individually owning enough land to grow food. Families could "own" their own small garden plot for a season within larger community gardens, sometimes free of charge, and sometimes for a small fee. Deciding who controlled the borrowed land was potentially problematic, as Daisy acknowledged, since city land was ultimately under the control of city employees, even city maintenance crews who might randomly decide to "clean up" a garden site; or, so Daisy feared based on media and social media reports of past incidents. Sometimes organizational staff set the parameters for plot size and fees, and controlled access to tools. Sometimes groups of gardeners banded together to make communal decisions. All plots were subject to city or residential community laws or ordinances applicable to animal husbandry and yard maintenance, meaning the range of options for land was out of the hands of individual owners or organizations.

The burden of fundraising: "Funding is very hard."—Daisy. None of the women I spoke with described funding initiatives that were tightly tied to frontline communities' expressed needs and goals. Further research might examine how much participation frontline community members did indeed have in the nonprofit funding decisions. The women I interviewed pointed to

some concerning elements that they were aware of even from the location of their temporary positions within nonprofit communities.

Funding was always a difficulty for small organizations, according to Daisy, in ways that larger nonprofit organizations may not experience as acutely.

> **Daisy** *Funding is very hard. I think that, a lot of the nonprofits that I've worked for, they're very much a part of the non-profit industrial complex. And they have lots of big donors. Also I think that there's some funding things that are more in the favor of big foundations.*

Larger nonprofit organizations, in Daisy's experience, were more attractive to individuals and companies willing to donate larger sums. They were also part of what Daisy called the "non-profit industrial complex" in that they had established private and governmental pipelines for steady funding. Reliance on a network of public and private funding also included adherence to stipulations laid out in grants or endowments, which often meant funders shared decision-making power.

Frontline communities that endured low wages, lack of affordable housing, joblessness, etc. over a period of time often found themselves the target of research and funding efforts from academic institutions and nonprofit organizations. Kayla told a story that perhaps best illustrates the work and rewards required in forming the trusting relationships and good communication that were foundational to effective community partnerships and, conversely, the devastation that could occur when researchers failed to take time to understand the communities which they studied. She told the story of her work alongside "Miss Paula" during her year as part of AmeriCorps's Food Corps.

Kayla *I met a woman named Miss Paula…She lives and has lived her entire life in a trailer park on ____road and it is known as like the roughest trailer park in the county. Um, I would probably say like 100% African American. The structural racism of this county that I lived in was astounding coming from a big city. It was startling when I got there, it was startling. And her community in this trailer park was one of those that was just an out of sight out of mind kind of thing and then a mile and a half down the road is the town of ______where it's all the old money folks and all the people that have moved in and renovated like these old plantation homes and um, folks that actively try and shut down Black-owned businesses, and uh, it's a very interesting place.*

Kayla identified the structural racism that created separate, invisible living spaces for poor Black residents, compared to the highly visible White, wealthy housing enclaves nearby. Perhaps motivated by a desire to improve property values, White land owners sought to eliminate poorer properties they considered unsightly or unfit for inclusion in newly upscale neighborhoods. Since those properties were often Black-owned businesses, Kayla recognized the drive to close them as an example of structural racism. Since Miss Paula's trailer park was "out-of-sight, out-of-mind, it was "allowed" to remain. Kayla found this arrangement "astounding" since she had moved from Capital City to work in this rural community in a neighboring state. This was hard evidence of the racism she had an academic knowledge of but had not seen before in person. Kayla then described Miss Paula's active leadership in a community garden at her trailer park.

Kayla *So Miss Paula is a community leader to the bone, compassionate, beautiful, amazing woman. She started a community garden in her trailer park and uh, she shared the produce with all her neighbors, taught all her neighbors how to cook with it, figured out the issues with why people weren't showing up and tackled them. She's like 85 and uses a cane. I mean you should see her out there! She'll get somebody else to mound up the rows but she goes out there with her cane and pokes a hole and bosses somebody around and tells them to put a pea plant, or a pea seed in it, you know. I mean it's just like, she's just amazing! And the compassion and passion that she has for her work and her community and what she thinks is right is, is inspiring.*

Miss Paula inspired Kayla's admiration and respect because, despite her age and disability, she created a community garden for herself and her neighbors and actively led the difficult physical labor involved in maintaining the garden. Kayla recognized Miss Paula's leadership skills in

planning, trouble-shooting and implementing this community-led project. She also recognized that Miss Paula needed more resources than she had access to.

Realizing that the community garden could benefit from additional funds, Kayla was excited to hear about a group of academic researchers who offered cash in return for a community survey. Kayla related an extended conversation that changed how she thought about researchers and outsiders interacting in research settings without taking time to establish trust.

> **Kayla** *Her garden was doing just fine and then a group of researchers from a certain university wanted to come in and like, help. They wanted to give her some money, and of course they needed money, but like they were also doing research, and so at the time in my head I'm like that sounds great, yeah, let them do some research, let's get some cash into this garden.*
>
> *But [Miss Paula's] viewpoint on it was one of the most eye-opening experiences for me because she was saying "Kayla, they showed up the first day that they were going to collect data, using me as a like "in" to the community. And they came with packets of paper that were like 4 pages thick with yes or no questions and they say that they're anonymous but you still have to put your mother's maiden name and the date of birth of your, you know, the month of your birthday and we all know they can trace it back and I don't want to put on there what I've been eating. That's embarrassing! And I don't want to talk about if I'm on SNAP or not."*
>
> *You know, all of these things that like, when she was explaining to me it's like of course that's humiliating! So that and many, many other conversations I had with her gave me a lot of insight into always remembering that folks are not coming from the same place as you at all, ever.*
>
> *Um, which I pray and I hope and I think that that has shaped kind of like how I approach my work. And food education and food justice work .And any food system work really is sensitive because food has such a heavy weight of where you as an individual have been, and you as a culture have been. And that's something I didn't know.*

Kayla began the narrative with observations based on her own positionality about the value of Miss Paula allowing the research team to have access to the garden and her neighbors. However, the conversation revealed to Kayla that research and funding efforts can be understood very differently, depending on a woman's standpoint in the research effort: something the visiting researchers apparently did not understand or consider. Kayla lamented the loss of Miss Paula's volunteers due to the clumsy way the research team handled their investigation.

Kayla *So she didn't have any money, and so she had to accept help from researchers for the money, and then those researchers came in and scared off 90% of her volunteers. They like never came back after that day so she had to start from scratch. It was devastating.*

And when folks stepped into help she felt like there wasn't enough communication on the front end as far as them getting to know the community before diving in with like these tools that they thought would help.

Miss Paula's solution to this difficulty would have been to work on communication and relationship "on the front end." Building trust through establishing relationship and communication before initiating a research project, or perhaps choosing research methods that depended upon authentic communication, might have forestalled the unforeseen consequences of losing the labor and interest of Miss Paula's neighbors; a consequence that surely researchers interested in community gardens would not have advocated. Perhaps in part because of the evident communication failures embedded in Miss Paula's story, Kayla felt happy about the relationship she was able to build with Miss Paula.

Kayla S*o, I was blessed to be able to know her. And I still check in with her now that I've moved back here. They harvested so much this summer from the garden and she just made a mess of stuff. I'm just really blessed to have met her and to continue to be in touch with her.*

And it was interesting too because, when I first met her, she was very like not into it. She was like "Here's just another White AmeriCorps lady who's gonna leave in a year and a half and like why would I invest time in this person?" You know? Which is totally fair and I don't deserve [favor] from anybody, you know? But you gotta earn it, and I did with her, which was thrilling. It was awesome. It was awesome. And she became my adopted grandmother. She's always feeding me.

Kayla did not take lightly the trust and acceptance Miss Paula showed Kayla. Despite the difficulties, Miss Paula's community garden remained an ongoing successful enterprise, as evidenced by the "mess of stuff", or abundance of output that they were able to harvest and preserve in the most recent growing season. Kayla then turned to how she could apply the new knowledge to her career in food justice work. She understood conversations like this one with

Miss Paula as essential in shaping her personal philosophy of how she could do her work more respectfully and effectively.

> **Kayla** *And now looking back I mean I can see it in my own life, like of course I grew up fat and unhealthy, because, you know, living in [Capital City] my mom, you know, didn't give a shit. You know?*
>
> *Like that's just what we ate, that's what all my friends were eating. So even thinking like on the micro level, I understand what that means to me.*
>
> *And then when I zoom out I can see what it means culturally in the South, and then when I think about like other ethnicities, like when I think about other African Americans and when I talk to Miss Paula I understand that agriculture does not mean the same thing for me as a White woman as it does for her as an old Black woman.*

Kayla discussed the changes she experienced, beginning with revising how she understood her own upbringing, to now being able to glimpse the perspective of an older, Black woman living in poverty. Kayla learned that her perspective was but one position within a shifting and interconnected matrix of domination in which other women endured multiple oppressions she would never understand through direct experience. What is more, Kayla understood the necesity as an ally of privileging frontline community women's positionality in research and resistance efforts over her own, or that of other organization staff, even when it might mean rejecting some sources of funding.

Faith explained the difficulty of researchers' habit of approaching the same residents of a certain demographic repeatedly to gather data or provide evidence for grant funding.

> **Faith** *But, you know these are also communities that are used to being surveyed, used to being used as grant opportunities. (laugh) And so a program might come in for two or three years until funding dries up and it's out of there. So you know it's hard to maintain an ethic of trust within a community when that community feels like it's just being used, again, by organizations and institutions that don't reflect back either with their hiring practices or their boards or any of the communities that they purport to serve.*

Faith pointed out that maintaining "an ethic of trust" was impossible if communities felt used by researchers to create programs that may or may not come back to benefit the community on which the research was based. Faith's experiences included working with a program that assisted women in signing up for SNAP benefits in poor neighborhoods of urban public housing in Capital City. Even though Faith worked in urban neighborhoods and Kayla worked in rural areas, the same potential imbalance of power was evident in both settings. Both Kayla and Faith realized that developing trust was essential, and was not to be earned without honoring the vision and agency of those they served.

Willow suggested that grant funding requirements might not always match the ways that actual human relationships operated in the real world.

> **Willow** *It's really hard, from what I understand, to fund community led [initiatives]. There's not as much money out there especially because grants are so heavily focused on proven returns and being able to measure like SROI [Social Return on Investment] and stuff like that. Um, and it has become---not that I'm like blasting academia cause that's the world I'm currently in---but it's like you have to have like proven results, and it's more formulaic and much more like the ways of the scientific world. But that's not how the human world actually operates and so I think a big barrier, aside from like within the lives of the people who could, should, would be like leading these initiatives, is that there's not money accessible to them for a wide variety of reasons. But it's just like the reality of the way grants are structured. And [also because] you know, our government is structured in a way that it has to come through grants because we don't really actually have social services through our government.*

Willow critiqued the strict scientific analyses required by some grant funders to prove an adequate return on their financial investment. She saw them creating more barriers instead of building relationships when it came to funding community initiatives. Because of this funding pattern, small-scale community initiatives had minimal access to funding compared to projects organized by nonprofit organizations with financial backing from academic or governmental institutions with ties to foundations.

On the other hand, Harper, who has worked in the governmental policy world in Washington D.C. for several years, noted that, earlier in her career, she might have been less frustrated about funding projects had she truly understood funding options.

> **Harper** *I wish I would have known some of the ins and outs of the policy world so that I could funnel folks more easily to federal policy so that they could help address some of their local level needs through federal policy. It was just this big confusing world for me five or six years ago.*
>
> *So when I was in [Capital City] and we were complaining that we didn't have enough beginning farmer support, or enough support for farm to school grants, or you know, the programs that we wanted to see for farmers markets, I didn't understand a lot of that actually went to the federal level, and how the federal policy actually affected those issues. So if I had known all of that then I would have tried to make those connections sooner.*

Harper now understood more clearly the ties between local initiatives and federal funding sources and how her newly acquired knowledge could have benefitted her in the past. Her position in capital City did not provide education on the federal funding process. It was left up to the individual to self-educate on this and other issues.

Quinn described a shared funding system an immigrant garden program found useful.

> **Quinn** *So we have what we called the Garden Bucks Program. Where everyone who comes into the program and pays a program fee, which is a pretty good deal given the amount of things provided with it. So they pay $35 in our community garden, and then receive $100 in our garden store, garden bucks credit. Which they can buy seeds, transplants, compost, row cover, like season extensions, and pest control. That is, that way we kind of modeled it after a group in Kansas to show the transparency of cost. So that if someone were wanting to do it on their own, they would know. We do have the benefit, however, of buying in bulk, right? But hopefully the future of that same kind of principle of buying in bulk and sort of sharing that better cost can be replicated by communities, versus an organization.*

The goal of such transparency in sharing the costs associated with gardening was to encourage community gardeners to move away from dependence on the organization. Quinn envisioned either individuals creating their own gardens, or groups of family members or neighbors working collaboratively to share costs outside of an official nonprofit structure.

Participants reported pointedly directing funds within established organizations such as Future Farmers of America, and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America to assist with work addressing food insecurity. And the nonprofit organizations with which they worked obviously raised funds for programs that were intended to address poverty and hunger. Other participants worked to connect individual constituents with federal and state emergency food assistance, or with benefits such as SNAP or WIC. No participants reported teaching grassroots community leaders how to seek and deploy academic research to help define or explore community need, in order to procure foundation or government-based funding. As Harper observed, nonprofit employees themselves often did not understand the resources available through private or governmental institutions. While Serve Capital City's mission was to support local social service organizations through volunteer labor, there were no entities reported that helped grassroots nonprofit organizations learn about and utilize funding options. This discrepancy might have been a result of the limited purview of this research project, rather than an actual omission in essential resources grassroots organizations would need to flourish financially. If it was true, however, that information about the ties between research and funding was generally not available to grassroots organizers, then those organizers might rightfully assume that research and philanthropic foundations were yet more examples of the ways a patriarchal, White racist system shuts them out of essential resources.

Participants found that working for nonprofit organizations gave them access to what they believed to be worthwhile projects in the effort to change the daily realities of living with food insecurity. Nonprofit funding supported their (meager) salaries, and backed diverse infrastructure such as a greenhouse, a barn, or garden fencing. Through their association with nonprofit organizations, they were part of a greater community of women doing food justice work, which gave their work visibility and structure. On the other hand, these benefits came with

low pay, insecure employment, and an obligation to adhere to the many rules and restrictions surrounding funding and project implementation.

Grappling with Privilege

Participants seemed cognizant, to varying degrees, of the ways that privilege and power worked within their personal stories to initially provide them with employment and service opportunities within nonprofit organizations. And many understood the ways that privilege manifested itself within the nonprofit organization itself as they conducted the routine practices of everyday social service work. In this section, participants discuss privilege in three themes: the differentiated nature of nonprofit visibility, nonprofit organizations as White spaces, and learning the boundaries of allyship.

The differentiated nature of nonprofit visibility: "According to Mary, teams of cooks often volunteer together at consistent intervals."—Field Notes, Oct. 5, 2015 The public visibility of food justice nonprofit organizations was not uniform across organizations, but varied widely. By visible, I mean that information about the organization was easily searchable on publicly accessible online and social media sources and in print and broadcast media. Even a surface-level examination of these media outlets indicated a difference across class and race. A comparison of the websites and volunteer experiences with two nonprofit organizations, one White woman-led, and the other Black woman-led, will illustrated some discrepancies in visibility.

I interviewed three participants who were staff members of "Capital City Fresh Food," a nonprofit organization with the mission of growing, cooking and sharing good food, in order to build community and alleviate hunger. All three participants had been AmeriCorps members in other settings before joining this staff. Many other participants spoke respectfully and positively

about volunteering with Capital City Fresh Food, even when they were working in other organizations.

According to the organization web site, Capital City Fresh Food employed fifteen staff members. Fourteen of the staff members, including the director were women, and two of those fourteen women were Black, while twelve were White. Twenty-one board members represented financial and health care institutions, multi-national construction firms, attorney and consulting firms, and retail businesses. Almost half of board members were listed as "community volunteers," rather than by their professional or job ties, possibly indicating a concerted effort to include a variety of community voices in decision-making. Thirty-two corporate or foundation donor organizations contributed from $1,000 to more than $20,000 each in the last year. Eight churches supported the nonprofit, including the church on whose property the nonprofit was located. That church allowed the organization to occupy rent-free office, garden and kitchen spaces, and paid for water and electricity. Annual fundraiser tickets sold for $250 for a meal prepared by chefs from several states, and was served in a local boutique hotel. More expensive tickets sold for $1000 and included an evening with local musicians and songwriters at a popular venue. More than 6,000 volunteers helped make their work happen in a one-year period. The thousands of meals they prepare were delivered in food trucks around the city daily to after school programs, ESL and GED classes and other community organizations. Food trucks were painted with the nonprofit's cheerful brightly-colored logo. Organization personnel updated Twitter and Facebook feeds routinely. They have been featured on local news media.

The organization grew vegetables in their own gardens, sometimes in collaboration with community groups, and gleaned fresh food from nearby grocery stores and markets. Volunteers helped in the gardens and in the kitchen to prepare and deliver over 3000 meals each month. Online sign-ups to volunteer for this organization filled up days, sometimes weeks, ahead for garden, kitchen and delivery crews. On the day I volunteered there, several White students from

a local church-related university were helping in the garden, and seven to ten other mostly White men and women were busy in the kitchen. Staff members kept the garden work and the kitchen moving along cheerfully. I noted that the garden was well-kept and well-supplied with resources as well as volunteers. A neat fence surrounded the garden behind the orderly white house that occupied one end of the parking lot of the sponsoring church on a broad boulevard.

The routine sight of logoed Capital City Fresh Food food trucks going about their business on a daily basis expanded visibility to communities in which they served fresh, hot meals. Every sponsorship through churches, corporations or foundations multiplied the nonprofit's visibility within those groups. Thousands of volunteers took their experiences back to their families or friends or co-workers, further expanding the positive reputation and an understanding of the organization's mission and work out to the broader community.

I contrast that experience to my volunteer work with another Capital City food justice nonprofit organization, "New American Gardens." When I asked specifically for leads to women of color led community gardens, several women mentioned New American Gardens. I found a 2014 introductory article about the organization in its founding summer on a state-wide newspaper's online feed and checked for social media presence. Their Facebook page had not been updated recently. The organization's web site was a one-page introduction produced on a do-it-yourself platform which provided a basic mission statement and contact information. Their funding base appeared to be minimal, with no corporate sponsorships. A donation button on the web site invited individual donations. I later discovered that the founders were often busy working full-time jobs, so the garden was a part-time occupation. When I checked in to monitor progress on the website six months later, I found that the website had closed.

These factors were indicative of the reality of starting a new nonprofit organization without the benefit of an extensive network of well-connected supporters. Leaders and fellow

gardeners used spare time they might have after working long hours to do the basic infrastructure and maintenance activities that the garden required. Maintaining a vibrant social media presence and actively seeking financial support did not fit into the grinding daily schedule of work and home labor.

The garden itself was easy to miss in the grassy neighborhood park. The site was a flood-prone five acre green space in a working-class neighborhood that the city had designated for community gardens. A dense riparian border of trees and shrubs grew thick along the creek bank, obscuring the stream from view at street level. A pile of wood chips formed a compost pile near the biggest oak tree. It was a late October morning, but the weather had remained warm enough for herbs and even a few late tomatoes to cling to wire trellises in the ten to twelve small rectangular garden plots amid drying stalks. Untended grass had grown tall around the garden areas.

New American Gardens had secured enough funding through donations to employ Daisy, a part time garden manager. She attended a training session sponsored by Serve Capital City to learn how to invite volunteers through their online sign-up system in an effort to gain visibility and the much-needed labor of volunteers. She put that training to work with a late-season garden clean-up day advertisement on Serve Capital City's web-based volunteer calendar, which was reposted on a feminist collective Facebook feed to which I have access. Since I had been eager to meet the African immigrant women who ran this community-based garden, which Daisy managed, I signed up online to volunteer. When I arrived at the designated location, I found I was the only volunteer who had responded, and Daisy, who was a White woman in her mid twenties, was the only garden community member present. We worked side by side for a couple of hours. A male friend of Daisy's also arrived, and a young man who was passing by stopped to help us clear weeds and dig in compost.

After we finished, we cleaned up our work area and stored and locked our tools in a portable trailer that the nonprofit had purchased. Someone had broken the trailer lock since Daisy had been there last, but we laughed that they must have been disappointed to find only an old push mower and a few shovels among the scattered rakes and garden forks inside the trailer. There was nothing worth stealing.

The contrast between the visibility of two different organizations was illustrative of the way that different nonprofit organizations can occupy differing locations on a matrix of domination (Collins, 1991). Capital City Fresh Food's original organization was quickly supported by a large, affluent, White church located in a neighborhood known for private schools and high-end retail. White women who were not employed because they were retired or because husbands supported them were the organization's most faithful volunteers. The gardens and kitchen spaces on the church property were attractive and located in a "safe" (White, upper class) neighborhood, which attracted teams of corporate volunteers. Their mission was simple and perceived to be valuable enough for foundation and corporate boards to feel comfortable donating money, which they assumed would be well spent, since respectable members of the financial and business community served on the board.

New American Gardens struggled for three growing seasons and then closed. Occasional volunteer teams, recruited among groups of like-minded feminist friends, typically, helped clear garden spaces or pulled weeds or mulched beds, but help was too inconsistent to be transformative. The garden was located in a working class, mixed-race neighborhood, which was not necessarily unsafe, but was perhaps less familiar to women who made a career out of volunteering. There was no apparent infrastructure, no buildings or restrooms or even a pavilion for shade, since the gardens were located in a flood zone. Funding was inconsistent and it was unclear on the website what any donations might be spent on, although it was visually obvious that the gardens could use an infusion of cash for basic infrastructure if for nothing else.

Invisibility is perhaps not always a guarantee of failure for nonprofit organizations, or a negative quality. In the beginning seasons of a nonprofit's life, some invisibility may be beneficial as grassroots organizers learn the ins and outs of running a nonprofit and solidify their mission and vision. Faith pointed that successful grassroots agricultural endeavors had been happening for generations, even though they might be relatively invisible to the larger society.

Faith *I wrestle with also [acknowledging] Southern cooperative organizations of black and brown farmers who have been doing this work for thirty years but didn't call it the trendy names we call it now. It's striking to me, especially in the South, people have been growing their own food and surviving for a very, very long time. And that's really real, you know; and* ***creatively*** *surviving for a long time.*

And so, although it may not be named in a way that is discernible to like a foundation doing a fellowship (so I think sometimes with a funder mindset now), it may not make sense to a funder based in New York City, or it may not make sense to a national advocacy organization in DC. It doesn't sort of fit their parameters or metrics or labels. I don't know. I think there are a lot of creative things happening, because they've always been happening. And I want to lift that up and honor that, as well.

Faith, who created a nonprofit organization after she completed divinity school, was personally familiar with the intersecting benefits and disadvantages of working through a well-known nonprofit structure to achieve a social outcome. She pointed out that, for generations, "Southern cooperative organizations of black and brown farmers" had achieved their goals without the formalized funding systems that she dealt with and depended upon. As someone adept at navigating the nonprofit community within the larger political system, she paused to honor the accomplishments of grassroots agricultural communities who had simply relied upon one another, since financial and other resources White communities enjoyed were often not available to communities of color. Faith emphasized that, though these communities might not fit the model commonly associated with successful social justice organizing, they survive, and survived creatively, a distinction she admired and wanted to illuminate.

Nonprofit organizations as White spaces: "All the organizations that I think of off the top of my head are dominated by women, mostly white women."—Kayla. Most participants I interviewed spoke about the prevalence of White women in leadership in nonprofit organizations. This was noteworthy because the populations whose experiences of injustice the nonprofits sought to remedy were largely people of color. Faith noted the discrepancy between the people who populated frontline communities and those who led nonprofit organizations. She called this as an institutional challenge.

> **Faith** *You know I feel challenged sometimes because when I look at the populations that we were serving in Nashville---especially with our food stamp outreach and advocacy program, which were I want to say predominantly people of color, but very low income, lots of people of color, and poor white folks in Nashville---and who actually staffs those organizations (laughs). I was like, as I take a survey, right? Of the landscape of the different food-related nonprofit organizations, there were a lot of well-meaning like liberal white women in their 30's and 40's (laughs lightly) who have no direct connection to the communities that they were working with. Which made it a really isolating place to be as a person of color…And you know the question of access, not only for the beneficiaries of our programs, but also access to jobs in that sector, for frontlines communities, feels like a real institutional challenge to me.*

Faith made the point that there were vibrant organizations that were led by people of color, such as Growing Power in Milwaukee and The Peoples Grocery in Oakland, but she did not see that scenario repeated in Capital City. Faith felt that communities of color were challenged and isolated by the reality that White women with no direct connections to those communities were the most visible actors in change efforts while community members did not have access to jobs in the nonprofit sector.

Kayla, who is a White woman in her twenties, also acknowledged the same landscape that Faith noticed, in which White women dominated in leadership.

> **Kayla** *Even here in [Capital City], like all the organizations that I think of off the top of my head are dominated by women, mostly White women. Um, and I don't want to sound like I think that's a bad thing, cause I think that this work is important and it needs to be done period, you know? Um, I do think though that community-based grassroots movements that are led by the folks that are um, most affected by the issue at hand are the most effective, the most impactful movements.*

In Kayla's opinion, food justice work was too important not to do, but the "most impactful" work would be led by "the folks that are most affected by the issue at hand." This was an issue that Kayla noted also occurred in government partnerships with school lunch programs as well as in local nonprofits. Currently in her first job after her AmeriCorps service, she felt an uncomfortable dissonance in being in leadership in a farm-to-school program as a White woman where most of the women who ran local school kitchens were women of color. She regretted not having time to make the kinds of connections to people that she worked with in school kitchens that she made during her AmeriCorps membership. Because of the nature of the job, she was in and out of schools, acting as the "bureaucrat" who made and enforced the rules.

Kayla *So like we're the folks that are like regulating the programs and like coming in and enforcing the rules so we're like the people in power and we're not representative of our state at all. Or of the staffs of our school nutrition programs which are primarily women of color. And that makes me uncomfortable… So I don't know what to do with that yet.*

And it really, on a really deep level, it, it, it affects me and makes me very uncomfortable because it's so different from my previous job in a lot of ways and in that way, that, that is something that's so important to me that that dissonance is really uncomfortable.

In the position that I'm in now, I don't have the time. I don't have the time but I don't have the face to face interactions with people and enough to build those relationships where I can get to that point. And so instead I'm now like part of the big bad state that's coming in to like audit your program and that feels terrible because something that is so important to me is those personal relationships that spread goodness rather than um, confirm stereotypes.

Kayla's cognitive dissonance existed because of her role as a White woman in a capacity that did not allow her to make personal connections with the communities of color that she routinely encountered in her work, or to engage community leadership, which contradicted her deepening awareness of intersectional oppression that communities outside of her own experience lived with every day.

As a nonprofit leader whose staff had doubled in the last year, Bailey felt deeply her responsibility to hire employees that represented the communities they served.

Bailey *I have felt incredibly self -conscious about being a White woman in this role though. Because a lot of the children we serve are young children of color. Um, and so really we're making an effort to reach out to those communities and see who wants to come alongside and become an educator with us, because I think it's really important that those young people see people who look like they do.*

Bailey advertised her open positions among friends at farmers markets frequented by people of color, and she talked to personnel in agriculture and nutrition university programs to attempt to widen her search. She understood why some people of color might feel averse to choosing an agricultural career.

Bailey *I also feel like there's a lot of baggage with land and farming in the South with the ugly scar that is slavery. And it's fair enough if you come from a family where you're like , no, I come from a family that did that. I'm not doing that anymore. But it's also pretty powerful to take that back and make it your own I think.*

Her goal was to offer a place of employment that not only empowered the children they taught, but also built community among staff members so that growing food together became a healing narrative for anyone who might step out to join them.

Faith pointed out that, though she shared the same race as most of her constituents, she was considered "different" among many because of other elements of her positionality.

Faith *I think it made a difference that I was a person of color going into these communities. But I was also a graduate student at ______. Right? Who is from CHICAGO, you know, so I didn't sound like I was from, you know, the South. So there were certain levels, I think, there were certain ways that my identity was able to break down some barriers. But it was very clear that I was DIFFERENT. And real different.*

Several factors made Faith different than the communities she served. Her work was organized through her master's degree program at a prestigious university. Her Northern speech patterns marked her as an outsider. Still, she believed that sharing part of her positionality as a woman of color was important to help break down barriers and achieve trust.

Learning the boundaries of allyship: "It would just be these White people going to a different country to kind of give them what we think they need."—Sophia. Daisy paused to consider her role as a relatively affluent White woman doing social justice work.

> **Daisy** *I've been thinking a lot about what my role was as a White woman in this work. Food insecurity education work is a lot of White women. And I think that that comes from a White savior thing that exists. I mean like, what do I know about the experiences of someone that is Black and poor? Like what do I really know? I'm qualified in order to be able to change those things because..? I will never know as much as that person. And so, for me it's a question of allyship more than being an instructor and imparting knowledge.*

Daisy questioned whether she was qualified to teach about food justice because she could not speak from direct life experience. Daisy resolved this dilemma for herself to some extent by being selective as to which organizations she volunteered with and which organizations she sought to be affiliated with as an employee. She rejected the prominent "white savior" narrative and chose to practice solidarity as an ally who supported the work of women who were most affected by the injustice.

> **Daisy** *And if that means that I won't be doing education work because I'm not the most qualified for teaching that---like the people who are directly affected who have been growing or learning to grow--they're the most qualified to be teaching. And so, I like coordinating the community garden here because I, I get to learn from the farmers who know how to farm. And I think that the structure works really well.*

Daisy worked part time managing a local community garden that was organized and operated by an organization run by two sisters who are African immigrants to Capital City. She also volunteered for a nonprofit which was run by workers in the hospitality industry who were seeking fair wages and fair treatment on the job. These endeavors fit Daisy's criteria of being led and operated by members of the affected community. She followed their lead and contributed her time and energy in the means that organization leadership saw fit. She positioned herself as a learner, rather than a teacher.

Quinn worked for an urban agriculture organization while also working with refugees through Catholic Charities, which allowed her a unique viewpoint on the ways that access to resources varied.

> **Quinn** *While simultaneously working in urban ag I also worked for a refugee organization, so I worked at Catholic Charities, for their after-school program. And that's really where my understanding of how much bigger the world is and how access varies in different areas [began].*
>
> *So a lot of the youth I interacted with and my colleagues that worked with me were like, "We've never met a White farmer before!" (laughter) And I was like, "That's funny because I've never met a non-White farmer before!"(laughter) And um, just a lot of conversations with different people made me realize like, man we're really missing out on learning from these communities who have either a desire to garden or grow food or have extensive histories.*

For many immigrants and their school-age children who had been farmers in their countries of origin, Quinn was the first gardener/farmer that they had met who was a White woman. For Quinn, whose relatives had been farming in the South for several generations, working with the immigrant population in a community garden setting was her first experience with non-White farmers. Quinn and the gardeners from the immigrant community made this revelation a point of humor and connection. Quinn recognized and appreciated the farming knowledge that many immigrants brought with them to their new communities. She worked to ensure that the nonprofit organization with which she worked focused on sharing knowledge between all parties, particularly addressing the unique needs of immigrant farmers rather than attempting to impart a strictly "White American" view of garden education.

Like Quinn, Sophia and Willow recognized the value of sharing information between diverse groups of people rather than one more-powerful group dictating policy and practices. Both Sophia and Willow had traveled outside the United States and assisted with farming projects on the African continent. Sophia, a nineteen-year-old White woman, discussed an approach to sharing information that she learned while on a mission trip with a group of American agriculture students and professors.

Sophia *And so like kind of teaching them ways that they can still farm through that hot season, and us having the knowledge, and not like going into their country saying this is what you need to do, but saying like, we want to learn from you guys how you do farm in that 3 month period. And then we have ideas that we have, that we have learned in our country that will help continue on. And so it wasn't going in and like saying this is, telling them what they need, but kind of trading off knowledge was a really cool experience.*

Sophia enjoyed the experience of trading knowledge among group members, rather than attempting to dictate pre-formulated solutions. She acknowledged that unique locations had unique problems which required distinctive solutions developed in collaboration as they developed long-term relationships.

Sophia *Otherwise it would just be pointless and you wouldn't know, you wouldn't come back with the experience of... mm, like what they're doing, and understanding how they live. It would just be these White people going to a different country to kind of give them what we think they need. And that's something that I've thought about with like the opportunity to go on missions trips and how you can change that from being, like, giving all your information and not taking anything; creating that relationship with them and still being in contact continually; hearing their lives and stuff.*

Sophia believed that it was essential to make an effort to understand the perspective of the community with which she was working. This was much more effective, she thought, than White people arriving in a foreign culture prepared only to expound upon and spend money on a preconceived agenda.

Willow, who worked for a Canadian international development nonprofit organization in Kenya before coming to Capital City to complete her master's degree, admitted that her underlying assumptions about food justice had changed.

Willow *Initially, before I really understood what food justice really meant, my perception of it was like planting community gardens everywhere and all this kind of stuff. But that's a very, like, White world view of what is feasible and possible. And I think, as with most community solutions, it needs to actually come from the community affected. Um, so I have heard about more things since I've started to really listen and look for it.*

I think communities of color need to have more of a voice in it, since they're the people mostly affected by it. And it's very much because nutrition and the environment are very like traditionally White purviews.

Willow entertained the possibility that a focus on planting community gardens and on nutrition and the environment fit neatly into a White world view, but might not necessarily be the direction in which affected communities would lead. Her comments suggested that the needs of any particular community cannot be known unless that community's voice is taken seriously, and those most affected by an injustice take the lead. Willow and others seemed to appreciate resource-rich nonprofits' intentions to create positive change in the world, but they saw those assets as better used in the service of frontline community leadership, rather than in self-preservation..

Educating Youth and Children about Food Justice Issues

Many participants turned to food justice education as a meaningful way to actively impact frontline communities. In this section I turn to participants' beliefs about the food justice education work they conducted. All participants reported their own transformational moments in educational settings such as high school classes and clubs, undergraduate or graduate courses, or in governmental offerings such as a county master gardener's course, or private institutions such as an online certification course in holistic health. Participants described these classes because they were pivotal in leading participants toward initiating work they considered to be important in the food justice nonprofit arena. Several claimed that it was a "perfect fit" to move directly from their own educational experiences into educating youth and children about food and food justice issues. Participants served as food justice educators in diverse settings including summer urban or

rural farm camps, after-school programs, pre-school and elementary classrooms, high school drop-out prevention programs, secondary special education classrooms, youth volunteer programs, immigrant services programs, veterans' programs, county extension programs, SNAP benefits programs, and Boys and Girls Clubs.

In this section I will present the reasons participants believed children and youth were appropriate targets for food justice education, their goals as educators in food justice work, and some limitations to their work.

Why Educate Youth and Children?: "I think kids are stronger change makers."—Grace. Youth and childhood appeared to be a fertile time period to learn about food and food systems. Jessica related the story of a tenth grade student who participated in farm camp as an example of the kind of positive impact food justice education could have on junior and senior high school students.

> **Jessica** *One of the girls, I think she's in 10th grade this year, she got her own chickens. In fact, we gave her the chickens. And she loves being there. It's just neat to see. And she gardens with her grandmother already. But now she's bringing what she's learned, so she's impacting her own family. And I'm thinking she'll impact her friends.*
>
> *She will think differently about food systems. She may not have even thought about food systems. I mean I think when I was her age my mom had a garden. My grandparents farmed. But I never knew there was this greater farm system, that there were people that weren't eating well. I just wasn't aware of any of that. So I just think it's so incredible that we can be impacting [them] at a really young age, which will be life changing hopefully, in the sense that they won't forget what they've learned. And they'll incorporate that into their lives for a lifetime.*
>
> *And I think the more we can reach children and middle school high school, the more we can shift our society in the sense of food justice, for sure.*

Jessica believed that camp activities would introduce young people to injustices in the food system that were not easily recognizable in their everyday lives. In fact, she herself had not understood many of the unjust practices within the food system until she started participating in the camps as a facilitator and learned alongside the young students. Then she eventually began

teaching. Students who attended the high school camp could apply to become interns to help run other camps and keep the gardens and barn in good shape throughout the summer. Jessica noted how passionate young people could be when given the opportunity to become teachers themselves, as this young woman had done. She believed that young people could influence their home and family culture around food.

Jessica *So you know that's really, to me, the future. That's where we're gonna change society is by more and more young people getting a vision for this and moving forward with it in a way that is life changing.*

Ella also understood junior high and high school-age students as ideal learners in a food justice program because they were able to understand some of the nuances of injustices in the food system.

Ella *I think that [teaching high school-age students] was identified when this program first came into being. That population was really identified as an audience that is really excited and willing to learn, and at a capacity where they can sort of take on some of these bigger topics that we're talking about, like farm workers' rights, and the environmental impacts of agriculture, and the industrial versus sustainable, and all these things.*

Junior high school students had the capacity to comprehend the complicated connections they were trying to make as they taught about workers' rights, the environment, and sustainable farming practices.

In fact, Grace believed that young people might be more apt to adopt new ideas about food than their parents whose eating habits were more entrenched.

Grace *I've always been drawn towards working with kids. Also I think kids are stronger change makers. I think kids are more likely to change their habits. I think if you get kids really accustomed to thinking about food a certain way and making certain eating choices I think it becomes second nature, if they have access to those choices. Whereas adults, who've been eating processed foods for 30, 40, 50 years to suddenly make this lifestyle shift I think is a lot more difficult. And at which point there could be a lot of diet-related disease.*

With early intervention, young people were more likely to make good eating a lifelong habit, which could mean less diet-related disease as their generation aged. She viewed youth as important change agents who could shift the trends of poor eating habits and make a concern for healthful eating a more common and accepted practice.

Kayla told a story to illustrate the impact her school garden project had on one young gardener.

> **Kayla** *He came up to me one day when I came in, he was like "Ms Kayla, guess what I did last night!" And I said "What, what did you do?" And he's like "I went to Golden Corral with my family and I walked up to the buffet and I started piling spinach on my plate and my mama made me put it back and then I said, "No, no, no! I will eat this! I promise you I will eat this." And she said ok, and so I piled it all on my plate and I put some balsamic vinegar, I know we made that in class together, and I ate the entire plate and my mom was so impressed. And she bought me ice cream afterwards."*
>
> *But it was just like awesome, because it's just like, case in point: When these kids understand what a food is you know, like what a crop, or what any fruit or vegetable is, then they're so much more likely to eat it. And then if they actually grow it themselves, it's gonna happen. They have a sense of connection with it that makes them so much more likely to eat it.*

Kayla offered this story as an illustration of the good habits that can form when young children take an active role in growing their own food; for her, a good reason to believe her work was important.

Bailey believed that teaching pre-school children to grow food was a revolutionary act.

> **Bailey** *And there's a quote out there and I don't know who to attribute it to, but the "teaching people to grow food is a revolutionary act." I mean it is. It's empowering, it's giving the power to sustain life back to an individual. And to give it to a young person before they've decided that this is not who they are, I don't grow food, I don't get dirty, I don't eat green, like I think that's really powerful stuff. And the kiddos get it. I mean they're a bit fearless about trying all these things.*

Age four or five was an ideal time, according to Bailey, to empower children to sustain life through growing food. Introducing them before they decided all things associated with vegetables

or dirt were bad might change the trajectory of their relationship with healthy food from the very beginning.

Social Justice Goals: "This is how you can become an activist, a change-maker in your community, and kind of take this back for yourself."—Grace. Grace was suspicious of programs that relied on merely telling low-income children and youth how they should eat. She argued for creating programs that were based on creating a critical consciousness that would lead to empowerment and social justice action.

> **Grace** *My concentration is in equity and justice. But what I'm focusing on specifically is reformatting nutrition and agriculture education in urban areas, in order to take more of a social justice emphasis. And I'm arguing for that through the lens of culturally responsive pedagogy: so basically, problematizing the notion of going into schools with many low income students of color and telling them that they need to eat better. And instead presenting it as, this is an injustice, and this is how you can quote unquote, take up arms. This is how you can become an activist, a change-maker in your community, and kind of take this back for yourself.*
>
> *I believe that through that shift in focus not only will it make the curriculum more relevant, it will make the curriculum more accessible, and it will foster sociopolitical consciousness and activism in youth, which I see as an important thing.*

Grace envisioned food justice education as a catalyst for igniting change among youth in their own communities. The more typical programs in which students merely planted gardens and cooked food would never teach students to disassemble the hidden injustices behind their everyday food choices. By arguing for a culturally responsive pedagogy Grace indicated that food justice education must begin with a foundational understanding of the various pressures intersecting students' lives.

> **Grace** *I also don't think that it's as engaging as it could potentially be. And I think that's the common challenge with young kids is getting them excited about healthy eating, because kids don't care. I didn't care. And I think this might be one way to do it, by giving it the social justice emphasis. Because it's like, I think that could have really gotten me interested um, because nobody talks about social justice issues with kids. Even I find myself censoring myself with high school students, like Oh this is inappropriate topics of discussion. And I'm like, this is reality! This is what kids need to be… This is the MOST appropriate topic of conversation!*

She suggested that while students might find an emphasis on justice more engaging, teachers sometimes feared social justice discussions as somehow inappropriate. Instead of pushing the boundaries to press for dismantling unjust assumptions and practices, teachers often practiced self-censorship, perhaps out of fear of reprisals from administrators who rewarded teachers for maintaining the status quo. Or perhaps teachers feared offending overprotective parents, or felt obligated to defer to more conservative ideologies which were often the underlying assumptions within funding sources such as foundations (Ahn, 2017; Smith, 2017). Grace believed that educators should, nevertheless, confidently address social justice issues as important and appropriate in order to move students out of their complacency.

Entrepreneurial goals: "We would like them to really experience what it's like to run a business and to be a local food producer."—Nora.

Nora's AmeriCorps focus was to create an agriculture program in collaboration with teachers at a local high school. The goals for the program were centered on building a new greenhouse and helping students design an agriculture program that included a strong entrepreneurial focus.

> **Nora** *We really want them to understand the entrepreneurship aspect of it and the only way really they can do that is by giving them those responsibilities and with our supervision obviously. We would like them to really experience what it's like to run a business and to be a local food producer.*

Nora's vision was to guide students through the entire process of producing food as a business including growing, marketing and selling their product. She included marketing and work force soft skills as part of the program so that students could not only experience how to run a business, but also discover and develop personal talents or strengths.

Nora *We have the idea to kind of do a basic training like orientation to the greenhouse, basic greenhouse operations and side by side with the workforce development and entrepreneurial skills. If they are able to zero in on something they realized they were good at, whether it would be like the marketing aspect of it or the accounting aspect of it or something that they were drawn to and were able to kind of practice that and got a sense for their personal talents and were able to make them grow in this program, that, I think, would be a success. '*

Because they can learn the skills and they can learn how to work in a greenhouse and what the basics are [for] being in a work environment, but I think what people truly want is to figure out what they're good at. So, for me, I think [for] a student at that age, [the program] would give them the next step; especially those who are thinking about going to college next, or just going into the job world next.

Nora believed teaching students to run an agricultural business would help her students learn the basics of business ownership and how to be a good employee, all useful, real-world skills applicable in multiple settings, but she was doubtful that an agricultural business could actually offer a sustainable livelihood. She had witnessed the limits to how well a small farming operation could support the farmer financially.

Nora *For a long time, I've wanted to have my own farm. But then I kind of realized that I wouldn't be able to do as much influentially as I wanted to. A lot of farmers don't see the return. You know, they live paycheck to paycheck, because it's so expensive to operate a farm and I think that people selling, you know, going to the market to buy stuff is a lot more expensive. Some [consumers] understand why, and that what you're getting is less pesticides and less processing and blah blah blah. But, I mean, for a lot of people who are on a very tight budget and can't afford food like that, they're going to go to the grocery store. And so I think a lot of farmers struggle in that way.*

Nora understood the value of teaching about alternative farming methods such as growing food without pesticides and with less processing, but she also realized that running a small farm was not always a financially secure business proposition, so she wondered at the wisdom of spending resources on such an enterprise.

Quinn, who managed a community garden alongside recent immigrants to Capital City, expressed a common theme concerning educating adults who were farmers in their home countries.

Quinn *This year we started mostly talking about markets, and where you can market, how to market, what are the different options. Because, like I said, most of our farmers, especially in our market garden program, were farmers in their home countries, growing wholesale amounts, selling acres of food. So the barrier of them accessing that here is not knowing how our process works in the U.S. and sort of the legalities and the options. So she's been teaching about marketing, but also about production.*

Many immigrant farmers who were part of Quinn's program had prior experience in agriculture. As a result, Quinn focused her education efforts on marketing, business practices and legal obligations that were unique to the United States' economy. The program is relatively new, so it remains to be seen whether these activities encouraging entrepreneurship will lift immigrant families out of poverty.

Providing opportunity for kinesthetic learning: "Gardening, you know, in a very basic way, is a kid's connection to nature."—Olivia. Olivia began working in outdoor youth camps as a teenager herself, and then earned a bachelor's degree in outdoor education. She believed a hands-on connection to the natural environment was important for all students, but she understood the challenges of finding funding for overnight stays, transportation and other expenses related to off-site educational experiences.

Olivia *I was working at an outdoor education center in _____ and just really started thinking about how many kids didn't come from schools, or weren't at schools where um, they could access outdoor education. Like that's kind of a luxury to be honest. You know you have to have money to bus kids somewhere, you have to have even more money if you want them to stay overnight, you know it's just kind of an expensive process, so there are a lot of kids that never get that piece of education and that's, you know, my degree I feel like every kid should get, I feel like every kid has the right to like learn about nature and it's really important.*

And so um, and they, you know I've read some stuff talking about that as like another learning style, like some kids learn really well that way, and I feel like it's really sad to think that there may be kids that are never taught to their learning style just because they're not in the right school or they don't have the right money, or enough money.

In making her argument, Olivia first established that access to nature was a basic right that all students should be allowed to enjoy, and not a luxury limited to students living in the right zip

code. Olivia strengthened her argument by citing educational theory about learning styles, insisting that not only should every child have access to nature, but every child should also be allowed to learn in the learning style most effective for him or her. She clearly understood that barriers to enacting these basic rights were based in systems of power and privilege in which some schools were financially capable of offering such programs and some were not. Schools serving low-income students were often labeled as failing institutions and submitted to more tightly controlled leadership with a focus on raising test scores, rather than students' identification with and enjoyment of the natural environment.

Instead of discussing how to even this playing field across race and class, Olivia suggested an alternative that could be enacted in virtually any school in America.

> **Olivia** *And so I started thinking about ways that I could bring something like that to a kid that was at a school, and then I started thinking about gardening and how gardening, you know, in a very basic way is a kid's connection to nature.*
>
> *You can stick a garden anywhere. Every school has a patch of grass where you could potentially put a box and plant some flowers. And the moment that you do that you create like a small ecosystem. You know, you have bees and birds and rabbits maybe and things come out of the woodwork to visit that garden and all the sudden it's a little piece of nature, even if it's in the middle of the city; even if they can't go on a hike or they can't go to the ocean or study a pond ecosystem or whatever.*

By placing outdoor education within the everyday world of public schools through a school garden, Olivia believed there could be no valid excuse for failing to provide access to nature and to a kinesthetic learning style across any class division. Schools already occupied public land set aside for the purpose of educating children. Surely this land could also serve as the gateway to a child's connection to nature.

Working in collaboration with a special education teacher, as an AmeriCorps member Daisy helped design a school garden curriculum that was specific to the needs of the students,

offering them enriched sensory experiences.

> **Daisy** *One [class I taught] was a class at [a local high school]. That one was really cool. It was a special education class. It was a really good structure because they were in the same classroom all day and so they had a lot more ownership over their classroom and also like I think that like garden education provides this really sensory experience that was super useful in teaching. And [it] also challenged me as an educator. It was me working with the teacher there to come up with a curriculum that would work well for the students. It was really great. Our ultimate goal was to build wheelchair accessible raised beds there but, because of the structure of the AmeriCorps program, I never got to see it into fruition and the ball got dropped.*

Daisy enjoyed the challenges of creating a stimulating child-specific curriculum for students with special needs by introducing them to the garden. She was disappointed that her AmeriCorps term ended before her idea for a wheel chair-accessible raised bed garden was completed.

Limitations of Food Justice Education with Youth and Children

Most participants considered their work teaching youth and children to be important in terms of giving students tools to live a healthier life, or by providing sensory-rich, kinesthetic opportunities to grow and develop, or through teaching entrepreneurial strategies. They believed it was important to engage students in understanding the underlying inequities of the food system based on inadequate public transportation, or low wages, or poor working conditions, or the use of unsustainable farming practices. However, they wondered if their work was truly transforming those systems, at least in the immediate sense. They believed that by teaching students about these practices, and by being examples as advocates themselves, they might inspire the next generation to join the ranks of activists, alongside their teachers, or perhaps even to lead the movement. On a more personal individual level, participants believed that when young students were empowered to enjoy and value fresh food that they knew the source of, their choices would collectively create healthier communities. Changing younger students' attitudes and preferences around food could empower them change the culture of their own families from within.

Daisy disputed the value of bussing students out of their neighborhoods to visit urban farms and then returning them to their homes where gardens or organic produce were unavailable.

Daisy *I think that that was one of my bigger critiques too is that in youth programming garden work, there'll be these spaces that are not owned by the kids, which might not even be in the neighborhoods of the kids that are going there. They come there, and they are imparted knowledge and then they leave and then they go back to their homes where their access to food might be a convenience store. What is that really doing to change a system which is crooked?*

When students visited gardens that were located in parts of the city other than where they lived, Daisy suggested they may view the valuing of locally grown, organic produce as part of a distant (Whiter, wealthier) world; one from which they are obviously excluded. Young people could clearly discern that, in their neighborhoods, the difficulties with transportation access, fresh food availability and affordability remained unchanged.

Grace suggested focusing directly on the root causes of food insecurity rather than emphasizing lifestyle choices.

Grace *So most of the proponents of food activism really preach eating locally, and voting with your fork, and eating organically, sustainably, and all of these things without really acknowledging that those choices aren't really available to most of the people that food insecurity affects. Whether it be geographically, fiscally, for any number of bigger picture, systemic reasons. Um ,so I think that when people come in with good intentions and try and educate low income urban youth, youth of color about these issues, they neglect to touch on the root cause of food insecurity.*

Grace was critical of well-meaning people who aimed to teach students to value something to which they had little or no access. Since not all students and their families could access the idealized food varieties that "eating organically and sustainably" usually encompassed, Grace advocated addressing the root causes of food insecurity through education instead.

Ella, on the other hand, did emphasize the importance of conveying the practical side of food justice education, by teaching youth and children how to grow food. She was concerned that

the food system, as it was now configured, was unsustainable and unstable, and eventually may lead to collapse, in which case, young people must be educated about alternatives.

> **Ella** *Because we can be doing all these things but if people don't know that [fresh and healthy food]is something that's available that they can choose, that they have every right to deserve, then doing those things is pointless. So education [is important]. There needs to be education or there won't be any change. I do think that the food system is at very critical point where I think they are going to completely crash and everything's just going to be a mess. So I think like the importance of education is crucial right now because once all those things topple down, people need to have some sort of path to go on, right?*

Ella believed it was important to convey to students that the right to fresh, healthy, affordable food was universal, and included the students themselves. It was important to prompt students to understand the injustice in their lives and to give them the tools to create change.

Chapter Summary

Through their work in nonprofit organizations, participants addressed intersectional challenges that created barriers for families in frontline communities accessing fresh, healthy food. Barriers included the stress of working long hours or multiple jobs at low pay while also working to meet the needs of family members. Little time or energy was left for the labor of traveling out of neighborhoods in search of a well-stocked, affordable grocery store with organic produce, or for the labor involved in preparing fresh ingredients. Women who worked in nonprofit organizations noted the difficulty of living off of the low pay that was often associated with nonprofit work, especially the stipend allotted to AmeriCorps members. For some participants, the short-term experience of living on low wages as an AmeriCorps member or a graduate student was eye-opening, and allowed them to connect more closely with the stories of their constituents trying to maintain a household over the long term on low wages. Several mentioned frustration at the rapid turnover associated with AmeriCorps membership which they saw as a barrier to maintaining the viability of ongoing projects. However, most also noted a

positive sense of collaborative spirit that connected women doing agriculture work in the city, and they understood their intern or AmeriCorps experiences as a stepping stone to further their careers in the social services sector.

Women in this study expressed initially hopeful outlooks concerning the importance of their new work assignments and the potential positive difference they might make in communities where food access was problematic for a variety of reasons. They joined nonprofit organizations that worked to address food insecurity through education because they believed educational experiences had been transformational for them, and they viewed education as an important access point for helping students change their lives and even change the food system itself.

During the course of their day-to-day interaction with children, youth, or clients, they learned to question their initial assumptions about those they were trying to serve, and about their own positionality or privilege. They often contrasted what they understood to be true before their involvement in food justice organizations with how that understanding became more nuanced and complicated as they worked. Ella, for one, wanted to continue learning.

> **Ella** *I see the food system as SO intertwined with all these other social issues and I want to go wider, and figure out who's doing what. What are all the issues? How can we form connections with each other in all of this and create a community that's willing to work on all this together?*

Ella and others envisioned a path to community and connection in the pursuit of solving tangled social issues around food justice. Change occurred through dialogue, through observation, and through reflection. Participants believed that change occurred largely through choosing the role of an ally whose work would be to bring nonprofit organizational resources or personal resources forward in support of a resistance movement that would be directed by leadership emerging from frontline communities most affected by food insecurity and injustice.

In chapter six I will engage intersectional feminist theory to further analyze what was happening as participants re-envisioned what their work might look like within a paradigm of ally activism.

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS: INTERPRETING FOOD JUSTICE EDUCATION THROUGH AN INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST LENS

The women in this study entered their internships or AmeriCorps service with a desire to ease the burden of food insecurity on families living in poverty. They endeavored to influence the ways that people accessed fresh and healthy food and even to alter the food system itself by creating spaces where neighbors or communities could grow their own food. Participants also wanted to promote change by introducing youth and children to urban agriculture not only as a means of providing for themselves, but also as a means of resistance against unjust systems. Through enacting this work in everyday practice, participants developed a richer understanding of the intersectional challenges that fortified injustice in the food system and a more nuanced comprehension of their own intervention strategies as allies and advocates.

In this chapter my goal is to interrogate and analyze more closely what was happening in these activities from a theoretical lens. I will employ intersectional feminist theory, based largely on the work of Patricia Hill Collins, Kimberle Crenshaw, bell hooks and others to discuss the following themes: 1.) the praxis of a feminist ethic of care in women's work in food justice nonprofit organizations, 2.) the role of the "nonprofit industrial complex" in attempts to transform the food system, 3.) the characteristics of intersectional feminist allyship and why they

are important, and 4.) how food justice education in this context acted to transform and create sustainable communities, if, in fact it did. I will rely upon the work of Paulo Freire, Richard Kahn, David Orr, Janet Page-Reeves and Julie Guthman and others for insight into the complex foundations underlying what is happening in food justice work, in the context of a Southern U.S. city, as interns and AmeriCorps members described through their narratives.

Intersectional Feminism as a Lens for Analyzing Food Justice Education Work

Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) critiqued the ways that racism and gender discrimination have traditionally been addressed as single issues through the judicial and political systems. In viewing discrimination from a single-axis perspective, Black women have limited claim to race discrimination remedies based on the experiences of Black men, who, but for race, might have full access to society's patriarchal benefits. Neither can they fully enjoy gendered discrimination remedies based on the experiences of White women, who, but for their gender, might attain the benefits of White supremacy. Intersectional feminism emphasizes that oppression must be conceived as an interconnected set of variables such as race, class and gender, and not as single-axle issues. Race, class, gender, age, country of origin, language, disability and other factors in fact interact in complex ways to compound the effects of oppression depending upon one's standpoint. Crenshaw (1989) writes, "Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (p. 140). Patricia Hill Collins (1991) further theorizes these interconnecting oppressions as existing within a matrix of domination.

> Race, class, and gender constitute axes of oppression that characterize Black women's experiences within a more generalized matrix of domination. Other groups may encounter different dimensions of the matrix, such as sexual orientation, religion, and

age, but the overarching relationship is one of domination and the types of activism it generates. (p. 226)

Intersectionality offers a lens with which to examine and analyze the complexities of human experience, by placing women's experiences within this always-shifting matrix of domination (Collins, 1991) rather than addressing racism or sexism as if they exist in isolation from other pressures. Intersectional feminist theory also proposes the importance of placing women who are the most marginalized by racism, classism, and gender discrimination and other oppressive forces at the forefront of efforts to create systemic change. Though I have chosen to interview women who enjoy relative privilege as participants in this study, it is my intention that the voices and lived experiences of the most marginalized women in terms of food insecurity will remain at the center of the focus of this analysis. Honoring the voices and experiences of those who are marginalized by food insecurity is possible in this project because the focus of participants' work was on the lives and experiences of women who experienced food insecurity and who lived on the frontlines of injustice. Though participants did not share the same standpoint as their constituents in a matrix of domination, their daily work and interaction with women differently positioned than they provided opportunities for connection and an entrance to alternative perspectives. Stepping from their own perspective into the perspective of another woman was often the beginning of learning allyship. An examination of their experiences through an intersectional feminist lens prevents participants' work and contributions from dominating questions about injustice. The dominant focus is ultimately on women who are most marginalized, and how participants might offer their labor as allies in women's frontline struggle, rather than on the supposed heroics or sacrifice of the White worker.

Collins and Bilge (2016) offer six themes that often appear within intersectional analysis, and which help make intersectionality a useful tool in a discussion of food justice work in the context of this study: social inequality, power, relationality, social context, complexity and social

justice. Food justice advocates often emphasize the social inequalities underlying differentiated access to fresh and healthy food. These inequalities are often based on White supremacist patriarchal capitalist systems of commerce and governance in which decisions about food production and supply are made in board rooms and legislative chambers that continue to be occupied in the majority by wealthy, White, males. Power is also evident in the lives of women experiencing food insecurity when education bureaucracies or government agencies unilaterally impose unyielding requirements and boundaries for free school lunch or emergency or short-term food assistance such as SNAP benefits. The act of entering an emergency food agency such as a food bank to request food immediately draws the woman into a bewildering (even for college-educated AmeriCorps members) maze of applications, compliance requirements and surveillance (Dickinson, 2014; Rose, 2014).

Relationality, according to Collins and Bilge (2016), shifts the focus "from analyzing what distinguishes entities, for example, the differences between race and gender, to examining their interconnection" (p. 27). In intersectional analysis, relationality often appears "in terms such as 'coalition,' 'dialog,' 'conversation,' 'interaction,' and 'transaction'" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 28). In the context of this study, relationality occurs most often where women engage in cooperative strategies within nonprofit organizations that are intended to ally with frontline communities to, for example, provide alternative food pathways (as when Harper worked with Boys and Girls clubs to create farmers markets in the neighborhoods where children lived) or to expand access to social capital (as when Daisy activated a larger nonprofit's technology system to invite volunteers to work in the small-scale New American Gardens operation). The very act of signing on to work as an intern or AmeriCorps member indicated a belief that relationality could in some way impact the food system's inequities or irrationalities.

Social context and complexity are important in an analysis of food justice since food insecurity exists within a long-term, multi-faceted historical and political framework. "Using

intersectionality as an analytic tool," write Collins and Bilge (2016), "means contextualizing one's arguments, primarily by being aware that particular historical, intellectual, and political contexts shape what we think and do" (p. 28). The goal of the so-called "Green Revolution" for example, was to influence less-developed countries to use Western agricultural technology to increase crop yield (Ahn, 2017). While international crop production certainly increased, these new techniques, which were adopted widely, also destroyed indigenous agriculture that had sustained whole populations for generations and increased dependence upon manufactured chemical products which were then needed as fertilizer, insecticides and herbicides, but were perilous to humans (Ahn, 2017; Kingsolver, 2007). The complex consequences of this revolution appeared in Capital City in the form of ubiquitous, cheap, low-quality food options that were filled with corn syrup and other byproducts of large-scale government-subsidized corn production.

Women's conception of social justice was foundational to their decisions to begin actively serving as advocates and allies within nonprofit organizations. Women certainly cared about the plight of low-income women. However, many people who care about social justice issues support those causes through charitable donations, or by political action they can enact from their home computers. The women in this study, instead, enacted their care by moving half way across the country (for some), committing to rely on minimal income and benefits, and physically taking on the everyday work of interacting with frontline communities, or digging up gardens, or teaching children. In this way they embodied the praxis of an intersectional feminist ethic of care. I will examine more fully participants' commitment to an ethic of care in the next section. I will also continue to explore the ways that Collins' tools of intersectional analysis—social inequality, power, relationality, social context, complexity and social justice—might open new pathways for understanding food justice work.

The Praxis of a Feminist Ethic of Care

Participants in this study engaged physically in food justice work as their way of contending with moral dilemmas concerning injustice. Nel Noddings (2003) notes that this caring response is often the way women engage with moral problems:

> Women, in particular, seem to approach moral problems by placing themselves as nearly as possible in concrete situations and assuming personal responsibility for the choices to be made. They define themselves in terms of caring and work their way through moral problems from the position of one-caring. (p. location 187)

Caring, for participants, was not a strategy for keeping their hands busy in order to mask or prevent grappling with the discomforts of cognitive dissonance. Engaging in caring work was an active, hands-on means of mapping unfamiliar territory and gaining insight into their role as activists, teachers, or allies.

Patricia Hill Collins (1991) identifies the ethic of caring as "another dimension of an alternative epistemology used by African-American women" that includes "talking with the heart" (p. 215) as opposed to more traditional epistemologies that negate the role of caring and rely upon an impersonal, distant, or objective stance. Collins (1991) expands an ethic of caring into three components: 1.) the emphasis placed on individual uniqueness, 2.) the appropriateness of emotions in dialogues, and 3.) developing the capacity for empathy (pp. 215-216). Women in this study relied upon rather than shunned these components in order to access new knowledge about their growing interest in food justice advocacy and allyship. As participants contemplated whether to join food justice work, or how to impact the day-to-day realities of food insecurity they were often moved by the stories of women who were food insecure, or by media reports of injustice that they researched. They considered a capacity for empathy to be a strength that might make their care work more impactful.

Intersectional feminism, as enacted by participants, involved critical praxis, defined as:

> the ways in which people, either as individuals or as part of groups, produce, draw upon, or use intersectional frameworks in their daily lives—as everyday citizens with jobs and families, as well as institutional actors within public schools, colleges and universities, religious organizations and similar venues. (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 32)

Intersectional feminism, as enacted by participants, involved critical praxis (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Critical praxis "explicitly challenge[s] the status quo and aim[s] to transform the power relations" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 33). Participants' practice was critical in that they aimed to dismantle false or unhelpful or false narratives about how and why constituents customarily chose to access the food they did. Participants' everyday experiences involved praxis in that they aimed to "put feet to it," as participant Jessica stated. Theirs was not merely a theoretical argument, but rather a commitment to exercise the powers of their physical bodies and employ the material and relational means at their disposal to enact change, with the goal of transforming the food system. Inasmuch as they worked with youth and children, their goal was also to empower and equip young people to affect change in their own lives.

Participants in this study related complex narratives of how they began to care about justice issues related to food and how that concern translated to serving as interns or AmeriCorps members in nonprofit organizations doing food justice work. Their interest often began with environmental concerns they learned about through community service or academic classes, or they became interested because they were moved by the plight of particular individuals who struggled to provision their households adequately for health and well-being. For several participants, a personal emotional or family crisis moved them to reach out in search of a chance to heal or to find new outlets for service. In short, their choice to participate in food justice organizations was often based on an ethic of care: earth care, community care, family care, or self-care.

Women in this study accepted emotions as a marker for new knowledge leading to understanding intersectional challenges around food justice work. Riley, for example, began her narrative of how she became involved in food justice work with an emotional story about how senior citizens and youth in her community were struggling with the effects of food insecurity after her small-town grocery store closed. Even though the events in this story occurred several years ago, she still paused in telling the story to regain her emotional composure. This emotional connection helped her build empathy for neighbors who were dealing with hunger. She identified that moment as pivotal to launching her ongoing search for knowledge about hunger relief work and food justice issues and a deep desire to impact injustice through her own labor. Participants relied upon emotion and empathy to reveal new knowledge about the material situations facing adults, children and youth with whom they worked in urban farm camps, immigrant community gardens, or in community organizations offering access to SNAP benefits or emergency food supplies.

Within the context of a feminist theory of caring, Fisher and Tronto (1990) define caring as an activity that "includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible" (p. 40). Participants cared about the ability of frontline communities to live "as well as possible" because they lacked access to fresh, affordable, healthy food due to intersectional, interconnected matrices of oppression. They cared that a food system based on destructive industrial agriculture practices could collapse, leaving little space to "maintain, continue or repair our world" enough to allow for adequate healthy food production. Participants came to understand that caring could be problematic because caring "involves social interactions that contain the potential for conflict and because it requires material resources that might be difficult or impossible to obtain" (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, pp. 39-40). Participants realized that those material resources were unevenly available because access was founded on a system that privileged some individuals over others based on gender, race, class, language,

religion or country of birth. They cared that mothers in their own communities struggled to obtain material resources that participants believed should be readily available to all.

Caring was not solely a philosophical notion, but a call to put their concerns into action in a progression of "caring about," "taking care of," and, for some, becoming involved in the hands-on action of "caregiving" (Fisher & Tronto, 1990) Fisher and Tronto define "caring about" as the phase in which participants "select out and attend to the features of our environment that bear on our survival and well-being" (p. 41);"taking care of" as taking on "the responsibility for initiating and maintaining caring activities" (p. 42); and "caregiving" as the "concrete (sometimes called hands-on) work of maintaining and repairing our world" (p. 43). Kayla first "cared about" growing good food when her college friends introduced her to the pleasures of volunteering in a community garden. She began "taking care of" food justice concerns when she volunteered as an AmeriCorps Food Corps member. She participated in "caretaking" as she labored alongside Miss Paula in her community garden at the trailer park which Miss Paula initiated to serve her neighbors and community members. Kayla and other participants engaged in the progression of caring behavior as an act of resistance in solidarity with those most affected by food insecurity.

Fisher and Tronto (1990) identify three locations in which a feminist ethic of care can be offered or received: the household/community, the marketplace, and the bureaucracy. In this section I will explore how Fisher and Tronto's characterization of care in these three locations might illuminate the interaction of participants in this study with frontline community members, by way of the nonprofit organizations with which they were affiliated. This study focused on the work of women inside nonprofit organizations, which do not fit neatly into any of the three locations Fisher and Tronto suggest. Or, perhaps it can be said that nonprofit organizations contain elements of all three locations.

Household/community care. Care enacted in the household/community, according to Fisher and Tronto (1990), is pre-capitalist and relies upon direct access to kinship networks. Power to enact care depends upon relatively equal participation of care givers and receivers within the household/community. Nonprofit organizations, such as the immigrant resettlement organization in which Quinn managed community gardens alongside immigrant families, depended upon and expanded kinship networks. Immigrant groups which were similarly situated economically and by country of origin and language tended to join the community garden together. By providing land, tools, education and the expansion of social capital through access to Capital City's governmental resources, Quinn's work aimed to empower those responsible for provisioning their own households and communities. Though Quinn's efforts expanded the possibilities of families caring for one another within a kinship network, Quinn herself and the organization were not truly members of that network. Because Quinn is a caring and empathic person, she might argue that the immigrant families with which she worked over several years became *like* family, but, indeed, she was not experiencing the same economic, religious or language-based discrimination that they might have endured, and therefore was not an equal partner in their suffering. She acted as a supplier—indeed, a friendly supplier whose supplies were offered free of charge, or at a reduced rate—but a supplier nonetheless, in a pattern more directly associated with the marketplace.

Care in the marketplace. In the marketplace, "Responsibility for caring means spending money. Caregiving means meeting a demand for labor…In theory there is no kind of caring that cannot be reduced to the exchange idiom" (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p. 47). Participants in this study were deeply concerned that this consumer/producer power balance was interrupted by elements of inequality in the food system. In part, they relied upon their organizations to help fill in gaps in income for constituents living in poverty. Nonprofit organizations, in general, skirt the usual marketplace supply and demand equation in which individual buying-power controls

how well one can meet need with services in that the nonprofit organization, through charitable or foundation funding, bears the financial burden. (I will return to this theme in a later section.) Buying-power, to some extent, indicates control over the kinds of goods or services that are available and possible for a consumer to acquire. By offering the nonprofit's coffers on one side of the "exchange idiom," constituents could potentially participate more fully in the market economy.

For example, Capital City Fresh Food provided the infrastructure (gardens, kitchen, and delivery trucks) and (largely volunteer) labor to grow (or glean) good food, and created over 3,000 attractive, healthy, tasty meals, and delivered them to pre-determined locations across the city every week. Members of frontline communities could access that free food at the given locations. The delivery points were usually other organizations that were supporting people in poverty, such as churches where members conducted GED or ESL classes, or youth center after-school programs, or warming shelters for homeless individuals. "Free" did not mean without cost, however. The men, women and children who accessed free, fresh, healthy meals lacked power or control over what, when or where they would eat. Those decisions rested with the hosting nonprofit and its partner organizations. Most locations involved some kind of in-kind contribution such as attendance at a training meeting for the low-income, often homeless individuals who sold an alternative newspaper on the city's streets. Many volunteers in the organization's gardens and kitchens were men and women who became involved after receiving free meals at one of the locations and wanted to "give back." While the exchange medium still existed, it was not measured on the dollar scale.

That being said, some nonprofit organizations aimed to expand constituents' ability to participate directly in the local marketplace themselves. Several participants were tasked to help constituents develop entrepreneurial skills as part of their internship or AmeriCorps membership assignments. In the case of immigrants who had participated as farmers in their local economy in

their home countries, and who desired to learn more about an American marketplace, entrepreneurial goals were constituent-led, rather than being imposed by the organization. Kayla's students in the drop-out prevention program she worked with as an AmeriCorps member designed their own production and marketing program, which Kayla gladly supported. A public charter high school in Capital City partnered with Serve Capital City to create an agricultural entrepreneurial track within the charter school program, including building infrastructure such as a new greenhouse, and teaching students basic business and accounting practices. In these situations, participants sought to engage constituents in entrepreneurial activities in order to nudge them toward a permanent change in economic status, or to lessen the burden of poverty or the everyday provisioning of a household.

Some participants were doubtful, however, as to the promise that participating in local farmers markets or other small-scale entrepreneurial enterprises would significantly impact poverty. Nora critiqued the emphasis on engaging the marketplace as a means of improving quality of life by pointing out the minimal probability of small community gardening operations making a difference in the household budget bottom line. This was especially true for constituents who had little access to other sources of social capital such as bank credit, reliable private transportation, or significant amounts of expendable cash with which they could gamble on the fluctuations of the market and the fragility of fresh produce. For Nora's student entrepreneurs, as with many small-operation urban farmers, their position within the matrix of domination tended to amplify risk and diminish benefits in ways that were beyond their immediate control.

Bureaucratic caring. Participants commented often on the elements of nonprofit organizations that resembled bureaucracy, Fisher and Tronto's (1990) third location of care. This was especially true where organizational survival was tied to funding equations dictated by bureaucratic governmental or philanthropic agencies. The main difference between marketplace

and bureaucratic caring lies in how decisions are made concerning what to care about, according to Fisher and Tronto. The marketplace, in theory, decides what to care about based on laws of supply and demand. Bureaucratic decisions about caring emerge from the political process, which is by nature cumbersome, slow and fragmented. Faith, who has founded her own nonprofit organization since her internship and fellowship experiences, noted that not all organizational goals or activities fit neatly into funding requirements. Willow commented on the constricting influence bureaucracy-based grant requirements may have on an organization. According to Willow, when organizations must rely on proving the value of their programs through formulas and scientific proofs, the process becomes more of a self-sustaining bureaucracy than an agile, caring response to community needs.

Women who handle the day-to-day details of bureaucracies tend to be several steps removed from decision-making power, "thus, at the bottom, individuals are expected to engage in caregiving according to routines whose procedures and logic were derived at some distance from the actual caregiving itself" (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p. 49). In Capital City, food justice nonprofit organizations tended to be led by White, middle to upper-class women whose vision created the nonprofit, or sustained and expanded the mission of the founder. Even though these organizations were not perceived as large-scale bureaucracies, their ability to make agile decisions was sometimes hindered by the requirements imposed by board members, the political sensibilities of supporting organizations, or guidelines for accepting funding. Interns or AmeriCorps members were, by nature of their temporary relationship with the organization, several levels of separation away from decisions that affected their tenure, the durability and lasting effect of the programs they labored to create or sustain, and the levels of support they enjoyed. Their students, or the women that participants encountered as constituents to the organization, were perhaps one step even lower than interns or AmeriCorps members, when it came to deciding organizational goals or the direction of funding. In the end, Fisher and Tronto

(1990) claim that “poorer women are pushed into accepting caregiving from bureaucratic agencies regardless of how such women define their own caring needs”(p. 47). Participants witnessed this as they helped enroll women in food stamp programs or offered emergency food supplies through local food banks.

An ethic of feminist caring is anchored in understanding actual human experience. “Feminist theory is, at its core, an exploration of the actual. Whatever the appeal of broad principles or abstract rules, such tools cannot lead to justice unless they are understood and applied in ways that acknowledge the real-life experiences of those affected” (Verchick, 2004, p. 66). Participants initiated their association with food justice organizations because they desired to put action behind their concerns about injustice. They cultivated awareness through their work, through travel and educational opportunities in order to move from merely caring about injustice to becoming caregivers in the process of restoration. New knowledge emerged from their everyday labor alongside immigrant gardeners, discussions with mothers at emergency food operations, or clarifying moments teaching children and youth.

David Orr (2004), in discussing the neglected role of motives and feelings in discerning the reasons scientists engage in lifelong studies of the environment, writes, “We tend to talk about ‘career decision’ as if our lives were rationally calculated and not the results of likes, fascinations, imaginative happenings, associations, inspirations, and sensory experiences stitched into our childhood and early adult memories” (p. 45). Orr suggests that environmentalists do their work “because of an early, deep, and vivid resonance between the natural world and ourselves” (p. 45). Many participants in this study reported this same deep connection to the earth and its care. They joined the struggle for social justice within a food justice paradigm, because they also cared deeply for fellow humans and their suffering under the burdens of poverty and inequality.

In the next sections I will expand an intersectional feminist inquiry into the ways that nonprofit organizations, as part of the "nonprofit industrial complex," supported women's ability to engage in ally activism or perhaps hindered those efforts.

The Role of the "Nonprofit Industrial Complex"

Since the modes in which nonprofit organizations functioned was important to interns and AmeriCorps members' ability to serve, I will offer some critiques of the nonprofit model based on the experiences of longtime organizers, using the analytical tools of an intersectional feminist lens. Then, I will discuss participants' comments about their relationships with nonprofit organizations and how those relationships affected their ability to form (or inhibited the formation of) transformative alliances with frontline communities.

Earlier, in chapter five, I defined the "nonprofit industrial complex" as, "A system of relationships between the State (or local or federal governments), the owning classes, foundations, and non-profit/NGO social service and social justice organizations"("Beyond the nonprofit industrial complex," 2014). This definition emphasizes that nonprofit organizations do not stand alone, but are interconnected within a network of institutions that mediate or control important interests in the day-to-day operation of the organization. Organizers who want to remain outside the surveillance of the government or the control of grant funding requirements have few options for maintaining the financial well-being of the operation. Those who have tried, for example, relying upon donations from grassroots membership or volunteer labor from leadership who support themselves with day jobs find troubling inequities in that system as well. As Andrea Smith (2017) reasons,

> Not everyone has the same day job. Some day jobs provide more resources and free time than others. If these organizations do not collectivize the resources from these day jobs,

> then a class structure develops in which those with better day jobs have more opportunities to engage and thus control the organization. (p. location 103)

Smith notes that, while it is possible to organize outside of nonprofits, it is not possible to organize outside of capitalism. Neoliberal economic and political policies have employed deep cuts in funding for education, health care and other human services and reduced regulation with the explanation that an unfettered capitalist economy would create opportunity for all. The obvious inequities inherent in such a plan have nurtured an uptick in the formation of nonprofit charitable organizations seeking to pick up where the government (and capitalism) failed to provide for its most vulnerable citizens (Ahn, 2017).

In Ahn's essay (2017) critiquing the role of philanthropy and its relationship to democracy, she notes that wealthy families successfully shelter family fortunes from taxation by forming charitable foundations. In this way, funds that would have gone directly into U.S. government coffers where, theoretically, those funds would be accessible through democratic processes to care for the needs of its citizens, are redirected into foundation control. This means that family members and foundation boards govern the outflow of funds, successfully removing the government, and its citizens from access or control.

Foundations are legally obligated to pay out only five percent of their assets annually, including any administrative costs associated with grants. Payouts in the form of grants often go to organizations such as universities, art museums, hospitals, and research institutions that continue to support the lifestyle and goals of the typically wealthy White men and fellow elites who serve on foundation boards. Ahn (2017) writes,

> The fact that most private foundations are governed by wealthy white men may partially explain why only 1.9 percent of all grant dollars in 2002 were designated for Black/African Americans; 1.1 percent for Latina/os; 2.9 percent for the disabled; 1

> percent for the homeless; 0.1 percent for single parents; and 0.1 percent for gays and lesbians…Barely 1.7 percent goes to fund civil rights and social action. (p. location 2024)

From funding statistics, it seems obvious that foundations do not prioritize spending on social justice issues.

Based on the low probability of receiving significant funding from foundation grants for social justice projects, and a desire to avoid participating in a system that is so obviously based in White supremacist patriarchy, some organizations seek other options. King and Osayande (2017) report progressive philanthropy programs that are "specifically designed to build the capacity of under-resourced people-of-color social justice groups" through educational curriculum that "trains people of color to become fundraisers and fundraising trainers" (p. location 2421). These models teach grassroots organizers to stop wasting time on writing foundation grants, and instead spend time cultivating relationships with individuals, which, on the surface appears to be a good strategy for valuing the organization's constituency over institution building. However, since relationships with wealthy individuals are the ones that will produce financial results for the organization, and those relationships depend upon membership within the networks in which wealthy people circulate, this method also appears to be embedded within a patriarchal system. King and Osayande (2017) conclude that "If Black organizations write anything to a foundation or corporation, it should be demands for reparations—not proposals requesting money" (p. location 2338).

Besides the inequities associated with funding methods, Amara Perez (2017) also points to the tendency to run nonprofit organizations within a business model as inconsistent with a desire for transformative social justice.

> Ultimately, critiques of the non-profit model are not just about how the revolution is funded, or the dependency that it creates, or the way foundations have grown increasingly

> powerful over the course and content of social justice work. Such critiques are also about the business culture that it imposes, how we have come to adopt and embrace its premises and practices, and the way that it preempts the radical work so urgently needed from a social justice movement. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to maintain political integrity in circumstances that demand a professionalized, businesslike practice. (p. location 2661)

The concept of a charitable organization subscribing to the same organizational standards as a business must seem obvious and undisputable to most. For example, a burgeoning online industry advances its own capitalist market share by supporting the nonprofits-as-business model through consultation services. "Mission Box" (www.missionbox.com) is an online resource offering free advice on completing the steps to set up a new nonprofit organization, sharing connections to businesses that support the implementation of nonprofit goals, and promoting expert commentary on how to "shine" in your community. They charge a fee for "premium services." The assumption here is that, for those with a heart for social justice issues, but not an MBA, these services can fill the gap, and have the nonprofit organization quickly off the ground and running as a smoothly-functioning business should.

If the day-to-day business of a food justice nonprofit organization is structured in the hierarchical fashion that business or educational institutions perceive as efficient, then constituents, like the immigrant family living in poverty or food insecurity, are likely to become invisible, since they do not appear in the chain of command. Even for compassionate organizations that strive to keep the voices and experiences of food insecure families, or frontline communities foremost in their thinking and planning, the actual voices and bodies of the poor and disenfranchised occupy the offices, halls and board rooms of the organization only as specters of the imagined impoverished "other," or perhaps as glossy photos artistically arranged in the volunteer center. Following the recommendations of insurance providers, human resources

specialists, or budget officers may efficiently perpetuate the organization's survival and keep everyone safe, but the radical mission of ending the injustice of differentiated access to good healthy food perhaps requires a different model, as some long-time organizers suggest. What this model might look like continues to be worked out in private, public and online spaces.

Participants raised a number of concerns in their interviews about the efficacy of engaging in transformation of the food system by means of their nonprofit work. Daisy and Quinn both suggested that their role in managing community gardens should be to work themselves out of a job, rather than to perpetuate the existence of the nonprofit organization, or solidify the existing power structures. In their view, the most important goal the nonprofit could achieve would be to support the development of leadership from within frontline communities who would take ownership of the collective movement and steer it in the direction that community members found transformative within the larger context of life in Capital City. This would require the organization's ability to nimbly shift its shape and expand or contract its boundaries, even, perhaps, to the point of working itself out of existence.

Building trusting relationships was essential to encouraging and supporting emerging leaders and building new institutional knowledge within an intersectional feminist paradigm, as Daisy, Kayla and Faith noted. However, when the organization relied upon short-term AmeriCorps members to create relationships on the frontlines of anti-poverty work, those relationships were imperiled every ten months, at the AmeriCorps break. Nora worried that her efforts alongside school employees to oversee the installation of a greenhouse and develop an agricultural entrepreneurial program would be thwarted, since the momentum she helped build in her ten-month tenure would be difficult to maintain for a new AmeriCorps member who had to learn everything from the beginning. Many participants commented on the near impossibility for constituents to build relationships among their neighbors and potential co-laborers in reform efforts, since the responsibilities of managing multiple low-paying jobs and caring for their

homes and children left little energy for political organizing or collective support of managing a community garden.

Nonprofit organizations did sometimes serve as bridges between communities, as some participants described appreciatively. Through her nonprofit organization, Bailey and her staff of garden educators crossed regularly from their relatively affluent worlds into the municipal school district's preschool classrooms where they helped children (many of whom dealt daily with the pressure of poverty and food insecurity) build and enjoy gardens in their familiar school environment. Valerie, who struggled to find a comfortable social location within her high school after immigrating to the U.S. from Peru, credited an after-school program at a nonprofit youth center for helping her finally engage productively in her community. The program introduced youth to volunteerism as a way of learning to feel that their place in society mattered. She remembered volunteering for the food bank, for Capital City Fresh Food, for the Girl Scouts, and for the Serve Capital City urban farm. These connections, offered through nonprofit programs, offered access to resources and relationships, and provided pathways to adult career positions in the Girl Scout organization, in the youth center where she began her volunteering efforts, and eventually into the mayor's office.

It is unclear whether youth who were bussed in to Farmville once a week from various youth services organizations crossed any relational bridges when it came to learning to love nature, or enjoy garden-fresh food, or to relate productively with others outside their usual contacts. Many seemed to be more interested in the typical teenage endeavors of enjoying social interaction between peers, or defending from itchy grass and pesky insects, or with keeping the garden dirt off of their shoes and clothes. The Farmville staff did not research student/client engagement in any formal way. Staff did, however, collect data from several years about the impact that serving as camp leaders had on high school interns, based on reflection sheets that interns completed in their daily wrap-up meeting. Some showed remarkable insight into their

own growth as leaders. A few interns returned to Farmville several summers in succession, reporting to me informally that they appreciated the leadership skills and people skills they gained from their work. Engaging youth as interns/leaders provided the youth with connections to multiple municipal organizations, and allowed them to bring their experiences back to their high schools, and into college.

Women valued the way that nonprofit work allowed them to cross into communities that they would not have had access to before. They hoped that the outcome of that interaction would be transformative, at least on a personal level for their constituents. Participants valued access to the organizations' infrastructure resources such as land access for urban farms, or technology systems that allowed them to enlist volunteers through social media. They valued the camaraderie among other women working in food justice. And they valued the job experience which they could potentially translate into next-steps in their career pursuits. When it came to dismantling poverty and food insecurity, however, they were often skeptical as to the transforming power of their work to change underlying injustices in the food system.

Where transformation happened, it was often in the perspectives of interns and AmeriCorps members, who learned valuable lessons in ally activism. I turn now to a discussion of what allyship looked like in the context of food justice work, and why such a discussion is important to transforming communities.

Characteristics of Intersectional Feminist Allyship

Allyship lies at the heart of intersectional feminist work since it encompasses simultaneously an understanding of the origins of inequality, a commitment to relationality in the social context of nonprofit organizational work (in this study), and an acknowledgement that relating with and coming alongside frontline communities to accomplish social justice goals is a

complex and ever-evolving project. Longtime anti-racist educator Anne Bishop (2015) describes allyship in this way:

> An ally is not an identity, but an endlessly unfolding struggle for equity. Just as an alcoholic must accept that they will never not be an alcoholic, an ally never "arrives." One cannot *be* an ally, but is always *becoming* one, part of a larger process, and not anywhere near the centre of it. It is likewise not for us to name ourselves allies, because the point is to contribute to a struggle defined and named by those who are the targets of that particular form of oppression. (p. 103)

Bishop writes that when confronted with the realities of racism, sexism, classism, able-sim, etc., and, simultaneously, an accounting of their own privilege, common responses are backlash ("They need to stop playing the 'race card.'"), denial ("That was a long time ago.") or crippling guilt ("Please trust me/forgive me."). Over many years of social justice advocacy work and teaching anti-racist classes, Bishop compiled the list of characteristics of an ally, shown in the figure below.

Figure 3 Distinguishing Characteristics of Allies

- *Their sense of connection with all other people;*
- *Their grasp of the concept of social structures and collective responsibility;*
- *Their lack of an individualistic stance and ego, although they have a strong sense of self, perhaps* because *they have a strong sense of self;*
- *Their sense of process and change;*
- *Their understanding of their own process of learning;*
- *Their realistic sense of their own power;*
- *Their grasp of "power-with" as an alternative to "power-over";*
- *Their honesty, openness and lack of shame about their own limitations;*
- *Their knowledge and sense of history;*
- *Their acceptance of struggle;*
- *Their understanding that good intentions do not matter if there is no action against oppression; and*
- *Their knowledge of their own roots. (Bishop, 2015, p. 91)*

Bishop (2015) theorizes that these same characteristics that describe allies also describe individuals who "are well-advanced in their own liberation process" (p. 91). We are all made to feel powerless in some aspect of our human condition, and Bishop believes that understanding and tapping into that dual role as both the oppressor and oppressed is foundational to learning to be an ally. Collins (1991) writes that this both/and stance opens up the possibility of a richer understanding of oppression within a system in which,

> all groups possess varying amounts of penalty and privilege in one historically created system. In this system, for example, white women are penalized for their gender but privileged by their race. Depending on the context, an individual may be an oppressor, a member of an oppressed group, or simultaneously oppressor and oppressed. (p. 225)

Allyship is feminist praxis in that an abhorrence of oppression is coupled with action to resist oppression. For participants in this study, the experiences of physical labor alongside oppressed women along with honest dialogue based on earned trust merged to move participants from mere concern for impoverished people to a commitment to resisting oppression as a day-to-day struggle. In the next paragraphs I will examine participants' experiences by considering how they learned to take the perspective of other women differently situated than they, and how they confronted their own privilege through the praxis of their everyday labor.

Learning to take on the perspective of another. Collins (1991) emphasizes practical experience as a criterion for meaning in knowledge production within an Afrocentric feminist epistemology. Participants in this study employed embodied practical experiences as interns and AmeriCorps members to learn to interpret the abstract; to glimpse and comprehend differences in perspective between themselves and the women constituents they worked alongside who were differently situated within a matrix of domination.

One example of this shift in perspective concerned participants' relationship with working the land. For Kayla, Clara, Piper and Olivia, learning to work in the soil and getting their hands in the dirt had profound significance beyond the fact that the work produced good food. The labor became a catalyst for a network of values that they deployed to organize their daily lives. The passion for working in the soil directed their career paths, guided self-healing practices, and decided the means by which they chose to position themselves in solidarity with others.

However, for some Black women, the soil continued to have negative connotations related to longstanding historical periods of oppression and terror. Julie Guthman (2008a) recounts the racialized history of land and labor that includes giving away land to Whites even as reconstruction efforts were disintegrating in the South, appropriating land from Native peoples, restricting Chinese and Japanese citizens from owning land and disenfranchising "Californios" of their inherited ranchos during early settlement of the West.

bell hooks (2009) comments on this distinct relationship Black women may have with the soil in her book of essays *Belonging: A Culture of Place*. She offers an intersectional contrast between White women who choose farm work as a vocation and Black women, who, in many cases, must first surmount generations of oppression directly associated with working the land. hooks herself shares Kayla's and Olivia's reverence for nature, and particularly for the sacredness of growing good food on rich soil that connects the farmer to the land, and this features strongly in her decision to return to her home state of Kentucky to live. Her decision-making process, as she tells it, is engulfed in cultural struggle emerging directly from her position as a Black woman who was raised in segregated, working class "imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy", and who seeks legitimacy within her own psyche outside this geography.

From her grandfather she learned "to see nature, or natural environment, as a force caring for the exploited and oppressed black folk living in the culture of white supremacy" (hooks, 2009,

p. 42). However, she acknowledges the conflicted relationship that Black culture maintains with small farm culture. Small (especially southern) farms of past generations are too often associated with slavery, share cropping, poverty; the "story of racist white folks engaged in acts of terrorism chasing black folk off the land, destroying our homeplace" (hooks, 2009, p. 44); with being forced to sell land in hard times; and with continuing injustices in land ownership. Even as recently as 2004 when hooks returned to Kentucky to live and work she felt compelled to purchase land as a silent partner with a White male buyer simply to avoid potential racist antagonism to her owning property. Ultimately, though, hooks understands returning to the land as a healing practice. She sees movements "for black self-determination that focus on our relation to nature and the role natural environments can play in resistance struggle" (hooks, 2009, p. 47) as a hopeful prospect.

Her story creates an interesting contrast to the participants in this study. Like hooks, all participants were thoughtful, well educated, and respectful of the natural environment. hooks, in contrast, is positioned, as a Black woman, in such a way that having a relationship with nature is not "natural" but is counter to the cultural values that have continued to develop in resistance to "imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy." She eventually comes to understand a return to her rural Kentucky hills as counter-hegemonic, rather than acquiescent. Several participants in this study verbalized their own discovery that their unique location in relationship to the soil was only a partial, limited perspective, and, through everyday experience, they were able to understand new perspectives belonging to women who were experiencing multiple oppressions through race, class and gender. Hands-on experience acted as a catalyst to move participants across the threshold of their partial perspectives into a broader, deeper grasp of the ways in which location and positionality may influence a woman's relationship with the soil.

A theme revealed in chapter five was the conflicted association participants reported concerning manual labor. Collins (1991) posits the importance of employing the concrete

experiences of everyday life to evaluate knowledge claims as an element of Black feminist thought. Collins (1991) writes, "For most African-American women those individuals who have lived through the experiences about which they claim to be experts are more believable and credible than those who have merely read or thought about such experiences" (p. 209). Most participants in this study deliberately sought to place themselves in a work environment on rural or urban farms in order to add a physical knowledge of working on the land to their academic knowledge about food justice that was introduced to them as part of their formal schooling. Nora, for example, worked as a part time volunteer on an organic farm for a summer. Even that brief experience demonstrated to Nora that producing food was only accomplished through hard labor; labor that was often invisible to consumers.

These exact same physical actions connecting women with the land often have a very different connotation when the farm worker does not own the land she works, and when the labor is required for mere survival in a hostile environment. Sandilands (2004) tells of the elation one (presumably White) woman had as a member of an Oregon separatist community because she "had cooked a pot of beans on her own stove with wood she had cut herself and water she had hauled in buckets" (p. 119). Such delight regarding the physically back-breaking work this woman did for survival might be laughable to women of color who understand, as Alice Walker (2007) writes, "Black women are called, in the folklore that so aptly identifies one's status in society, 'the *mule* of the world,' because we have been handed the burdens that everyone else—*everyone* else—refused to carry" (p. 216). Walker points out that Black women have, for generations, been called upon to pick up the tasks that no one else is willing to shoulder, even when those tasks are essential for the survival of the wider society in which they serve. Their labor is not of their own choosing, but is imposed upon them by virtually all other members of society.

When Walker (2007) describes her mother's daily life, her description is not a romanticized celebration of the current trendy practice of going off-grid, or an advertisement for popular Permaculture practices which teach how to create a self-sustaining homestead in modern America. Instead, she writes with a sense of sorrow for the grinding labor her mother had to endure in order to keep her family healthy.

> She made all the clothes we wore, even my brothers' overalls. She made all the towels and sheets we used. She spent the summers canning vegetables and fruits. She spent the winter evenings making quilts enough to cover all our beds. During the "working" day, she labored beside---not behind---my father in the fields. Her day began before sunup, and did not end until late at night. There was never a moment for her to sit down, undisturbed, to unravel her own private thoughts; never a time free from interruption---by work or the noisy inquiries of her many children. (pp. 216-217)

Such was the everyday reality of Walker's mother's life, and that of many women of her generation. Walker remembers that she did this before and after her daily work in the fields and in the home. Walker offers "our mothers' gardens" as an example of the survival of an artistic spirit in the most pressing, constricted circumstances. "For her, so hindered and intruded upon in so many ways, being an artist has still been a daily part of her life. The ability to hold on, even in very simple ways, is work black women have done for a very long time" (Walker, 2007, p. 218). Walker honors the agency and creativity of her Black fore-mothers who carved out spaces for creativity even as they endured labor as a necessity.

Participants recognized that their ability to choose farm work as a labor of love was itself a marker of privilege, since, for Black women, the relationship to the soil has not always been so benevolent. Faith noted, "*People forget the pain that the soil carries for some black folks, right*?" Kayla concluded from working alongside Miss Paula, and engaging in open conversation with

her, “*When I talk to Miss Paula I understand that agriculture does not mean the same thing for me as a White woman as it does for her as an old Black woman*.” As an employer, Faith acknowledged that she found being a White woman leading a nonprofit that employed mostly other White women, but served mostly Black or Latino children, somewhat problematic. She hoped to employ more women from diverse backgrounds, but her experiences had taught her that Black women, in particular might not be interested in farm work. *“There’s a lot of baggage with land and farming in the South with the ugly scar that is slavery. And it's fair enough if you come from a family where you're like, no, I come from a family that did that. I'm not doing that anymore.”* By working alongside Black women who continued to experience a troubling relationship with ties to the soil, interns or AmeriCorps members who deeply valued their connection to the earth gained access to alternate locations on a matrix of privilege and power related to the land. They were never working out new knowledge in isolation, but, as Collins (1991) suggested “connectedness rather than separation” was an essential component of the knowledge validation process. They connected through shared narratives that invited women to step into one another’s lives, even for a brief moment, in order to validate new understanding in a richer, fully-embodied experience.

An important note here is that Kayla did not ask Miss Paula to be her formal guide to understanding the world of Black women. Other participants did not insist that constituents educate them in how they were blind to intersectional oppression. What Kayla extrapolated from dialogue with Miss Paula, and applied to larger racial issues, emerged from their everyday work together to accomplish a purpose: to grow healthy food for and alongside Miss Paula’s community. Poet and feminist essayist Audre Lorde (1984) comments on the frequent demand that members of oppressed groups do the work of bridging understanding. “Traditionally, in American society, it is the members of oppressed, objectified groups who are expected to stretch out and bridge the gap between the actualities of our lives and the consciousness of our oppressor

(p. 114)." In a food justice context, this "tradition" might require that overworked women of color, who are mothers of hungry children, do the work of explaining where the system has failed them. Lorde views this as "a constant drain of energy which might be better used in redefining ourselves and devising realistic scenarios for altering the present and constructing the future (p. 114)."

In participants' experiences, revelation followed work, which was made possible because they had committed to a year of service, set apart from other obligations. This was admirable, and proved to be a productive exercise in terms of gaining a better understanding of intersectional feminist issues and their possible roles as allies. As Guthman (2008a) points out, though, "a white person's choice to change her environment in order to challenge her unconscious habits of white privilege itself instantiates privilege" (p. 443). Kayla, and other participants, had a choice whether to spend a year doing AmeriCorps service as part of a Food Corps mission. Miss Paula had few such choices to negotiate.

Confronting privilege. The privilege participants enjoyed derived from their socioeconomic level, their educational status, and, for most, their race, since most participants were White. Women understood being "White" as something more complex than a racial term, but as a location, or set of locations, within an intersectional feminist matrix of domination, in which Whiteness, by nature of its association with histories of dominance, acts as an oppressive force upon those who are differently situated. Activist and author Chris Crass (2013) points out that White privilege is "the flipside of racial oppression" and is not a biological reality, "but rather a position within a hierarchy of power based in one's relationship to the state" (p. 174). He further explains his position as a White person:

> "White" is not a category of who I am as an individual person. Rather, it is a historically developed social position into which I was born in this country. My relationship to the state and the economy shapes what I have access to, how society interacts with me, and

> how I understand myself in relationship to others. This is not just a relationship between myself as an individual white person and the state and economy. It is the accumulated experience of hundreds of years of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. (p. 175)

Some theorists (Guthman, 2008a; Slocum, 2006) identified farmers' markets, Consumer Supported Agriculture programs, and school garden programs as White spaces, not only because they are often located in geographic areas of relative wealth and largely frequented by White individuals. The maintenance of these spaces also tended to rely on values shared by wealthier, Whiter populations such as preferring organic and locally grown food selections, regardless of affordability or convenience. So when Daisy, Kayla, Faith, Bailey and others pointed to the predominance of White women in leadership positions and boards of nonprofit organizations (chapter five), and the disproportionate representation of White women as employees and volunteers in those organizations, they understood, to some extent, the underlying system of domination that Whiteness carried with it.

While Crass (2013) does not use the word ally, his three-step progression in shaping a commitment to collective liberation is similar to Bishop's characteristics of an ally, in that taking responsibility follows recognition. His three elements are:

> [First] recognizing the exploitation and oppression in society; 2) understanding one's relationship to that exploitation and oppression; and 3) working to form alliances between people who experience both oppression and privilege to transform this society, recognizing the centrality of oppressed people's leadership in that process. (p. 177)

Jessica's description of the way her thinking changed illustrated this three step process in action. She pinpointed the moment in which she realized her own complicity in a system of domination as she described her initial forays into researching various injustices affecting women, "*So I began to find videos, documentaries on coffee, on chocolate, on sugar and it's like those things*

were really upsetting to me. So I'm like Oh, I consume this stuff!" After first identifying the injustice, then Jessica's immediate reaction was to recognize herself in the role of a consumer who helped perpetuate the injustice. Finally, she quickly transitioned to how she might change her behavior or begin to act in resistance to the injustices she recognized. At first, she was baffled as to where to begin, *"Sometimes you can be passionate about something and you want to rescue, you know free children or whatever, but you just kind of feel like, well I live here in America and how can I have an impact at all?"* Later she described becoming part of Greenfield University's urban farm, which she understood as "*putting feet to*" her convictions.

Learning what *not* to do as allies was also important to participants. Daisy, in particular, set standards for herself regarding how she would and would not participate in resistance movements. She chose to stop acting in the role of teacher, which she saw as taking on too much undeserved authority in food justice work. The power to explain the day-to-day impact of food insecurity, she felt, belonged with those experiencing food insecurity. She would lend her labor, but felt that when she spoke on behalf of others, her place in White society gave her too much unearned power. Instead she worked for organizations that were led by women most affected by the injustice, such as Workers' Dignity (Dignidad Obrera), a grassroots movement that especially supports women working as housekeepers in the hotel industry. Daisy summarized her role as a White ally, "*And so doing community justice work [I know] that as a White person I don't really know. I don't know things. And like, I need to listen up, and be directed by those who are directly impacted."*

Allyship is similar to cultural critic bell hooks' (2000a) identification of a love ethic as essential to the transformation of injustice. hooks writes, "We can successfully [embrace a love ethic] only by cultivating awareness, to see what is needed so that we can give care, be responsible, show respect, and indicate a willingness to learn" (p. 94). These qualities require humility, a word Kayla used several times in her hour-long interview. Kayla understood being

humbled as setting aside her own beliefs or ideas long enough for others' voices and intentions to move to the foreground.

Using the word "solidarity," a term related to allyship, Paolo Freire (2005) theorized that "solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary; it is a radical posture" (p. 49). He warns that those who choose to act as allies but fail to truly trust the grassroots leadership have perhaps not really made the conversion. "The convert who approaches the people but feels alarm at each step they take, each doubt they express, and each suggestion they offer, and attempts to impose his 'status,' remains nostalgic towards his origin" (Freire, 2005, p. 61).

The importance here does not lie in an individual's personal choice to become an ally. Becoming an ally is not a quick-and-easy identity solution that "allows members of the dominant group to feel better, take back control of the conversation and avoid action" (Bishop, 2015, p. 103). Instead, being an ally "refers to a collective process of taking responsibility for privilege, guided by those who are the target of that form of oppression and firmly rooted in a structural analysis" (Bishop, 2015, p. 103). Recognizing privilege and learning to sit down, be quiet and listen—three often-repeated steps to becoming an effective ally (Bishop, 2015)—require intentional practice through reading, research, or through joining a class or course guided by experienced allies or members of oppressed communities. Some women in this study participated in anti-racism workshops which their nonprofit organizations sent them to. This seems like an indisputably essential starting point for any social justice, or social service work.

The alternative to allyship from an organizational standpoint may be patriarchy. The figure below illustrates where a nonprofit organization might fall according to two axes: organizational goals, and organizational leadership. In this model, organizational goals are either ameliorative (intended to relieve suffering in the short term), or transformative (intended to create

permanent, sustainable change in the oppressive system). Organizational leadership, is either agency led (nonprofit leaders make decisions based on an efficient business model, funding requirements, etc.), or constituent led (leaders from affected communities drive decisions about goals, resource allocation, etc.).

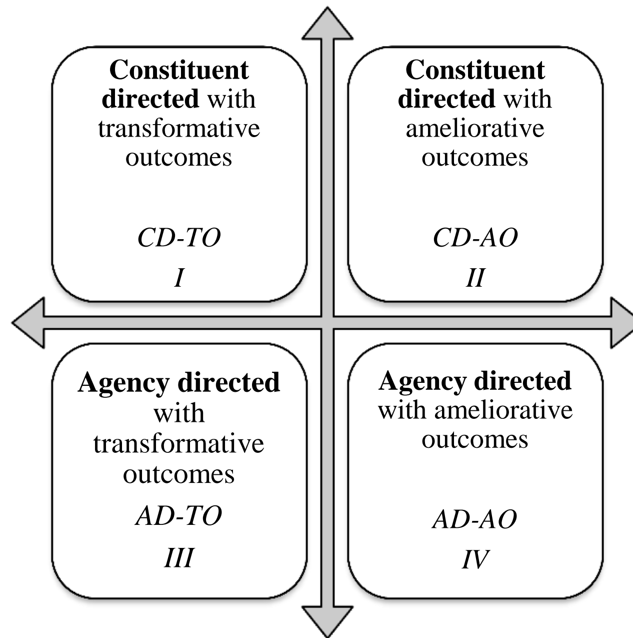

Figure 4 Comparison of Organizational Outcomes and Leadership

Allyship has the opportunity to flourish in quadrants I and II, since those are the locations of frontline community leadership. Many frontline food justice organizations work to address both ameliorative and transformative outcomes. Patriarchy flourishes in quadrants III and IV in that the agency-led power structure employs resources (often with the most benevolent intentions) on behalf of a distant, silent, and invisible "other." In reality, the lines are seldom drawn so distinctly, since many nonprofit organizations take measures to deliberately build constituents' voices into planning and resource allocation. In the end, though, the choices are truly between allyship or patriarchy. Organizations may offer a brand of beneficent, caring patriarchy, but patriarchy is never benign. There are always consequences when one person or institution, made

more powerful by the collective racist or classist, or gendered discriminatory social system in which we live, chooses to undermine the humanity of another by speaking and acting in her place.

Food Justice Education as Transformational

If allyship is at the heart of why activists would take up a cause that is not wholly their own, then education can be understood, among other things, as a vehicle for bringing potential allies to an understanding of intersectional oppression and moving them out into the world to create sustainable food systems. In this section I apply an intersectional feminist lens to participants' narratives regarding education, and, again deploy Collins and Bilge's (2016) six tools for intersectional analysis; social inequality, power, relationality, social context, complexity and social justice. Participants in this study viewed education as an essential pathway toward transforming access to and attitudes about fresh and healthy food among youth and children. They had experienced transformative moments in formal and informal educational settings that changed the trajectory of their education and career paths toward food justice work, so education seemed a natural location in which to employ their energy and imagination. Their goals for educational experiences with their students varied, from teaching how to plant seeds, to introducing students to the complex political and social foundations of their own food insecurity.

At Farmville, Serve Capital City's urban farm camp, and at Greenfield University's farm camp, educational activities included both the practical and the political. Students learned to plant and tend a garden. They also engaged in activities intended to help them connect barriers like inadequate transportation to their own lived experiences of food insecurity. These lessons had been refined and expanded over several summers, and camp managers, despite AmeriCorps turnover, had polished routines and procedures, so camp activities ran fairly smoothly. There were daily, short-term evaluations of how the program was going, but they mostly centered on improving interns' communication skills, or solving discipline or organizational problems that

cropped up during the day. 2016 was Farmville's last summer since Serve Capital City had decided the camp was not aligned with the nonprofit's larger goals. So there would be no serious, in-depth efforts to evaluate whether the program had created impactful change within the life of the city, or a reckoning of how to create stable transformation in the future.

Ella, Nora, Grace, and Willow seemed to feel that the camp had served an important function in getting young people outdoors and actively involved in caring for the earth and for humans through agricultural undertakings—an opportunity that many campers did not enjoy outside of Farmville or Greenfield's day camps. Olivia and others pointed to the power issues related to limited access to nature for some students, implicating powerful political and commercial lobbies that required excessive student testing which limited how teachers could spend precious class time. Systemic racism in housing and commerce created unequal funding formulas, generating deficits for impoverished school systems, so "extras" like play areas and outdoor education were not "valuable" enough to be funded. So participants understood the social injustice behind students' everyday realities when they rejoiced that their programs introduced students to the natural world.

In theoretical terms, camps created opportunities for the emergence of biophilia. David Orr (2004) defines biophilia as "the connections that humans subconsciously seek with the rest of life" (p. 46), especially the development of human love and esteem for the natural world. Orr (2004), Kahn (2010), Merchant (1995) and others theorize that only men and women who deeply appreciate a genuine loving connection between themselves and their natural environment will fight for the protection and preservation of natural systems, and resist social and political pressures to relegate nature to merely serving as a vehicle for improving the corporate profit margin of political and economic elites. Several participants' journeys to begin the struggle of food justice work began with a transformational moment, standing in a garden alongside friends

or family who brought them there. If farm camp can create opportunities for human connection to nature, this is no small accomplishment.

The other obvious aspiration among food justice educators was to open students' eyes as to the connections between their everyday food options and injustice present in students' lives. This type of teaching follows a long tradition of critical pedagogy. Ira Shor (2009) defines critical teaching as "a praxis that begins from student generative themes and then invites unfamiliar reflection and unfamiliar connection of the local to the global" (p. 294). Henry Giroux (2009) also proposes a type of critical pedagogy that is "fundamentally concerned with student experience insofar as it takes the problems and needs of the students themselves as its starting point" (p. 453). Giroux (as reported by Ira Shor) insists that "critical literacy would make clear the connection between knowledge and power" (Shor, 2009, p. 298). Paolo Freire (2005) conceptualizes a liberating pedagogy as one that is constructed within mutual dialogue between teacher and student, not based on a banking concept in which "education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are depositories and the teacher is the depositor"(p. 72). Instead, Freire envisions that those who are "truly committed to liberation must…abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations to the world" (2005, p. 79). This problem-posing education is dialogical, transforming the role of teacher and student. Freire explains, "The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teaches" (p. 80).

These conceptualizations of critical pedagogy are consistent with the hands-on, student-driven curriculum that often characterizes pedagogy intended to link students with sustaining practices of earth care. Sustainable agriculture education, for example, has a long history of experiential learning, action learning or community service-learning (see Battisti et al., 2008, p. for a comparison of these learning methods). Battisti and Sipos (2008) find that successful

experiential learning in the arena of sustainable agriculture begins with student initiated learning, which is augmented with best practices and current research literature, and built into a framework for self-reflection and interaction with peers.

Interns and AmeriCorps members deliberately chose methodology that was designed to engage students in discovering the ways the food system functioned below the surface within the larger socio-political world in which they lived and shopped and ate free school lunches. Camp participants played the games, watched the films, participated in discussion and then went home, often to housing projects where there was little to no visible effort to beautify or enhance human access to the natural environment, much less grow good food. Surely, many must have connected "nature" to having to clean their dirty shoes when they were forced to get on the youth center van on Wednesday mornings and go "be in nature."

The young people who seemed to truly comprehend these complicated connections, albeit at a simple level, were the interns at both Farmville at Greenfield University's urban farm camp. They had multiple opportunities to investigate, re-think, teach, and reflect; opportunities which students who were bussed in for the morning did not enjoy. Thanks to farm camp, students at least experienced a glancing blow intended to awaken "consciensitization" or the experience of developing their "power to perceive critically the *way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves," so that they "come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire, 2005, p. 81). This opportunity to reorganize the way they see themselves in the world was antithetical to the voices and images with which they were bombarded daily, as all teenagers are, that suggest that their existence is indeed a static reality that they better conform to, not dare to transform.

It is remarkable that farm camp experiences might be the only educational experience students encounter, whether formal or informal, in which transformation is suggested as an

option. Freire (2005) accurately identifies what happens most often in schools as "banking education," in which pedagogy involves teachers attempting to make "deposits" of learning to students' "accounts." Freire proposes instead, "problem-posing education," a form of liberating education which "consists in acts of cognition, not transferals of information" (2005, p. 79). Richard Kahn (2010) addresses this dichotomy between banking education and problem-posing education in the context of ecopedagogy.

> It is extremely worrisome that a major emerging trend within education for sustainable development is to treat education as a mere method of delivering and propagating experts' ideas about sustainable development, rather than as an opportunity to work for participatory and metacognitive engagements with students over what (if anything) sustainable development even means. (p. 14)

The same dangers await food justice pedagogy that is focused on merely transmitting the latest trends in homesteading or expert advice, tips and tricks for permaculture design, or organic gardening, or even on parroting the same list of probable culprits in creating unjust food pathways (transportation, big agriculture, housing, labor, etc).

Meek and Tarlau (2016) identify three essential tenets of food justice education work they label "Critical Food Systems Education," or CFSE:

1.) Food embodies and produces race and class-based divisions;
2.) Food systems education cannot be ambivalent to questions concerning race and class;
3.) Marginalized groups have the right to define their own food systems, including education about these systems. (p. 242)

To Meek and Tarlau, including race and class, as well as a right to self-determination within CFSE curriculum is essential and not extra, optional or peripheral. "Like many school activities,"

they write, “food systems education programs can easily be cast as politically neutral activities” (Meek & Tarlau, 2016, p. 253). However, de-politicized food systems education programs in which “NGO’s sell garden-based learning programs to schools using the logic that students will make better nutritional choices, improve standardized test scores, and obtain normative body sizes” (Meek & Tarlau, 2016, p. 240) do little to radically transform the food system.

One might ask why Meek and Tarlau stop with race and class as essential elements of CFSE. Why not include other sources of oppression such as sexism, ableism, or religious or language discrimination as barriers to accessing food in a just manner as worthy subjects for a critical pedagogy? Freire advocates creating opportunities for raising consciousness of injustice based on the lived experiences of students; in food justice education, those students would be the ones living on the frontlines of food insecurity. A Freirean ecopedagogy may bring students to the knowledge of injustice, but, if those students are Black women, immigrant women, or women living in poverty, how then do they validate knowledge claims within the accepted norms of a patriarchal White supremacist capitalist system; a system to which they have little access? For the validation of new knowledge they would require a different knowledge system, such as an intersectional feminist epistemology in which social inequality, power, relationality, social context, complexity and social justice (Collins & Bilge, 2016) are the tools for knowledge validation.

If our goal is simply to make students more aware of the health dangers of food additives and the benefits of eating organically, it might be sufficient to direct students to the organic section of their local Kroger’s or Publix store, since public demand has successfully increased the supply of organic goods on the shelves of most major supermarket chains. However, if the goal is to transform the connecting points on Collins’ matrix of domination, so that at whatever standpoint one finds oneself, a clear pathway to healthy food is visible, then, that task will require a critical ecopedagogy for food justice that is perhaps not yet imagined. Imagining such a

pedagogy must be a labor of love which is co-originated and co-created between “teacher” and “student,” within the praxis of the lived experiences of both collaborators.

An important final consideration is in what location, physically and institutionally, a problem-posing critical ecopedagogy for food justice might occur. Kahn (2010) suggests that

> a Freirian ecopedagogy also analyzes schools as practical sites for ideological struggle, but with an eye to how such struggle is connected with counterhegemonic forces outside the schools in the larger society. In other words, a northern ecopedagogy [alongside movements in Latin America] must be concerned with the larger hidden curriculum of unsustainable life and look to how social movements and a democratic public sphere are proffering vital knowledge about and against it. (p. 22)

Many researchers (Delpit, 2005; Gay, 2010; hooks, 1994; Orr, 2004) criticize schools as locations of social control and replication, rather than sources of creativity, improvisation or ingenuity. In her interview, Grace lamented teachers’ (including her own) tendency towards self-censorship when social justice topics emerged in classrooms. My almost three decades of public school service confirms this to be largely true. I also find myself practicing self-monitoring behaviors to preserve my job as an employee new to a district, to spare my reputation as a “difficult” teacher who wants to upset the status quo, or simply to appease students who find it extremely unsettling to encounter conflict in the classroom and respond by complaints or shutting down. Black history classes, Latino culture surveys, LGBT (heaven forbid) historical accounts and other curricular attempts to present students with an opportunity to work out where they came from and where that connection might lead are often dismissed outright by school boards, or closed down due to the loud vocalizations of a few enraged school district patrons. Short of a major overhaul of public school attitudes about teaching social justice, at least in historically Whiter, wealthier

school districts, I think food justice educators must look outside the institution of typical K-12 schools for locations of instruction.

What was promising from participants' narratives in this research was their ability to find answers to their own social justice questions through both formal and informal education options, once they began to search. They connected to sources of wisdom on social justice issues through online blogs, videos, web sites, or journalistic articles. They traveled with church groups and college groups. They selected courses as part of their college and master's degree programs that seemed unconnected to their major emphases but which sent their educational careers veering in a new direction. They watched and listened to mentors. As they took on internships and AmeriCorps positions, or later started their own nonprofit organizations or joined other organizations already in the struggle, they chose to teach students in preschools, outdoor camps, or after-school programs, thus continuing the education chain.

Conclusion

Participants in this study typically requested to join nonprofit organizations as interns or AmeriCorps members because they valued the organization's mission and because they anticipated applying their own beliefs or values in a practical way through the organization's work structure and relationships with the community. Most participants seemed satisfied with how these goals worked out. Nevertheless, their experiences sometimes worked to unravel the well-ordered fabric of their values rather than bind them neatly together. This unraveling was uncomfortable or disquieting at times, but served as a catalyst for change in attitudes and action.

In this chapter I have analyzed participants' experiences through an intersectional feminist lens that privileges acquiring new knowledge through caring, through dialogue and concrete experience, through interrogating personal privilege, and through teaching youth and children. This brand of knowledge production is not predictable or linear but is often reiterative or

episodic. For example, a participant's understanding of a situation (constituents don't purchase fresh produce because they don't know how to cook it) may be static over time until dialogue with a constituent creates a rift in that understanding, allowing a new perspective to emerge (in reality, this constituent does not feel justified in spending limited resources on food her family might reject outright) in a way that recolors her conception of events past, present and future.

These revelatory moments may occur while exploring differently-situated perspectives through literature, film, or academic study, for example. Some participants' narratives would suggest, however, that the hard work of enacting everyday experiences alongside members of communities who are uniquely situated within the matrix of domination to suffer the most harm from injustices in the food system produced beneficial transformations in values that might not have been accomplished by other means. That is to say, some women reported that participating in the daily labor of food justice education produced transformational moments which challenged beliefs or revised assumptions to an extent not possible through the distance of mere study of an issue. Guthman (2008a) recognizes that,

> If an objective is to enable whites to be more effective allies in anti-racist struggles—indeed to draw upon the resources of white privilege, there is much to be said for participatory action, despite the multiple discomforts it creates. By the same token, such participation seems to call for a different sensibility than is currently operative, one that encourages those who wish to convert, to listen, watch, and sometimes even stay away instead. (p. 444)

As a consequence of their service, participants often came to believe that ally-ship was a responsible goal. Choosing to behave as an ally would mean choosing to direct their efforts in ways that those most affected by the injustice found helpful. In Guthman's words, that might mean listening, watching, or even standing back and staying away just as easily as it might mean

digging in and lending a physical hand to the resistance. The difference participants learned was a difference in perspective. Rather than approaching injustice through the lens of their own experiences, through active participation participants learned the value of honoring and following the lead of women whose positionality within the matrix of domination made them uniquely qualified to determine a path to effective resistance.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative multi-case study was to explore the experiences of women working in food justice education. Within this broad research question I considered how an interest in food justice activism, advocacy and allyship emerged, and how that activist commitment was mediated through the social and relational interactions of the everyday work of food justice education.

Based on findings I reported in chapters four and five, and analyzed in chapter 6, I offer the following conclusions.

Conclusions: How did an interest in food justice activism and advocacy emerge?

Both formal and informal educational opportunities were instrumental in the emergence of an interest in food justice advocacy and allyship. Participants described informal and formal learning opportunities that they leveraged to energize their emerging interest in food justice education. Informal educational opportunities included club membership (Master Gardeners, FFA, charity clubs), after-school programs, online certification programs, and working alongside friends or family. Formal educational opportunities included high school courses, bachelor's and master's degree programs and internships within those programs.

Volunteer opportunities were catalysts for the transference of a consciousness of injustice to joining active resistance work. Volunteer agriculture work provided an opportunity to develop skills and knowledge about growing food, and a deeper understanding of the costs of running a successful farm or community garden, both financial and physical. For women who reported struggling with depression or anxiety, sometimes due to significant life changes, becoming involved in home gardening or in urban farm volunteer work was both healing and productive. Volunteer work gave youth a sense of place, access to contacts and settings that had previously been inaccessible, and pride in contributing to their communities. Transferring the focus of their labor between volunteer work and full time employment as an AmeriCorps member was often a smooth transition.

Women extensively employed the use of social networks, mentors' advice, travel, technology and volunteer work to experiment with and sort through options when deciding upon a path to food justice work. For most participants, the decision to engage in food justice work was not a straight path, but one with many intersections and decision points. They used a rich variety of resources to experiment with and weigh differing options for careers and university courses of study. Internet technology was a key source of information initially. The advice and examples of mentors, friends and family was also important. Travel programs through school, church or family helped broaden their world view, and thus their understanding of important justice issues.

Conclusions: How is that activist commitment mediated through the social and relational interactions of the everyday work of food justice education?

Internship and AmeriCorps membership provided opportunities to identify and understand gendered aspects of their work and that of constituents. Through their associations with nonprofit organizations as interns or AmeriCorps members, women confronted

gendered aspects of food justice work while conducting the physical labor of farm work and while participating in the largely woman-led world of nonprofit organizational work. They also encountered the gendered barriers to accessing fresh and healthy food, for members of frontline communities, by laboring alongside women whose lives were most affected by food insecurity, engaging with women in conversation, and helping them access resources.

Internship and AmeriCorps membership provided opportunities to form and reform a consciousness of privilege which was essential to social justice work. Through their associations with nonprofit organizations as interns or AmeriCorps members, women began to develop a more nuanced understand of how they were positioned in the world as far as privilege and access to financial, political and social resources. They began to develop a sense of the ways that using privilege to control or dominate has served to oppress those who have historically and contemporarily been positioned on the margins of society.

Internship and AmeriCorps membership provided opportunities to understand the location of themselves and other women within an intersectional matrix of domination, which aides in the growth of ally behavior. They learned through practical experiences and connections to food justice work how their positionality differed from women in frontline communities within an intersectional matrix of domination. They began to grasp that varying forms of oppression such as racism, classism, and gender discrimination are not single axis oppressions, but instead interact and combine to create oppressive conditions for food insecurity. These revelations prepared participants to shift from offering charity to serving as allies to support the leadership of women most affected by injustice.

Internship and AmeriCorps membership provided opportunities to engage children and youth in critical ecopedagogy for food justice. Through their associations with nonprofit organizations as interns or AmeriCorps members, participants became food justice educators. In

preschool settings, camps, after-school programs, and in public school classrooms, they began to learn the challenges and rewards of creating a culturally responsive, problem-posing pedagogy that engaged students in unraveling the interconnected systems of oppression that support the food pathways students encounter in their day-to-day activities.

Recommendations for Action

Educational institutions. To foster an interest in food justice work (or social justice work in general), agencies and institutions, families or communities should consider how to expose adults, students, youth, and children to a wide variety of formal and informal educational opportunities including classes, camps, field trips, volunteer work and travel. Relationships as mentors, teachers, or family members are important in helping participants convert hands-on experience into meaningful career direction, service, or study.

Encouraging volunteer engagement may help adults and youth who are struggling with the difficulties of life changes or mental health issues, or feelings of displacement within the community to find a pathway to healing and belonging. Formal requirements for volunteer hours or internships can be integrated into public school leadership programs, university coursework, or business and corporate culture. Informally, church groups, scouting organizations, school clubs, and even families can make volunteering a priority in order to connect members to the larger social justice issues that are often hidden in plain sight within their communities.

Educational institutions (formal or informal) that want to foster biophilia, or teach students to impact social justice issues within their community should engage students in critical ecopedagogy. First, teachers must discover what critical ecopedagogy might encompass, Since typical curriculum students encounter in schooling is rarely “problem-posing education. Then teachers must work collaboratively to build educational opportunities that are culturally responsive to students’ lives. Of course, to build biophilia, students must have regular access to

natural environments outdoors, and guidance as to how to discover the rich wonders of that environment.

Nonprofit, charitable institutions. Agencies or institutions that want to move relief work out of patriarchy must consciously work to foster an attitude and practice of allyship, which also means helping workers to understand their own privilege. This could be attempted through regular guidance and reflection based on conversations with frontline community members, or through participating in one of the many ongoing training options available through educational groups that specialize in such training. Creating an intentional organizational culture and chain of command that requires actual frontline community members to be an onsite and integral part (not just anonymous annual survey responders) of everyday labor and decision-making is essential. Choosing funding options that honor historically marginalized peoples and their needs first, over the needs of foundations or institutions is also important.

Education is essential to developing ally attitudes and behaviors. Some organizations connect employees with ongoing anti-racism seminars or training sessions, surely an essential site of professional development for all who are involved in social justice work. Educational efforts that engage nonprofit community members in considering their programs and their work through an intersectional feminist lens are not happening, however. The tools for intersectional inquiry that Collins and Bilge (2016) suggest—social inequality, power, relationality, social context, complexity and social justice—could become indispensable tools for developing allyship goals within the nonprofit setting. Developing this kind of curriculum would require a commitment to communication across communities, and an emphasis on ongoing reflection in order for the educational experience to create meaningful opportunities for developing an ally mindset, rather than simply serving to check off a training box.

Recommendations for Further Research and Limitations of the Research

This study represents the lives and experiences of twenty-four women working in nonprofit organizations focusing on food justice education in a Southern U.S. city. Some grew up here or in nearby towns or rural areas, and some arrived in this city from many locations on the U.S. map. Since their origins spanned the geography of the country, I feel satisfied that their experiences may resonate with other women working in other locations outside of the American South. Their experiences of gendered barriers and their recognition of the intersectional oppression of women on the margins of society certainly are not bound by geography. Their stories could be your story, or your neighbor's story, wherever you make your home and care for family, provision a household, or plant a garden.

Change happens rapidly, however, in the nonprofit world (online giving campaigns, crowd funding, politically motivated funding policies), in attitudes about alternative agriculture (farmers markets, community supported agriculture, community gardens) and availability of resources. Food justice organizations in Capital City tend to cycle rapidly in and out of existence. Agricultural programs within larger institutions open or close, depending on the priorities of boards, constituents or leadership, or as casualties of political maneuvering, as in the recent closing of immigrant services organizations across the country. Therefore, what has been commonly experienced by women in this study may not resemble women's experiences in the future. The findings and recommendations in this study should be considered to be part of a constantly-moving story; as the most recent surge among swiftly approaching, constant waves of change. This research will be valuable if it serves as a contemporary witness; as a link between past, present, and future actions of intersectional feminist resistance.

There are some characteristics of women's experiences, however, that I believe warrant further study. More research that amplifies the voices of women experiencing food insecurity in a

variety of settings is essential to understanding how food insecurity interacts with racism, sexism, classism, and other sources of oppression. Janet Page-Reeves' edited volume (2014) *Women Redefining the Experience of Food Insecurity: Life Off the Edge of the Table*, is an excellent example of a collection of qualitative studies in which women explain how they manage everyday difficulties of food provisioning from a standpoint within the matrix of domination where multiple oppressions intersect. Since the challenges of food pathways are unique to each location, research that illuminates distinctive local conditions is needed. Every mayor of every U.S. urban center should have women's stories close at hand in order to understand how women and families in the city that he or she leads are experiencing hunger. There is national data, aggregated by region, that describe who accesses emergency food supplies, and how often. But the stories of the lived experiences of food insecurity are rare.

More research is needed on the ways that food justice organizations, or emergency food organizations, interact with those who are on the frontlines of food insecurity. Reports of numbers of meals served, or pounds of food distributed do little to help organizations understand what constituents need and how they perceive organizations' acts of charity or intervention. This study was conducted strictly within nonprofit organizations. More research is needed on how government agencies such as county agriculture extension offices or K-12 and higher education institutions are addressing food insecurity. This study addressed women serving as interns or AmeriCorps members. More research is needed on what women in nonprofit leadership believe and how they came to those beliefs.

Finally, more must be known about the role of ally activism and intersectional feminism within the context of grassroots organizing for changes in the food system. What is happening from the perspective of leaders in frontline communities? How are those leaders pushing the boundaries of resistance and what do they believe is the role of allies in the struggle?

Researcher Reflections

On the night of January 20, 2017, after watching the broadcast of Donald Trump's inauguration on the Capitol steps with my students in my high school classroom, I drove through the foggy night, along with my daughter and her friend. We arrived early on Saturday morning in the eastern suburbs of Washington D.C., where we grabbed a quick cup of coffee, lettered our protest posters that we would carry all day, gathered four more friends, and raced for the already-packed trains into the city for the Women's March on Washington. Another of my daughters, who had move to New York to work as an AmeriCorps member of a nonprofit there, still rebuilding after Hurricane Sandy, met us, with two more friends, at a church just north of the Capitol, which opened its doors that morning serving coffee, water, snacks, hugs and prayers to the gathered marchers. The intense crush of women was unbelievable. Bathrooms and food and drink were scarce. It was cold and damp. But the mood was joyous and electric. My daughters and I felt as though we belonged; as if we were surrounded by a supporting sea of raucous, comic, sometimes profane, dedicated, committed sisters. And these sisters were serious. We were there to welcome the new President to town in a way that would leave little doubt as to whether we would quietly accept the misogyny, sexism, racism and islamophobia that had appeared throughout the campaign.

In the weeks leading up to the march, I had observed an increase in traffic on local and national feminist social media outlets as an intense debate about the role of White feminism and intersectional feminism emerged. Discussions about misogyny, sexual assault, racism, and oppression had been lively for months. When the idea for a women's march began to coalesce from several sources, several of whom were White women, and initial suggestions referenced the Million Man March, a historic 1995 gathering of mostly Black men, many Black feminists responded with intense criticism. Here, it seemed, was yet another example of White feminism attempting to usurp all the feminist space. Many Black women debated publicly whether it was

more impactful to resist the insurgence of White feminism and not participate in the march, or to march together to resist what appeared to be an unencumbered national turn toward misogyny. As it became evident that intersectional feminist principles were important to the movement, as evidenced by the diverse make-up of the national steering committee and published commitments to unity principles, women from many backgrounds signed on, although some remained skeptical.

As a researcher completing my first major project, I learned how essential context is in searching for meaning from the data. The Women's March just amplified months of public and private soul searching around how women both ally together in resistance and participate in the patriarchy that surrounds us. Women in this study struggled most with how to own their own privilege while also learning to serve and make a difference and exploring what authentic allyship might look like. The national political and social context simply illumined their struggle.

I struggled as well, with how to reconcile all the competing voices that women try to incorporate into our lives. As a White, middle class, middle aged, Christian, cis-gendered, heterosexual woman, I am profoundly aware of my privilege and the unmerited advantages that life has handed me. Yet, somehow, I am also deeply moved by injustice and outraged by racism and discrimination. I wonder, as the women who so kindly agreed to participate in this project also wondered, how to turn that outrage into productive action that honors the leadership of women living with injustice as their day-to-day reality. A frequent question for debate on feminist social media is how one learns the tenets of intersectional feminism and how to employ those tenets in everyday relationships. I smile in response, because I know it has taken me years of PhD work and the intensity of a dissertation project to just begin to grasp all that intersectional feminist allyship might mean. Though I may be slow to learn, I am certainly a transformed learner, an ally-in-the-making, along with the women who so kindly shared their stories in this project.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Participant Demographics

Participant Demographics					
	Alias	**Date of interview**	**Age**	**Race**	**Bachelor's (B) or Master's (M) Major**
1	Ava	12-Jul-16	22	Black	(B) Nutrition
2	Bailey	3-1-17	44	White	(B) Art/design, (M) Outdoor Rec
3	Clara	8-Jan-16	56	White	(B) Sustainability
4	Daisy	29-Oct-16	25	White	(B) Anthropology
5	Ella	21-Jan-16	23	White	(B) Sustainable Development & Public Health
6	Faith	8-Mar-16	28	Black	(B) Political Science, (M) Divinity School
7	Grace	6-Feb-16	25	White	(B) Philosophy of Religion (M) Education
8	Harper	12-Mar-16	32	Black	(B) English (M) Community Development Action
9	Ivy	23-Dec-15	19	White	(B) English
10	Jessica	21-Dec-15	57	White	unknown
11	Kayla	24-Aug-16	24	White	(B) Public Health
12	Lilly	15-Jul-16	Early 20s?	Black	(B) Nutrition
13	Maya	8-Jan-16	26	Black	(B) Geography
14	Nora	8-Jan-16	22	White	(B) Environmental Studies
15	Olivia	13-Jul-16	Mid 20s?	White	(B) Outdoor Recreation Ministries
16	Piper	21-Jun-16	18	White	High school senior
17	Quinn	4-Mar-16	28	White	(B) Philosophy & Social Entrepreneurship

Participant Demographics Cont.					
	Alias	**Date of interview**	**Age**	**Race**	**Bachelor’s or Master’s Major**
18	Riley	24-Mar-16	30	White	(B) Agriculture Communications (M) unknown
19	Sophia	24-Jun-16	19	White	(B) Social Justice
20	Tori	21-Jan-16	23	White	(B) Agriculture, Biological Engineering
21	Valerie	22-Mar-16	33	Hispanic	(B) Psychology with a minor in biology
22	Willow	12-Jul-16	27	White	(B) Human Rights Studies (M) Education
23	Zoe (interview not included in data for this study)	24-Feb-16	32	White	(B) Biology

Appendix B Types of Short Term Assignments

What type of internship did they complete?			
Name	**AmeriCorps Member**	**College/university internship**	**Community Internship**
Ava		X	
Bailey	X		
Clara		X	
Daisy	X		
Ella	X		
Faith		X	
Grace		X	
Harper		X	
Ivy			X
Jessica			X
Kayla	X		
Lily		X	
Maya	X		
Nora	X		
Olivia		X	
Piper			X
Quinn	X		
Riley		X	
Sophia		X	
Tori	X		
Valerie			X
Willow		X	
Zoe	County Extension Office		

Appendix C IRB Approved Interview Protocol

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for Women Involved in Food Justice Work

How do you define food justice? Tell me about the food justice work that you do.

How did you become interested in food justice work?

Is there a particular event or person that has influenced your involvement in food justice work?

What do you think would be a good way to grow the participation in food justice work?

When and where does food justice education take place?

In what ways do you find food justice education to be effective? In what ways could it be improved?

Tell me about a time when you were involved in food justice education. What do you think were the most important outcomes of that experience for you? What do you think were important outcomes for other participants?

What do you see as the role of women in food justice work and food justice education?

What do you think are the needs of women related to food justice, and how has the work you have been involved with addressed those needs? Is there anything more you would suggest to address food justice issues as they relate to women?

What is the biggest barrier for women in having access to fresh and healthy food?

Do you have a picture, artifact, or video that you would like to share that represents your interest in food justice work? If so, would you mind sharing it and its significance?

Can you tell me about a favorite experience where sharing food was an important part of enjoying relationship or community? (added through IRB approval on 11-8-15)

VITA

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Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: IS IT A QUESTION OF ALLYSHIP?: AN INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN INTERNS IN FOOD JUSTICE EDUCATION NON-PROFIT WORK

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Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2017.

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