Community Politics and Leadership in Food In/Security: networks, issues and observations in Albany County, Wyoming and Tompkins County, New York

A Report for Kettering Foundation by

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This report tackles the first set of questions posed by Kettering Foundation in the Community Politics and Leadership series in health. The questions were: "What did we learn about the existing political discourse about the health concern of interest? a. What is the health problem that concerns you? How is it described in the media or other sources of information? As you talk with unaffiliated people in your community, how do they talk about the problem? b. What are the organizations currently involved in addressing this concern?"

We were tasked with the following: "Describe how the media or other sources of health information are writing about this problem and how professionals define it. Write a short description of informant concerns. Develop a description of the networks that do, or might be able to, impact the health concern. Describe who is currently talking about this problem and who is invited into the conversation."

This report tackles these questions generally, and then specifically in the contexts of Tompkins County, New York and Albany County, Wyoming.

"Food Security" as a Public Problem in the US

We have selected "food security", and its converse, "food insecurity," as the issue for our exploration of public deliberation and issue definition in community health. We include related discourses and issue definitions as relevant, including: hunger, community food security, food justice, food democracy, and food sovereignty. These terms, however, have currency mainly in professional and activist worlds. In our communities, simply talking about food, and perhaps food access, is perhaps the most salient way of discussing these issues.

Definitions

Richard Wright spoke about the hunger that defined much of his childhood in his 1945 autobiography, *Black Boy*:

> Hunger stole upon me so slowly at first I was not aware of what hunger really meant… but now I began to wake up at night to find hunger standing at my bedside, staring at me gauntly… This new hunger baffled me, scared me, made me angry and insistent. (14) … Once again I knew hunger, biting hunger, hunger that made my body aimlessly restless, hunger that kept me on edge, that made my temper flare, hunger that made hate leap out of my heart like the dart of a serpent's tongue. (102-3)[1]

Not long after Wright's book was released, US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) institutional ancestor began tackling hunger and undernutrition in the US for the first time through implementation of the National School Lunch Act of 1946. So many potential soldiers screened during draft for World War II were rejected for health problems related to undernutrition that Congress introduced free and reduced priced school meals as "a measure of national security, to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's children" (section 2). (Notably, this bill had another purpose; section 2 continues, "… and to encourage the domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural commodities and other food.")

Yet food access and hunger did not explicitly appear on the national political agenda until routine evaluations of the War on Poverty in the mid-1960s led to Congressional representatives observing near starvation in Mississippi Delta communities first hand, including Senator Robert Kennedy, who became a champion for the issue until his assassination in 1968. He is reported to have said, "I didn't know this kind of thing existed. How can a country like this allow it? *Maybe they just don't know*."[2: 77-78]

Maybe we didn't want to know. The US did not begin measuring food security or hunger for another 20 years. Congress tasked USDA with developing a measure as part of the 1990 National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act. The agency finalized the standardized household food security survey in 1998 and it has been administered annually since.

The word "hunger" formed part of the official definition of food insecurity until it was discursively eradicated in 2006, when the USDA renamed "food insecurity with hunger" as "very low food security." According to the panel tasked with reviewing USDA's "food insecurity" definitions and assessment, the word hunger "refers to the *consequence* of food insecurity that, because of a prolonged, involuntary lack of food due to lack of economic resources, results in discomfort, illness, weakness, or pain that goes beyond the usual uneasy sensation."[3: 47] Their report noted that hunger was an "individual-level concept" while the food security measures that USDA used were household level.

The USDA survey measure includes questions to heads of households if they have in the past year: worried whether food would run out before they had money to buy more, could afford to eat balanced meals, ever felt hungry or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money to buy food. With respondents who answer yes to any question, the surveyor asks follow-up questions about frequency. The number of "yes" responses combined with frequency determine the respondent's classification as one of high food security, marginal food security, low food security, or very low food security.

The USDA has adopted definitions of household food security and insecurity from a 1990 paper on the topic[4] as follows:

> Food security includes at a minimum:
> - The ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods.
> - Assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies).
>
> Food insecurity is limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.[5]

As the USDA notes, many people working in the "food security" arena focus not on households, but on communities. For example, the dominant actor in this arena, the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC), founded in 1994, uses Hamm and Bellow's definition of community food security:

> a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.[6,7]

Notably, this definition expands the household notion of food security to include culture, environmental sustainability, food systems, self-reliance, and justice. It also requires that *all* households in a community are food secure in order to achieve food security.

Finally, most recently, the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) has attempted to simply a broad brush measure of this issue at the household level with one question intended to measure "food hardship" The question, similar to one on the USDA food security, is: "Have there been times in the past twelve months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?"

As we will argue in the next section, food insecurity – however named and framed – is a public health problem and national and international moral disgrace. At the same time, we will explore the salience of this and related terms in communities composing Tompkins County, New York and Albany County, Wyoming, for guiding deliberation and action. For example, a colleague working with us on these issues in the unincorporated areas of Ashland and Cherryland, just south of Oakland, California, reflected on her own preliminary thesis research in this arena in that community:

> The food environment of Ashland and Cherryland is not "insecure," even though Hank [Herrera] would accurately say that the food that is available is poisoned with pesticides and unfair labor practices. Moreover, the food environment lacks the grocery super stores that many activists argue drain resources from local communities. The question that emerges for me stems from issues of equity in Ashland and Cherryland: how do characteristics of the local and regional political economy, racial politics, and cultural milieu affect the food preferences of residents of the unincorporated areas. Raising this question about food preferences challenges me because it strikes me as paternalistic and elitist at the same time that it seems important from a public health perspective.
>
> Several conversations with a youth from Ashland shed light on this conundrum. He described Ashland as being inundated with cheap junk food options and lacking opportunities for physical activity. Another time, he recalled knowing more people who failed physical education classes than math classes. He clearly problematized the food environment and linked it with other aspects of the physical environment. Following these conversations, I asked him what he thought about "community food security." He said, "What's that?" His question points to two problems with my study and with the field in which it is situated: first, the food security/insecurity dichotomy is terribly simplistic and second, even if an ideal definition of food security is identified, it loses all power when the term carries no meaning in the communities about which it is used.[8]

As mentioned above, Gayle and Jemila found it most salient to simply ask about food, occasionally "food systems," and people having enough to eat, rather than any of the professional frames above.

Media coverage and framing

Cheryl Geiger (research assistant working with Christine) compared media coverage of hunger and food security issues, particularly within the US, between two 5-year time frames: 1995-1999 and 2005-2009. Cheryl searched on the phrase "food insecurity" in both ProQuest and Google News search engines. She found approximately 1300 articles with this term between 1995-1999, and 870 published between 2005-2009.

The release of the USDA food security measure in 1998 and the run up to that may have garnered the greater coverage in the late 1990s. It was in this period that the term "food insecurity" gained currency as *the* way to talk about this issue (versus, for example, the phrase "nutritional insecurity," in an article cited below).

A prevalent theme in the late 1990's was the "hidden" food insecurity faced by U.S. citizens, particularly in areas like the Southwest. For example, an article in the *Austin American Statesmen* claimed 2 million Texans had trouble consistently affording food and that emergency food banks reported an inability to keep up with demand.[10] Then-governor George W. Bush did not accept these hunger findings in Texas; an article in the *Washington Times* reported that "he doubted a Department of Agriculture report that said his state had the second-highest rates of hunger and 'nutritional insecurity' in the nation".[11]

Debate over the use and effectiveness of the Food Stamp program was also prominent. The Austin article cited above also reported that "less than half of Texas' poor are receiving food stamps…this is down from the three-fourths of poor Texans who received these benefits four years ago".[10] Shocking hunger statistics, particularly for minority groups, led many to call for Food Stamp reform, making the program more accessible.[12] (These groups succeeded; funding for outreach programs was built into subsequent "farm bills," which set Food Stamp/SNAP policy.)

For the 2005-2009 search, the issue of food insecurity was less prominent in the news as hunger statistics released by the USDA in 2005 showed a decrease in the number of hungry U.S. citizens as compared to increases in the previous five years.[13] At the same time, there was still frustration related to over-emphasis on hunger numbers as opposed to helping the actual hungry. An editorial in the *Madison Capital Times* accused government officials of masking the issue of hunger by focusing on increases or decreases in statistics and using less palpable phrases such as "extreme food insecurity" instead of "hunger".[14] There was also a backlash against increases in food prices and a rise in interest in urban agriculture and community food systems. For example, an article entitled, "Urban agriculture: A solution to food insecurity" highlighted the use of urban agriculture internationally.[15] By the end of this period, the food movements characterized in the frames (3) and (4) below were gaining mainstream attention, as exemplified by the 2009 *New York Times* article rhetorically asking, "Is a Food Revolution Now in Season?"[9]

Four solution frames

In the US, those claiming to have solutions for ensuring every person has enough to eat tend to use one of four, partly overlapping frames:

1. **Second Green Revolution, "We Feed the World"**

   Who: industrial agriculture and biotech firms (e.g., Archer Daniels Midland, Monsanto), Gates Foundation, traditional land grant agricultural extension, biotech and most agriculture academics (e.g., one recently argued about the "moral imperative" for golden rice and was very excited about the prospect of splicing breast milk genes into rice), conservative media (e.g., *Economist*). International.

   What: More inputs (fertilizer, pesticides) but with more data-based and targeted application, but mainly biotechnology (GMOs) and even more industrial scale agriculture. Attention almost solely to quantity, with a nod to quality only in the narrow technical and reductionist sense of,

for example, fortification or the partial vitamin A in golden rice. Eaters as consumers. No attention to labor conditions, ownership, or environmental externalities.

Argument: Population growth is outpacing our ability to grow enough food, and fertile land has all been tapped. Our only way out is to increase productivity on existing land, and the only way to do that is more inputs and biotechnology.

Critiques: We have a distribution not a supply problem (currently there is enough food to feed the world, but we don't use it that way). If we didn't eat meat, or less meat, there would be enough for population projections for the next 100 years, at least. The way to increase productivity is through low-tech, multi-crop, small-to-medium scale agriculture with few to no external inputs. GMOs present unknown and potentially devastating risks and/or are meddling with the sacredness of life. More inputs means mortgaging future food production as we reach peak oil and peak soil.

2. **Anti-hunger, "Feeding America"**

Who: Food banks, large food processing companies, federal feeding programs (WIC, SNAP, school lunch, and nearly a dozen other small programs), mainstream media (e.g., *USA Today*). (Some soup kitchens, though these often have an explicit community building or organizing aspect.) National.

What: Giving poor people (who jump through all the service-provider-designated hoops) donated food or vouchers for food. Not much attention to quality or kind of food, though fruit and vegetable donation programs have been growing as has federal attention to the nutritional quality and sourcing for their feeding programs. Eaters as clients, service recipients. No attention to labor conditions, ownership, or environmental externalities.

Argument: "Hunger has a cure." People who don't have enough to eat need food. Give it to them.

Critiques: This is a band aid, and a humiliating one, not a solution. Food banks serve as dumping grounds for the unsold processed foods from food companies. Donating food, for example, in the annual postal drive, lets donators feel like they are off the hook for actually doing anything about hunger or inequity. Overall, the food banking system diverts resources and attention from real solutions.

3. **Community food security (CFS)**

Who: Community Food Security Coalition; most food-related NGOs other than food banks (and the odd food bank); a minor portion of the federal farm bill; social science, public health, and horticulture academics working in food systems. National.

What: People who identify as working in this frame span from anti-hunger (above) to food sovereignty (below). The core rhetoric, if not always action, tends to be about localizing and regionalizing food production, processing and distribution of healthy and culturally appropriate food. Unlike the previous two frames, CFS activists concern themselves with the way food is produced, the quality of the food, and decision making about and control of food and food systems. It is necessary but not sufficient that everyone has enough to eat, but this food must be culturally acceptable and produced (per the definition above) "through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice." Strategies include community

gardens, small production farms including in urban environments, "good food box" schemes, improved school and after school food, community kitchens, cooking classes, farmers markets, and small-scale food processing. Eaters as producers, citizens.

Argument: The solution to hunger is putting significant parts of food production, processing and distribution in the hands of communities.

Critiques: Community gardens, local markets and notions of justice are cute and all, but they are not going to feed the world or even make more than a dent in hunger.

4. **Food Sovereignty** (sometimes Food Justice, or Food Democracy, in the US)

Who: Via Campesina (international peasants movement; a US-based chapter is in formation)[1]; the most radical food NGOs, First Nation food movements, an occasional academic social scientist (though Via Campesina itself very rarely works with academics). International.

What: This movement aims to gain community control over land and other resources not only for food and food system goals, but to establish radical local democracy and equity. People in this movement do not want food per se, they want equitable and local ownership of the means of production and distribution of food, life in harmony with mother earth, peace from household to international levels, and radical (and contentious) democracy. They are actively taking on "big ag" in the first frame though international organizing, including by hosting "alternative" forums in parallel to UN international forums (e.g., the Alternative Global Forum for Life, Environmental and Social Justice held at the time of the Cancun UN Conference on Climate Change in December 2010). organizing demonstrations against chains such as McDonalds (as in Buve's actions in France). Many members are also small-scale farmers, or peasants, who either own their land or are working to do so, and aim to feed their families and communities with their harvests. Eaters as citizens, leaders.

Argument: This movement works in a different paradigm from the other frames, one much closer to many indigenous/Sovereign Nation frames than to the modernist, enlightenment frame that dominates Northern/Western thought. For example, in their declaration from the Alternative Global Forum mentioned above, Via Campesina argued, "We must rebuild the cosmovision of our peoples, based on a holistic view of the relationship between the cosmos, Mother Earth, the air, the water and all living beings. Human beings do not own nature, but rather form part of all that lives."

Critiques: In the dominant discourse about these food issues the radical 'alternative' frame that Via Campesina represents, and Via Campesina itself, is mostly ignored. People who identify with Via Campesina are represented as participants at CFS Coalition meetings but not in the CFS mission or management. In my personal experience in private settings, I have heard them what I would characterize as viciously attacked by academics who are closely aligned with the first frame. This has amounted to an unengaged wholesale dismissal, not an engagement including a critique. I have also heard food movement "insiders" and less hostile academics that agree with their frame question how well Via Campesina represents "real" or "average" peasants.

[1] By their own description, "Via Campesina is an international movement of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless, rural women, indigenous people, rural youth and agricultural workers. We are an autonomous, pluralist and multicultural movement, independent of any political, economic, or other type of affiliation. Born in 1993, La Via Campesina now gathers about 150 organisations in 70 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas."

The frames and critiques above are "professional" ones, in that they are salient to people studying, lobbying, or community organizing about food system and access issues. They do not capture the names and frames that "everyday people" may use about these issues.

The sections below introduce two geographic areas, Tompkins County New York and Albany County, WY/North Park, CO, and summarize what Jemila and Gayle (respectively) heard from community members in their communities about these issues.

"Food Security" in Tompkins County, New York (Jemila Sequeira)

Food security is at the forefront of discussions as communities are grappling with hunger and food insecurity. The following paper will discuss the process of community engagement and an overview of discussions on food security and health with residents of Tompkins county located in upstate New York. Conversations occurred in a deliberative and inclusive effort to represent individuals who self - identified as "food insecure."

Discussions with Tompkins county residents on food access, personal experiences with and efforts to address food insecurity revealed the systemic nature of the problem. The demographics of Tompkins county is worth noting when exploring how community residents understand, discuss and personally experience with food security. The demographics below are provided to create a context within which we may gain a deeper understanding of how income, education influence community engagement on food security and related health concerns.

About Tompkins County, New York

Tompkins county is nestled in upstate New York's Finger Lakes Region and the home to three institutions of higher education: Cornell University (20,273 students), Ithaca College (6,894 students) and Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3). Cornell's main campus is in the City of Ithaca, Ithaca College is on South Hill, within the Town of Ithaca and TC3 is just outside the Village of Dryden. The county landscape covers 476 square miles at the southern end of Cayuga Lake, the longest of New York's Finger Lakes. Centered in the county is Ithaca, the county seat and only city. Tompkins County includes 9 towns and 6 villages.

The U.S. Census Bureau's most recent 3-year population estimate for Tompkins County is 100,590, a 4% increase over the 2000 Census count of 96,501. The City of Ithaca is the population center with close to one-third (31%) of the county total. The 2000 census shows the Town of Dryden has 14% of the county population with 13,532 residents. The Town of Ithaca has nearly 19% of the population and the Town of Lansing nearly 11%. The six least populated towns combined represent just over one-quarter (26%) of the population. Overall, the 2000 U.S. Census classifies just over 58% of the population urban and 42% rural.

Much of the county's demographic profile reflects the weight of the college sector. The median age of Tompkins County residents is 28 years—the lowest in the state. Tompkins County's population is well educated: 92% of residents age 25-plus are high school graduates, 53% have a Bachelor's degree, and 28% a graduate or professional degree.

In Tompkins County, 1-in-6 families whose children are under age 5 have incomes below the poverty level. In Ithaca, the rate is 1-in-5, in Dryden 1-in-7. In the case of single-mom householders with related

children under age 18, the poverty rate is extreme: 33% for Tompkins County, 37% for Ithaca, 50% for Town of Dryden.

Tompkins County's population is 15% minority, over 10% Asian; in Ithaca, nearly one-in-six residents are Asian, and overall nearly one-in-four are non-white.

Initial efforts to engage community citizens in conversations on food security and health were challenged by the common language used in the food system. A brief explanation of the terminology used to discuss local food systems and issues of access, security and justice was shared in advance. When self-identified residents from low income communities understood the topic of food security and health stories began to give way to personal examples such as running out of food before the month is over and going to pantries instead till the next month. Twenty-five Tompkins county residents, fifteen from the city of Ithaca and ten from surrounding towns and villages agreed to participate in discussion on food security and health.

Community conversations/discussions included questions that addressed:

a. Personal understanding of food security and how the issues affects them personally. People were asked if they thought food security was an issue in their community and/or in Tompkins County.

b. Awareness of community resources to address food insecurity. Ease of access to known resources for those who are food. Insecure.

c. What are the main sources of information regarding food related concerns (pantries, food assistance, other?)

d. In what ways have you participated in efforts to address food insecurity locally? If never, what would you do to address food security?

The extent to which citizens engage in planning, creating and sustaining a healthy food system is impacted by real and perceived access and an understanding of the citizen role in shaping the concerns of the community.

In discussions with people the following general themes continued to emerge.

V.G: Puerto Rican female in her late forty's identified food insecurity as a real struggle despite full-time employment. The costs of basic necessities is too expensive to afford to eat healthy. When asked if V.G. would like to join a group of people who work towards ending food insecurity her immediate response was "no" and after a few minutes she added that many of these meetings are far out and at odd times and often unwelcoming unless you are invited in.

D.S: We met as she was sitting outside her apartment on watch while her two young boys play ball in front of her upstairs apartment. The discussion was easy and she welcomed the company. Her husband worked two jobs and she is presently unemployed. When asked about food security her response was that she considers her family food insecure and is really concerned about how poor folks are forced to eat unhealthy and sometimes you don't see the effect right away but it catches up. DS continued to talk about relatives who are obese and how their children eat unhealthy all day. She explained that she and her husband try to feed the children the best that they can afford. She added that she does not like to go to the food pantries mainly because the quality of the foods is undependable and she has gotten food that has alot of salt and sugar. When asked if she was aware of any groups or meetings addressing food

security she recalled that she had read about some benefit or event for hunger but could not recall the details. When asked if she was aware of community agencies or organizations that work to address food security her responses included the local Red Cross, Catholic Charities and Salvation Army. When asked if she knew who or where to go for health related information she stated I don't know much about this and would have no idea where to start, outside of the hospital and the health department.

KQ: Resides in the town of Dryden with her three daughters and a partner. Self-identified as food insecure with a chronic history of struggling with poverty. Formerly homeless, she learned how to survive with very little. KQ is an advocate for growing and preserving food. Dedicated to her community KQ has contributed hours of laborious work towards community gardens and meeting with town parks.

AG: African-American single father raising two daughters. AG is unemployed despite holding a BS from Ithaca college. AG has a personal and academic awareness of the underpinnings of social inequities and consequences of a profit driven society.

Relevant Networks

Network Venues: discussion, planning and action to address food security and/or health related concerns. Existing formal and informal networks. Who is at the table and who is not? What can be done to increase representation by those who are historically left out of discussions and planning?

Information exchange and media covering local food security and access issues has increased over the past few years in Tompkins county. Community agencies, such as the United Way have administered two community assessments which address food security in Tompkins county. Cornell University is also a resource for projects conducted by undergraduates and graduate students on various aspects of the local food system. During the academic year of 2010 a Cornell student conducted research on the markets throughout Tompkins county using GIS technology and identifying food deserts.

The County Health Department serves as the primary clearing house for health related information, offering services and resources throughout the county. The county health department provides support, informational series of workshops to help individuals learn to accept and manage chronic health conditions. Information sessions on diabetes and fall prevention are examples of services to the county.

The Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County is home to the Health Planning Council which has representatives from various agencies focused on health in the county such as the office of the aging and These meetings are open to the public however they are held during times that limit availability of non-salary workers to attend.

The Health and Human Services committee of the Tompkins County legislature holds it's meeting on the second Wednesday of each month. Meetings are open to the community however, like the Tompkins County Health Planning Council the meetings are held during times when people are at work or unable to afford child care to attend a 1- 2 hour meeting.

Tompkins county has a growing number of grassroots community initiatives working in the local food system. One overlapping goal is to increase the exposure and consumption of healthy foods to children and families.

Below are two examples of community initiatives that is quickly gaining recognition for meeting this vision and literally bringing healthy food into the lives of children in one of the county's reduce and free lunch elementary schools.

Ithaca Community Harvest

Ithaca Community Harvest (ICH) was envisioned by a diverse gathering of local farmers, community organizers, educators, parents and youth who came together last spring with the goal of sustaining the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program indefinitely. The idea that emerged was to exchange community volunteer labor for "extra" produce from local farms and school gardens to be served as classroom snacks at BJM, and also incorporated into after-school snacks and meals at the Greater Ithaca Activities Center and Southside Community Center.

In this first year, ICH made admirable strides in achieving its mission to create, sustain and expand a community-based system that provides youth and their families in Ithaca's public schools access to local organic produce, with particular focus on historically marginalized communities otherwise put at a socio-economic disadvantage.

Gardens 4 Humanity:

Gardens 4 Humanity (G4H) is emerging as a robust community driven initiative reaching throughout Tompkins County to promote economic, personal, and neighborhood empowerment through urban gardening and local farm connections. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County has and continues to serve as a valuable resource in supporting the G4H community.

G4H programs and services:

- 9 community-based gardens
- 3 afterschool garden programs at BJM*, Southside Community Center and with Urban 4-H
- 2 in-school garden-based learning programs for youth at BJM and New Roots
- More than a dozen garden-related workshops that are open to the public with topics ranging from garden season extension to garden-to-table cooking classes
- Spring & Fall Garden-Based Educators Training that teaches gardening skill building, effective teaching methods, and matches trainees to community or school based sites to help manage garden programs
- Technical on-site assistance to area gardeners, teachers working on school gardens, and community members wanting to start or maintain community gardens

G4H brings hands-on, garden-based learning and backyard fresh produce to BJM students, strengthening their appreciation of and connection to the fruits and vegetables they are eating as snacks in the classroom as a part of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program. By growing seedlings in classrooms, transplanting these in the garden as a school community, and participating in ongoing physical garden chores, art projects, and lessons on nutrition, science and sustainable food systems, BJM students gain experiential knowledge of soil, water and sunlight as the source of vegetables they will enjoy as classroom snacks.

Summary of Themes Heard to Date

Xxsummary of what people said. The below "summary and conclusion" section blends this and the next proposed section – for KF they should probably be seperated.

Deliberation Framework

Xxsummary of "Create a framework to provoke deliberation." And "Identify the community groups that should be invited to deliberate. What groups had not been included before?". The below "summary and conclusion" section blends this and the above proposed section – for KF they should probably be seperated.

Summary and Conclusion:

What: Increased awareness and concern emerged during conversations around food security and health. More than half of the people who identified as low income or food insecure were not aware of how to advocate for themselves or others within the health and food system. Only two people identified food or health councils as means to influence changes in both the food and energy

Who: Self-Identified food insecure county residents. Five people who self-identified food secure were shared some same interests as those who identified as food insecure.

How: What can be done to further engage community citizens in the process of addressing issues and concerns related to food security and health?

~ Provide key community leaders formal and informal information about local groups or committees address community health concerns. Encourage community leaders to talk with neighbors about food insecurity and explore what solutions come from how can eat healthy and nutritious foods. Be willing to work outside of the box. Honor l differences and be willing to adjust meeting styles to accommodate different meeting styles. Be ready to respect input from people you perceive to be of a different cultures and to the demographics of the community.

What: Community citizens who identify themselves as food insecure shared in conversation that food insecurity does have an affect their health. The lack of knowledge and resources limit how well many food insecure can manage their health. Suggestions from those include opportunities to learn how to create an affordable nutritious eating routine as a means to manage a chronic health condition or prevent its onset requires access to foods and learning how to eat foods together so they can support

Who: Self-identified food secure and insecure community citizens

What: People from both food secure and insecure communities throughout Tompkins County attended a community food security dialogue gathering at a community center. I convened this group to follow up on expressed interest voiced at two earlier dialogues on health and food security. Collectively this group identified the areas in the food system that would need to be changed, created or forsaken to support an equitable food system that works for everyone in the community.

Organized networks of food related agencies and initiatives in Tompkins county such as the TC Human Services Coalition, TC health Department, Ithaca Community Harvest and Gardens 4 Humanity represent dedicated work to support healthy eating and health concerns.

Tompkins county is fortunate to be the home of several other food related efforts specifically the Cornell Cooperative Extension-Tompkins is one of the hubs of innovative approaches to meet the community needs.

While These networks are wonderful however one of the most consistent messages from those who self-identify as food insecure is the need for employment or business opportunities. Food insecure Citizens

repeatedly explain that if there was stability in areas of employment and housing it would be easier to take time to attend meetings and advocate for change and fully engage in democratic change.

It is the systemic nature of food insecurity that requires innovative approaches to resource and build human capacity for those who are food insecure. The emerging green job markets that address food, agriculture, waste management and energy can provide opportunities for self-reliance, pride and support a community where all people have access to resources and opportunity to create a quality of life with respect

- Food Literacy: understanding healthy choices, nutrition, and food preparation; understanding and counteracting the impact of an unhealthy food environment
- Food Systems Literacy: understanding the impact and scale of the local food environment, engaging groups working in the fields of agriculture, business, health, and nutrition

Examples of other groups working to improve food access in low income and communities of color:

- Detroit Black Food Security Network- What's For Dinner? Lecture series and community conversations on Health and Wellbeing http://www.peoplemovers.com/events/whats-for-dinner-832
- Afri-Can Food Basket-The Food Basket program, community food market, and community kitchen http://www.africanfoodbasket.com/foodaccess.html
- Black Oaks Center for Sustainable Renewable Living- assists communities in reducing their carbon footprint and fossil fuel use. The Center is committed to bring information not only to communities which are largely unaware but to create a path toward solutions to our impending energy descent.
- Growing Food and Justice for All- brings together social change agents from diverse sectors working to bring about new, healthy and sustainable food systems and supporting and building multicultural leadership in impoverished communities throughout the world.
- The Stop Community Food Centre- through community cooking, The Stop offers the opportunity for people to connect with each other over good food. This includes a variety of community kitchens (see below), which help build food skills, reduce social isolation and participants' access to healthy food, as well as regular food demonstrations on the preparations of various foods. www.thestop.org/community-cooking.

"Food Security" in Albany County, Wyoming & North Park, Colorado (Gayle Woodsum)

Community Food Conversations
May, 2011
Albany County, Wyoming
Rural, Geographically Isolated
Largest City: Laramie, population 27,000, Elevation 7200' – 12,000'

Relevant Networks

Xxsummary"Develop a description of the networks that do, or might be able to, impact the health concern. Describe who is currently talking about this problem and who is invited into the conversation."

Notes on community leaders:

Full time white female educator researches, designs, funds, builds community gardens throughout the county (in schools, at day cares, for churches, in parks, on private property); heads up outdoor learning programs for children, leads new winter coat drives for them, does hands on garden construction with food insecure individuals, averages 60-hour work week in primary position, raises two teenagers as single mom; recently took on second job to try and help make ends meet.

Full time white male director of local NGO collects and provides food to community residents who increasingly use and rely on this service to combat chronic food insecurity; pays for transportation to jobs and medical care; raises and distributes financial assistance for housing, utilities, health care; supervises paid staff and volunteers, answers to volunteer board of directors, presents statistical data and community needs to local government officials including County Commissioners, City Council, United Way board; permanent disabilities require full time wheelchair use; averages 60-hour work week in primary position, works at Kum 'n Go convenience store/gas station evenings and weekends to help make ends meet.

Notes on community food conversations:

Source: government employee, single white heterosexual female parent, grew up in small farming family in U.S. Midwest

On Albany County food insecurity —

"The primary problem is the reliance on public assistance as a means of living. Once people are sent there, whether through job loss or whatever, it's hard for them to crawl out."

"I'd like to increase and improve access to food, especially people growing their own. In order to do that, people have to be motivated and committed to producing their own food. The end product, once they have it, helps with that. And it has to be a total family project."

"I believe all families in Albany County could produce 30% - 40% of their produce budget. To make this work in terms of my desire to increase and improve food access, preparation and nutrition programs would need to be part of it all. There's a family out in Harmony who are entirely self-sufficient where food is concerned, including dairy goats, small quantity meat and egg production, gardening and winter food storage."

Source: university employee, married white heterosexual female parent, grew up in U.S. – East Coast

On Albany County food insecurity —

"A pattern of food insecurity can start very young, because there are too few assistance services. WIC alone has too many restraints. Other things contributing to food insecurity here are high teenage pregnancy rates, large numbers of working poor individuals and families, a major stigmatization of subsidized school lunch programs in Albany County, and no summer lunch program outside of one outlying school where it's offered in conjunction with a summer school program."

"There is limited access to markets, limited public transportation options on Laramie's West Side and in West Laramie. There is limited food access for elders, the current Meals on Wheels program is unappetizing and has limited distribution."

"It's not just food, but also consumption issues, like the impact of dental work (or lack of) on the ability to consume certain foods. There is also a huge cost issue, especially for fruits and vegetables. I think there could be more cooking education, although I think that's the least of the problems we face."

"Often, it's the way in which a service is delivered that makes the whole difference. I worked with students who set up a shopping service for people in the Laramie senior housing. They get a list of groceries, take it to Albertson's where the food is packed up, deliver it back to the person's apartment, and pick up a check. The first student who worked the program took a long time, because she stopped and visited with the person ordering the groceries. The next student to work was all about efficiency, didn't do any visiting, and the quality of the response from recipients fell off."

"As for solutions, I have no confidence in the ability for current systems to make any of the necessary changes. I do think it's helping that Laramie has more visible community garden projects. But beyond that, we have home health aides, why not home health nutritionists? And there needs to be a way to get parent involvement in food issues at the school level."

Community Food Conversations
May, 2011
North Park, Colorado
Rural, Geographically Isolated, Elevation 8100' – 12,000'
Primary Town: Walden, population 630

Notes on community food conversations:

Source: service worker at Conoco convenience store, single white heterosexual female parent, grew up in ranching community of Walden, Colorado

On North Park food insecurity —

"I left North Park when I was younger, and probably would never have come back if it hadn't been for my father's bad health. As for getting food here, they say they want us to eat healthy, but how are we going to do that when we don't have access to fresh produce and meat that's any good? What they sell at the local grocery store is very poor quality, and the convenience stores only sell junk."

"And yet, if every place around us, like Laramie, Steamboat Springs, Granby, can get good produce, why can't we? Wal-Mart trucks go through here every day – several times. Wal-Mart in Steamboat has great produce and meat."

"I do most of my food shopping in Laramie (62 miles away). The food is cheaper, so even with the high gas prices, it evens out over what I'd have to pay here for much worse food. Mostly I shop in Safeway in Laramie. I used to shop at Wal-Mart, but lately I've come to realize it's actually cheaper overall at Safeway. Sometimes I shop at Safeway or City Market in Granby (57 miles away)."

"If we could get the same things here that we can get at Safeway, I think we'd shop here — people would be willing to pay more if the food was good. Our local grocery store is not locally owned. In addition to bad produce and meat, there are a lot of outdated canned and boxed foods on the shelves."

"I would think Laramie would be so easy to live in compared to here. Prices are so much cheaper. They have everything there. If you want a pizza, you can just go down the road and get one. A swap would be great – have some Laramie people driven here all the time for their food. Of course, no one would do it."

"And beyond just food, there's no pharmacy here. That's a huge problem."

"For people who can't afford food here? There's a lot of food stamp and WIC usage, there's a food bank, and there is a senior citizens bus that goes to Laramie. This is not a community you can survive in for long unless you have a great job or you have a partner with a great job. Housing cost is high, fuel cost is high, and the only decent employers are the school, government jobs, forest service jobs, and the big ranches that are now all owned by corporations."

"I think the greatest struggling population here is the Mexican community. They have large families. The women don't work. It's interesting though, because I see them driving new cars, but they're on food stamps and WIC. I think it's primarily the Mexicans who are using the food bank. And I think now there are almost more Mexicans living here than anyone else."

"I liked doing an interview this way — liked that you didn't have a list of questions for me, but rather just talked with me and let me say what I wanted to say."

Source: mental health counselor, retired Navy captain, first female chaplain in the Navy, partnered white heterosexual female, grew up in rural East Texas

On North Park food insecurity —

"The food bank here is run through Mountain View Baptist Church. There is one public time that it's open — Tuesday afternoons. What most people don't know is that the vast majority of people using the food bank are white people who know to call someone in the community who will open up the food bank at other times when no one can see them getting donated food. As a result, it's primarily the Hispanic families who use it when they are visible to the public."

"The food bank runs on private donations, and donations of game from the Department of Wildlife when they seize illegally killed wildlife."

"There have always been traditional food, clothing and gift baskets given to seniors and families in need at Thanksgiving and Christmas. But it was never coordinated, so a few families ended up getting several baskets and many went without. I got all the churches together to do a coordinated effort so more families are served without repetition or duplication. Church volunteers and the North Park Women's Club assemble the baskets and the sheriff delivers them."

"There are maybe 13 Latino families living in North Park now, which is an increase over the last 20 years. Most of that increase has to do with the corporate buy-ups of family ranches. The corporations hire Latino families to work on the ranches because they can pay them lot less than local white cowboys and their families. Some of the Latino families are undocumented, but have children who are legal U.S. citizens. I know of one ranch that has three large Latino families living in one small ranch-hand house."

"North Park has the highest percentage in the state of free and reduced school lunch. We provide breakfast and lunch at school, but there is no summer lunch program. As for quality of school food, I think the entire menu needs to change to a more nutritious approach. We do prepare all the food here with local workers."

"There is very little economic security here. We no longer have any well-paying private employers. The family ranches are mostly gone, the mines are gone, the lumber mill is gone, and the current stove pellet factory has so mistreated local employees they now hire from other parts of the state and Wyoming. The booming oil industry brings in its own workers from other states who stay about six months and then move on."

"Looking at solutions for food issues? For one thing, I think we could gain greater security if we had a locally owned grocery store, managed by local people who have the power to demand good food. The current store has poor quality fruits, vegetables and meat when they have them at all, and there are a lot of outdated canned and boxed goods on the shelves."

"There's one fresh produce stand in the summer that sets up regularly, bringing in local Colorado produce, and another that comes in every couple of weeks. They are small operations, one run by a Latino family that simply travels to where food grows in the state, then brings it back and sells it. Both these stands sell out everything they bring. People love having them."

"Attached to food insecurity is, of course, health insecurity, which is also extreme here. We have a clinic with traveling medical folk coming in from Steamboat Springs (60 miles away). That and Laramie (62 miles away) are the closest hospitals, with specialty care in Fort Collins as the closest (100 miles away)."

Summary of Themes Heard to Date

Xxsummary of what people said, above and perhaps since May.

Deliberation Framework

Xxsummary of "Create a framework to provoke deliberation." And "Identify the community groups that should be invited to deliberate. What groups had not been included before?".

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