128

Wed, 10/6 4:50PM • 1:45:06

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

people, flint, food, buy, connection, supplemental, community, nutritious food, affordability, questions, system, pandemic, sector, convenience stores, grocery stores, talk, group, farmers market, judgment, traffic

**SPEAKERS**

Interviewer 2, Interviewer, Participant 128

[INTRO]

**Interviewer** 20:13

But maybe for this one- Our first task is deciding what the connection strengths are for all of these relationships with question marks. So, um, I will sort of talk about the context of what these relationships are. And then if you feel comfortable with it, you can sort of share your perception of what's going on in Flint. So thinking about maybe these two first, so use of retail to local versus chain restaurants. What these connection strengths mean, is really, when you know people go to restaurants in Flint, are they going more or less to local restaurants or chain restaurants? Are they going about the same? Do they not really go to restaurants at all? You know, what do you think the connection strengths are to local or chain restaurants?

**Participant 128** 21:19

I think the local restaurants are probably a little bit stronger. But most of the people that I know aren't really going to restaurants very often

**Interviewer** 21:41

Gotcha. I'll make those really weak relationships. Then what is your understanding? of maybe the connection strengths to grocery stores, convenience stores and farmers markets? How much do you think people are getting their food from those sources?

**Interviewer 2** 22:11

I think they're using the grocery stores more than the farmers market or the convenience stores. Um, if I had to number them might say grocery stores 1, farmer's markets 2, and convenience store 3.

**Interviewer** 22:39

Awesome. And then thinking about these last three: How do you think people are using Supplemental Nutrition Programs like WIC or SNAP or double up food bucks in these different locations? Do you think people use them more in grocery stores, convencience, stores and farmers markets?

**Participant 128** 23:06

Um, yeah, definitely. I put it very strong at grocery stores. But actually I put convenience store second, and farmers markets third for that one. They have those double up bucks programs for when you buy produce.

**Interviewer** 23:36

Yeah.

**Participant 128** 23:37

But everybody that I know around here knows that the farmers market during the winter season- The sellers basically get their produce from the big store chains like Sam's or Walmart or Costco and then they sell it as a farmer produce.

**Interviewer** 24:07

Yeah

**Participant 128** 24:07

And while it technically is farmer produce, it's not the farmer that standing in the farmer's market.

**Interviewer** 24:15

Yeah.

**Participant 128** 24:16

So most of us are like yeah, we're not gonna put our money towards that. We'll wait towards the summer and fall.

**Interviewer** 24:24

Yeah. Awesome. Great. So um, the next thing we're going to do is go through a couple more definitions. So I will return to the presentation. Um, and so what we have is seven different food systems values. And so these values and definitions came from conversations and focus groups with Flint community members. So people were basically asked, you know, "what do you want from the food system? What is the food system that serves you well look like?" And this is sort of the the summary of all those conversations. So I'm going to go through the definitions fairly quickly.

**Interviewer** 25:20

And as I do that, if you want to think about which two or three you think are particularly important in the Flint food system, or which two or three, you know, you think you can really speak to from your experience. So I'll go through them right now. So for education, this is that people want opportunities to learn food skills, like cooking, gardening, nutrition, canning, and potentially apply those to career development. Folks also want community empowerment, which means a couple different things. So one will be you know, supporting local economic development. Also a sense of community, and prioritizing residents cultural values. Also have quality of life is respected. So this is that people want to be able to move through the food system with their dignity, choices, comfort and safety respected, to promote the common good, and quality of life for all.

**Interviewer** 26:27

There's also partnerships. So this is sort of above the consumer level, but with the different groups and organizations involved in the food system. And they want the food system to promote creativity and encourage problem solving to produce trust, and strong partnerships that provide leadership and support collaboration and communication. Also have nutritious foods. So this is that the food system should offer more options that are high in nutritional content, contain less additives and preservatives and come in appropriate portions to benefit health.

**Interviewer** 27:04

And the last two are affordability: so food should be priced so that community members can access the type, quality, and quantity they require. So this is not just the price of food, but also considering resident incomes or their ability to purchase that food. And then availability: with the type, quality and amount of food required for community members to conveniently feed their families and themselves should be physically present. Do you have any questions about these definitions?

**Participant 128** 27:33

Nope.

**Interviewer** 27:35

Awesome. I can also go back to this presentation at any time for any refreshers. So do you have a sense of which two or three you would like to add to your map?

**Interviewer 2** 27:51

Add to the map? Okay, um, wow, only two or three out of all of these, huh?

**Interviewer** 28:03

We can- it's easier to start with two or three, but we can build the map out and add all of them if you want to.

**Participant 128** 28:11

All right, the biggest thing I would think would be affordability. That's what we fight over here. It's why we grow veggies and fruit. So that people who can't afford it can come pick it for free. — Education is definitely important. I don't know how many people I've seen that have no idea how to use what we're providing for them, or how to store it or you know, anything like that.

**Participant 128** 28:53

And I guess quality of life. Because that- the whole respect thing. These are people that walk into a store and they buy what they know to buy, which isn't necessarily the most nutritious or they're going to stretch the furthest. And then they get a whole lot of negative feedback from people in the store, or people that they know other places, because they buy things that aren't necessarily the smartest things to buy. You know, and it's a combination of culture and lack of education. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 29:57

So I will definitely- I want to make sure I capture that in the map. So I will switch back.

**Participant 128** 30:05

Okay.

**Interviewer** 30:07

Um, I'll go ahead and add those concepts into the map. So affordability, education, and quality of life is respected.

**Interviewer** 30:39

So how would you maybe start drawing connections between this- these concepts. We can also start with one value and sort of, you know, talk about how you think the different sectors in the food system in Flint in general, you know, affect affordability or education or quality of life? Which one, would you maybe want to start one- start with?

**Interviewer 2** 31:18

Well, with education. I mean, I was really impressed when the the water crisis was going on. Because the universities were putting on classes on how to cook. You know, but they weren't teaching anything, or not much of anything about how to shop, how to store, how to balance it with other foods to make it healthier. Other than one or two recipes, you know what I'm saying?

**Interviewer** 31:58

Yeah.

**Participant 128** 32:00

So not only that, it was just the universities that I saw doing it, maybe one church. And that's not enough to educate people in this town. You know, Flint has a very unique dynamic. And we need to take programs like this that are cognizant of that dynamic, and use the resources that we all have to make it available to everybody. Or at least everybody that needs it.

**Interviewer 2** 33:01

[Participant 128], would you care to mention a little bit about that unique dynamic that you spoke to?

**Interviewer 2** 33:06

Okay. Other than a few that have moved in, in the fairly recent past. And I'm going by the demographics that I saw when I was working with the core program, okay. A majority of the individuals left in Flint are individuals that literally had no way to get out. Okay, everything started going downhill, those that could bolt bolt. Those that had the economic jur-resources to ride it out, they also stuck. But the disparity between the two groups got remarkably broader and more well defined. Okay, and the level of distrust is freaking amazing. You know, about the only one, as a nonhuman entity that gets any real trust anymore, is the churches. And not even all of them. Um, most communities you have like this, this blend that works, you know, level by level from one group to the next. And for us, you have one group and then this deep chasm and then the next group. So does that explain it? I'm not sure I'm making sense with this.

**Interviewer** 34:59

No. That-

**Interviewer 2** 35:00

You're making perfect sense. Thank you.

**Participant 128** 35:04

Okay. It's really a shame to because both groups have so much to offer each other. But like one wants to help, but thinks that the others are pretty much just being lazy and taking handouts. And the other group wants to learn and wants to succeed, but they think that the first group is out to get them. So you know- I like the way you put that together. That's pretty much exactly what I was trying to say.

**Interviewer** 35:38

Good, I was- I was gonna check in and make sure that this sort of reflects what you're talking about.

**Interviewer 2** 35:47

And the thing is, is it wasn't just the water crisis that did it. It's just the water crisis that made people take a look at the ugly, you know what I'm saying?

**Interviewer** 36:01

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 36:05

Up until that point, we could pretty much put our heads in the sand and it didn't matter. But the water crisis pretty much made everybody sit up and look around.

**Interviewer 2** 36:22

I think it did have one benefit. I think it's one of the reasons why when the whole, um, Black Lives Matter- Not that, not the groups, but the fighting that went on. Flint was noted for the fact that our police department representatives did their utmost to handle it respectfully and responsibly. And I think that's a direct result of having to deal with all the things that we've had to deal with so far. As the-the ability to have income dropping and the water crisis and everything, we've already bought those battles, you know, yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 37:20

Wow, you're good with that.

**Interviewer** 37:26

I've done one or two or 20 of these maps.

**Interviewer 2** 37:34

That's really good to hear that so clear. [Particpiant 128], we-we've been hearing a lot of connections to the water crisis and the resiliency and how Flint has, you know, been through so much that you handle things different.

**Participant 128** 37:52

Well, one of the benefits of working with the core group was that we literally walked every inch of Flint, going door to door. Um talking to people and helping them find access to clean water. And what they don't tell you about the-the people that were participating in the core group is that even while we were on the clock, we engaged in a lot of extra community activity. Like if we ran across somebody who was ill, it was nothing for one of us to sit with that ill person until, you know, medical assistance could get there. Or we found one person whose gas had been cut off and he was heating his house with one of those kerosene heaters, but with all the windows blocked up. And we contacted his family and let him- let them know about it. Um, because it was not safe. You know, and things like that. Working with core let us do that. You know, and, in return, people started trusting us and talking to us, and realizing that most of us that were working there were from the same group, they were.

**Interviewer** 39:34

Would this be sort of a fair representation that, you know: the groups and the actions that came out of the Flint water crisis, you know, built some social networks and connections to other people in the community. And that sort of counteracted some of the negative. That built back up trust, that built in resilience, that you know, did- helped out, you know, community cohesion. Um, is that fair? Would you make changes to how it's represented in the map?

**Interviewer 2** 40:18

I think it- it went a long way to- I don't know if I call it cohesion or stability or both. You know, because when all the the pandemic and political stuff started happening, the rest of the country is pretty much freaking out. Even the rest of the state was freaking out. And you know, most of the people I know, here are like, Okay, one more thing for us to deal with, what do we do first?

**Interviewer** 40:54

Yeah

**Participant 128** 40:55

You know

**Interviewer** 40:56

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 41:00

So, I mean, it was all there. Yeah, it was stronger here. It made us stronger. Before this pandemic hit, so that I think we were more capable of dealing with the pandemic.

**Interviewer** 41:20

Um, we are going to, you know, explicitly talk about the impacts of COVID-19 a bit later in this meeting. So I definitely want to get back to that conversation. Because that is one of the things that I think is emerging from our conversations with folks is that, you know, Flint was in this position of, you know, being able to manage COVID better than other communities, because they had these established systems of, of connections and sharing resources and help in the community. So I definitely want to talk about that more a bit later.

**Interviewer 2** 42:05

Just as a side note, I don't know if you've been watching the news. There's now- I believe it's someplace in Mississippi that's having the same issue with their water. And yeah, it's just it. I never thought of it from the outside looking in. But yeah, well.

**Interviewer** 42:37

Um, maybe we could talk a bit about how sort of this affordability piece. So how these different sectors and parts of the Flint food system affects affordability, and then maybe some outcomes. So what affordability connects to. What does it mean for people? How does it affect communities?

**Interviewer 2** 43:04

Affordability. The grocery stores, the convenience stores, the farmers markets. It's easier and cheaper to buy garbage food than it is to buy nutritious food. And it's easier to stretch garbage food than it is to stretch a nutritious food. And this has been a complaint for as long as I can remember. But again, it's gotten really, really noticeable now. Walk into any grocery store. You can buy a box of Pop Tarts, either generic or name brand much cheaper, then you can buy a nutritious cut of meat, and vegetables to go with it. So for the five bucks that you spend on a box of Pop Tarts, you'd have to spend 15 to 20 for a meal's worth. And we're talking a meal for two to four people. And it's like those Pop Tarts with all the carbs and crap in it will keep the person from being hungry longer.

**Interviewer** 45:02

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 45:11

So I think affordability plays a lot into that. And of course, they hide the nutritious food back behind all the junk food. And convenience stores are even worse about it. You wouldn't think that farmers markets would go that route. But let's just take the one down here. Okay. Um, you walk in there, and the first, depending on which end you walk into, the first thing you're hit with are either candy counter, or, basically a fast food joint. It's a locally owned fast food joint. But it's still fast food.

**Interviewer** 46:02

Yeah.

**Participant 128** 46:03

You go past the candy counter at the one end, and you're in another fast food joint. And then you walk around the corner, and there's another fast food joint, and there's two or three more candy places, or junk food places. So they're still there.

**Interviewer** 46:22

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 46:23

And, you know, when I was a kid, a farmers market was literally- You had raw milk, you had fresh field vegetables, you had fresh picked fruit. You had fresh squeezed juices and ciders. You might have one small nook where they had candy. But it was candy that was made from the products that were also sold at the farmers market. And you don't have that anymore. Or at least not as much of it.

**Interviewer** 47:10

Yeah, so I sort of, you know, connected farmers markets to sort of like stalls that-that don't have produce. So not like traditional farmers market stalls, and that those are mostly not nutritious food. And that convenience stores don't have nutritious food.

**Interviewer 2** 47:30

Oh, they're convenient as all get out. And they're more affordable than the stuff that's good for you.

**Interviewer** 47:40

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 47:42

You know, I can take the cost of one pound of produce, and I can buy two pounds to five pounds worth of candy.

**Interviewer** 47:51

Yeah. And are there other connections that you see to affordability?

**Interviewer 2** 48:00

Um, not as far as affordability goes. You know, unless you want to go for the education to affordability.

**Interviewer** 48:17

Sure.

**Participant 128** 48:21

There are ways you can get around, not being able to afford certain things. You know, I know where to look to find meat that's on sale, and to judge whether that meat is good. Or whether it needs to be frozen or needs to be canned. Um, how to buy in bulk. You know what I mean? So you can use education to offset the cost.

**Interviewer** 49:04

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 49:06

There aren't enough classes or people around here teaching this. And there really should be. You know, anything that'll bring the cost down should be utilized. Education will bring the cost down. You know, teach people how to get- how to buy it, how to sort it out, cut it out, store it and use it. You know?

**Interviewer** 49:38

Yeah.

**Participant 128** 49:40

And there are a lot of really intelligent people out here, but they have no clue.

**Interviewer** 49:45

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 50:00

So, yeah, that's about the only other connection I can see.

**Interviewer** 50:08

Um, maybe we can talk about this nutritious foods piece. Maybe how, you know- we talked a bit about how retail affects nutritious foods. Do you have any sense of how, you know supplemental nutrition programs, or in the emergency sector, if you'd like to talk about those at all, how those affect maybe nutritious foods? Or even-

**Participant 128** 50:36

The supplemental sector is so worried that somebody is scamming them out of a couple of dollars worth of benefits that the only information they can share is a pamphlet that somebody might not be able to read or understand. And even if, you know, they have questions, they have no one to ask the questions of. You know, that's absolutely ridiculous. I don't care if somebody steals 5 or 10 bucks worth of food or even 100 bucks worth of food off of my tax dollars.

**Interviewer** 51:15

Yeah

**Participant 128** 51:15

If they're hungry, they're eating. You know, I'd rather have them educated so that they know how to make their money stretch, including their supplements stretch. I mean, my family there- for two people was getting- At one point when I was at the worst, we were getting a little over 200 a month. Okay.

**Interviewer** 51:47

Yeah

**Participant 128** 51:49

I had questions. What can I buy? Can I buy seeds to plant food? Can I get things that will help me store food? You know, so can I can I buy in bulk? Can I buy at Sam's Club? A lot of that I just simply had to try on my own and see if it worked or not. Because I would call and I would ask my s- my social services caseworker. And if I got an answer, it was generally along the lines of "Read the material." Or "Why are you bothering me with this?" I'm highly educated. And I ran into that. Imagine someone who is subsisting at this point, at a high school or less level of education. And working two to three jobs trying to make ends meet.

**Interviewer** 53:03

Yeah.

**Participant 128** 53:05

If they're gonna run into a wall, they can't climb. Yanno

**Interviewer** 53:11

Yeah.

**Participant 128** 53:12

Then again, I guess it's just my political opinion. Sorry.

**Interviewer** 53:18

Do not apologize. We are here to hear your perspective. 100%.

**Interviewer 2** 53:25

Absolutely.

**Interviewer** 53:29

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 53:35

Wow, this thing is getting a lot more complicated than I thought it would.

**Interviewer** 53:39

That is one of the fun parts of these interviews is that we sort of reveal how much you didn't know you know?

**Interviewer 2** 53:49

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 53:54

Maybe then we can talk about this- Yeah, what's up?

**Interviewer 2** 54:01

I don't know if it would come out of quality of life or not. This supplemental sector, the judgment-

**Interviewer** 54:11

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 54:13

If that makes sense. Because the minute you walk in the door there- Even though you've paid taxes for this all your working life, they treat you like you're taking something that, you know, you're not supposed to or you should be ashamed of.

**Interviewer** 54:32

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 54:34

And I think that has a lot to do with some of the choices people make. In the way they do their food shopping. You know, it's just hurry, let's get it out of the way and be embarrassed about it.

**Interviewer** 55:05

So, I have that connection- I'm thinking of a best way to- like the best term to use. Would you want to say that, you know, that's sort of like "hurry up and get over it"- Do you want to connect it to sort of the health of the food choices? Or like, I don't know, purposeful food choices, informed food choices? What term would you maybe use here?

**Interviewer 2** 55:48

Well, that kind of helps the grocery stores with the way they lay the stores out. Because you basically just grab what you have to grab and get out of there.

**Interviewer** 55:58

Yeah.

**Participant 128** 55:59

Rather than you're reading the backs of labels and going from a list, you know.

**Interviewer** 56:09

Would it be even food choices based on convenience?

**Interviewer 2** 56:14

Yeah. Can you excuse me for two seconds?

**Interviewer** 56:34

Absolutely.

**Participant 128** 56:35

Awesome. Oh-

**Interviewer 2** 56:49

So [Interviewer], in the judgment piece, it sounded like there was a couple of things in there. Um, kind of like the respect piece. And then the choices. And the other part about the choices was the location: where they put stuff affects choices. Where they located in the store affects choices.

**Interviewer 2** 57:14

Well see I'm kind of like, on the inside, almost with the layout of grocery stores and convenience stores. My major's in psychology, specifically social psychology. And that's one of the things that I learned early on is that there is literally a branch of psychology that they use to do this- to encourage people to buy certain products.

**Interviewer** 57:52

Yeah,

**Interviewer 2** 57:53

And I was like, completely outraged

**Interviewer** 57:57

Yeah, there's been- I took a class on judgment and decision making. I'm a PhD student. I took a class on that a couple semesters ago and it was some wild studies about- if like, places have smaller plates people ate less, and like stuff like that. Of how like little things, or like how they laid out you know, somebody who has a cash register would make people buy snacks and candy and stuff like that when they normally wouldn't.

**Interviewer 2** 58:28

Yeah. Absolutely. And I understand using psychology to get market increases and stuff like that. But I went into this thinking that psychology was supposed to make people and the world around them better. And then I find out there's a whole field of psychology that is being used to perpetuate this-this disparity. This-this habit people have of not learning or eating like they should.

**Interviewer** 59:23

Yeah.

**Participant 128** 59:24

You know. It's kinda like I know you're poor. I know you're, you're broke. I know you can't afford to feed your family. Here. Let me put this junk food right here in front of your face.

**Interviewer** 59:50

Yeah

**Participant 128** 59:51

You know.

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:13

Very helpful [Participant 128]

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:17

Oh, good. I'm glad I didn't think-

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:20

Oh, very, very helpful.

**Participant 128** 1:00:22

And that whole quality of life respected part, it plays right into that. I mean, how can you treat people like this? How can you set them up like this? How can you keep fostering a system that works like this. If you truly respect the people in your community, in your town, in your state, in your country, on your globe, you know. There's- it doesn't become about the people anymore, it becomes about the almighty buck, and the people can go starve when there's that lack of respect.

**Interviewer** 1:01:09

Yeah.

**Participant 128** 1:01:14

And I cook a lot of different ethnic foods, okay, from a lot of different ethnicities. Um, one of the benefits of having a Heinz 57 family, you know, you're exposed to everything. And I noticed, like- when I'm going to buy ingredients to prepare something from one particular group, or another particular group their [inaudible] dietary staples, that the cost of that even though you can go two aisles over and find the quote, unquote, American version for a reasonable price. You will find the ethnic version of it for an astronomical price.

**Participant 128** 1:02:14

Yeah

**Participant 128** 1:02:14

You know, it's ridiculous. And there's, like I said, no respect there. So and I got to wonder how much of that affects the cost of the food and the choices in the food. You know, it's-it's just, if I can't buy what I know to cook, what am I supposed to cook?

**Interviewer** 1:02:47

Yeah. So I'm going to talk about some of these connections that I just made to make sure that it's accurately reflecting. So I connected- maybe I added this piece of sort of availability of known foods: things that you know, how to cook, and eat and prepare. That, you know, culturally relevant foods feed into that, education, you know, affects that. And then some of the outcomes is: having these things, availability, improves the quality of life and respects the quality of life of folks. And it also maybe decreases food choices based on convenience. That now you're-you're selecting things because, you know, what to do with them. Um, is that, you know- I think that is maybe something you didn't explicitly talk about. So if that's not accurate to-

**Participant 128** 1:04:18

That's very accurate. You know, and that quality of life is respected thing. I mean, that, that impacts everything, you know. The-the judgment, right. All these people are overweight and unhealthy and then, you know, some virus or another, or flu or whatever comes along, and, "well, of course, they're dropping dead from it because they make poor choices." You know what I mean? And it's like, you know, how bogus is that? They're making the choices they know to make with things they have available to them. But the judgment kills just as bad as the, you know, the other health complaints

**Interviewer** 1:05:11

Yeah. Maybe this connection I drew here- something you talked about, you know, the water crisis and stuff decreased community cohesion and stability. It ceated separate groups with with judgment against each other. Would then that be a fair connection to sort of bring this and connect it to judgment as something that's that's furthering not just judgement from organizations but social judgment that exists in Flint.

**Interviewer 2** 1:05:44

Okay.

**Interviewer** 1:05:52

Um, so the next thing I want to talk about is that we really started with the, you know, the sectors and the values that we started with but we also wanted to give you an opportunity to bring in any other concepts that you think are important to the Flint food system. So this could be other things that are really influential or other pieces that are important outcome. So not just these values but you know other things that you think are important to the community

**Interviewer 2** 1:06:33

Okay, this is gonna sound kind of harsh I suppose but political system. Okay. Um a lot of the issues with- that we have with the judgments we make, the decisions we make, the availability of the resources, the amount of resources available are based on politics. And our political system is built on the whole divide and conquer play. It really is. The welfare queen image for example, you know. It's supposed to be somebody probably with less than really white skin, who has x number of kids by all kinds of different guys just so they can get more money off the welfare system. And we're supposed to look at them like they're rich. And yet there has never been one person brought forward that has been shown to do this. It is a construct they came up with in politics to help suppress the welfare system

**Interviewer** 1:08:17

Yeah.

**Participant 128** 1:08:20

Okay, so we're supposed to automatically be biased. So you don't get enough to last for the month. You have to fight for every scrap you get. You're looked down on because you need it in the first place. And if you get so much as one time of help then your entire life has been a sham. And that's the way they make you feel. And that keeps people from resources. It keeps them from using those resources properly. It keeps them from accessing any education they can get on how to use the resources. And you know, it would have been one thing before the-the-the pandemic and presidential thing and everything to point this out. But it's like a blinding light now. You know, before you might have had to scratch the surface to find it. Now it smacks you upside the head without you even trying.

**Interviewer** 1:09:46

I think um in conversations with, you know, peers and friends, and loved ones. Especially during- not that we're done with a pandemic, but the height of it, you know, trying to find any positives. And one thing that I talked about a lot with friends is that I hope this is the thing that opens people's eyes. If they haven't realized already, how much we need systemic change, I hope that this is the thing that makes them realize that they need to fight for something.

**Participant 128** 1:10:22

The thing is, and don't take this wrong, please. We did this during the war between the states. We did this with women's rights. We did this with gay rights. We did this in the 60's and the 70's. And people as a whole have very, very short attention spans. The problem isn't opening people's eyes. It's really easy to open people's eyes. It's keeping their eyes open and keeping them from getting complacent. That lets this crap scab over until it festers up like it did again. The positive is, every time we rip the scab off, we move at least one or two steps further ahead. The bad thing is we should be making strides, not little steps.

**Interviewer** 1:11:33

I think this is a good transition to the next thing we're going to talk about. Which would be- you know, one of the goals of this project is to find leverage points: the things big and small that could be done in Flint to improve the food system and how it's serving people. Do you have any thoughts of what you think leverage points would be. Sort of you know, if you ran the world, what would you change about the Flint food system to improve it?

**Participant 128** 1:12:14

I think the first thing I would change is the requirements. They put the poverty level at around 20,000 or under. You break $20,000 a year into what it would be each week- No one can live on that unless you're living out of a cardboard box or your car

**Interviewer** 1:12:49

Yeah

**Participant 128** 1:12:53

You know, and yet if you make over that 20,000, you're not eligible anymore for help. Or for very limited help. So you're gonna go hungry or you're gonna get sick from the junk food you eat because the junk food is cheaper and it'll fill you up than nutritious food. Now if we had some sort of program where, yeah, we took 10% of tax out on everybody, and then everybody got health care, and everybody got food supplements, so that nobody could be looked down for it, you know, that would be great. But that's kind of a pipe dream. Actually, it's more than kind of a pipe dream. People would not put up with that. But it was level the playing field you know.

**Interviewer** 1:14:20

Any other ideas of leverage points and things you would change in the Flint food system.

**Participant 128** 1:14:28

Um back during the World Wars. Everybody had to have their quote unquote "Victory Garden." You know, yeah, you had your farms and yeah, we bought farm produce. You know, um but a lot of the the healthier staples you had to go at home.

**Interviewer** 1:15:03

Yeah

**Participant 128** 1:15:05

We're doing our little bit with these with these parks and these neighborhood gardens. But nobody is being given the-the resources or whatnot to do this for themselves. And say you got like 10 people in a neighborhood. Okay, and you got number 1 is primarily growing green-green things. And you got number 2 who's primarily growing fruit things, and, you know, berries and stuff. And you got number 3 who's going squashes. And number 4 is growing potatoes, and so on. Everybody could get together and swap out their extras. So that everybody would have exactly what they needed. And that would be a sustainable resource. And for the government to fund something like that would cost probably, you know, four to $800 per household to start, yeah. And would probably relieve about five to six grand per year, per household.

**Interviewer** 1:16:37

Yeah.

**Participant 128** 1:16:44

Why would you go to the store to buy it if you already had it in your yard?

**Interviewer** 1:16:47

Yeah. I'm thinking about, so I added gardening slash urban agriculture, to your map. And I have connected it to just, you know, what drives it is, you know, education, is funding, sort of these access to resources to learn how to do it. And the only connection out from it is, you know, increasing the availability of nutritious foods. Are there other benefits that you see from, you know, people gardening or having, you know, community gardens?

**Participant 128** 1:17:30

Just what I've seen from my neighborhood, okay. When I first moved here, before we started this, I had out of an entire neighborhood, three people interact with me.

**Interviewer** 1:17:47

Yeah.

**Participant 128** 1:17:49

Okay, we started this and now there are families from a 6 to 12 block radius, and there are people from other communities coming in and looking at what we're doing. So it builds those networks and those community connections. Um, and it shows- excuse me- it shows itself in some really strange ways. Okay, if- Like when we had this this snowstorm that don't 10 inches on us, all right. Several of the people in my neighborhood went around to others in the neighborhood that we knew um, suffered a lack of mobility, um, financial instability, you know, things of that nature to check on them. Okay, but ones that could not leave their houses to do this. made phone calls to do this. So they network: "Hey, can you go see somebody A. I just talked to them, and they don't have any groceries."

**Participant 128** 1:19:11

Since we started this, I just recently became part of a group online that instead of selling things like you do on Craigslist or eBay, we gift it. So, I have a vacuum that works perfectly, but it's a little older and I don't want it anymore. I'm not gonna throw it away. I'm not gonna sell it on eBay and get five bucks for it. I'm gonna post it on this site. Somebody in this area, needs a vacuum cleaner desperately. They get it for free. It just, it builds up stability. It-it builds the cohesion, it builds the trust. Because you trust me to be there for you, and I trust you to be there for me. Something else comes up, we're more likely to face it together than we are to face it separately.

**Interviewer 2** 1:20:29

What's the group called [Participant 128]?

**Participant 128** 1:20:31

Oh, hang on, and I'll let you know.

**Interviewer 2** 1:20:35

It made me curious. You made me so curious.

**Participant 128** 1:20:43

And the person that founded this I- he got the idea from somewhere else. Like um, one of the members right now is posting a free box of food. Two pounds of burger, a bag of fully cooked chicken strips. She's giving it away. And it's "Buy nothing." Buy Nothing, Flint slash Flint Township, Michigan. Hang on, I'm gonna — expand this. I got y'all minimized. Yeah, let me know. Um, if you can see it.

**Interviewer 2** 1:21:24

Yeah. Thank you.

**Interviewer** 1:21:27

I think I've heard of groups like that.

**Interviewer 2** 1:21:29

Thank you.

**Participant 128** 1:21:30

You're quite welcome. Um, as a matter of fact, I had a bunch of canning stuff that was given to me. The pots, the the racks, all that stuff. Because I wanted to learn to can my own food, but between health and work and everything else, I can't, I don't have the time. And I don't have anyone to teach me. The lady I gave them to who is scraping pennies and saving pennies because her husband's passing away. And she's got kids to support. She not only took the-the can-canning equipment that I had, but she's the one that's willing to put on classes for other people to learn how to can.

**Interviewer** 1:22:15

Awesome

**Participant 128** 1:22:16

You know, because she doesn't have anything else to give. Yeah, like I told her, are you kidding? That's something that will keep giving for the next 20 years or longer? You know, so I get on my soapbox. I'm sorry. No, sorry.

**Interviewer 2** 1:22:39

No sorry. This is perfect. Oh, gosh.

**Interviewer** 1:22:45

No, yeah.

**Participant 128** 1:22:48

I'm sorry, I was gonna say the gardening and urban agriculture. You know, that could like affect so many things. The- the supplemental programs, if they bought the excess off of the individuals. The individuals have a little more money coming in. And the supplemental section, or sector saves in- it saves the money on the on the food, and they have more food to give away. You know, I mean, it just- the restaurants, the retail could purchase the excess off the individuals and turn around and sell it for profit. There are just so many things that gardening and urban agriculture could influence positively. If we could just, you know, get the funding and the mindset, it's more than mindset than the funding because if you got the right mindset, the funding will follow.

**Interviewer** 1:23:52

Yeah. I wrote that down as as a leverage point. Is that it's not necessarily happening right now. But a really beneficial thing could be, you know, supplemental sector and retail, you know, purchasing food and supporting and, you know, giving that income to gardeners or community gardeners.

**Participant 128** 1:24:18

Yeah. Here's another thing. And we found this with our little garden down here. How many neighborhoods do you know that have a problem with things like vandalism, gangs, and just unsupervised youth in general. You know how many times our park has been vandalized in five years? Not once. We, we have a split rail fence up. We don't have a chain link fence. We reached out to the individuals that were causing trouble in our neighborhoods, and said, "Hey, you know, we're all older and stuff, we can't do this. Can you give us a hand?" So they helped dig out chunks of concrete. They help level the dirt, they help plant stuff, they help build stuff, right. And the most amazing thing, people come around here and they try to mess with it. And the same individuals that would have torn it into shreds, protect it. And not only do they protect it, but they actually inadvertently educate the people that are trying to stir crap.

**Interviewer** 1:25:56

Yeah.

**Participant 128** 1:25:57

And we end up with more people volunteering. And I'm talking people from, you know, two, three neighborhoods or wards away. These things- it-it- just this one little bitty thing, on a microcosmic level, and I mean major microcosmic. Because we're teeny. We are very, very small, has positively impacted hundreds, at least.

**Interviewer** 1:26:38

Yeah.

**Participant 128** 1:26:40

Can you imagine if the social services got rid of the stigma and judgment that they foster and implemented something like this with a positive "let's build you to be better" attitude? You know?

**Interviewer** 1:27:02

Yeah, absolutely.

**Interviewer 2** 1:27:05

Nobody wants a handout. But everybody benefits from a hand up.

**Interviewer** 1:27:18

Um, so I do want to be respective of your time. You said your- oh, no. You know, you said you're available to three. Are you able to extend this meaning a little bit past three? Or do you-

**Participant 128** 1:27:32

Yeah, yeah, we need to extend it. Yeah.

[COVID SECTION]

**Interviewer** 1:37:16

It is. This is an incredible map. I just want to say, like it is very cool and we talked about a lot of things. I'm going to stop sharing real quick. Um, and our last question is sort of to open it up. You know, we talked a lot about different food sectors and different values, impacts of COVID-19. Is there anything else important to this conversation around food in Flint that we haven't talked about today and you would like to add to make sure we carry forward in this research?

**Participant 128** 1:37:50

No, just the same message that I deal with every day. you know. That- and you saw it in your map there- we got to stop looking at each other as-as anything other than people. You know. If we can't break that, we're not going to break all the other problems. They're just going to keep going underground and hiding like a splinter until it festers up again. And I used to sit there when I was your age and laugh at the people that were older than me. Because they would say "This isn't new. This isn't new." And I thought they were full of it. And now I'm one of those older people and I'm like "you know we thought we had this fixed." We thought- we thought we were on the road you know. We were- we were fast gonna get there. And we're standing right back there today. Ya know? Other than that, you know, if we can get that fixed, we can get the food problem fixed. You know, we can get the trust problems fixed. We can get the rest of the problems fixed. So, other than that, no, I'm just an opinionated old broad.

**Interviewer** 1:38:05

Um,

**Interviewer 2** 1:38:09

That was good, [Participant 128].

[OUTRO]