211

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**SPEAKERS**

Interviewer, Participant 211, Interviewer 2

**Interviewer 2** 00:00

Oh great. Thanks for your permission to record. So the recorder is now on. Your participation, again is voluntary. And you can choose not to answer any of the questions or even to withdraw from the research at any time. We'll keep the recording confidential within our research team. And we won't share or use your name in any any or any other identifying information in any of our research results. However, we would ask that you might want to please be mindful if there's anyone who might be around you, or nearby and able to hear what you have to say. So again, also for your own confidentiality. We You can also follow up with us with any questions that you have by emailing Carissa, you know, after the interview today, and so your concern is demonstrated by your continued participation in the interview? Do you have any questions before we move forward? Tessa?

01:10

I don't. Okay,

**Interviewer 2** 01:12

wonderful. That's perfect. All right. So this is, this is going to be the hardest question we asked you today. So how would you describe your role or your experience with the local food system?

**Participant 211** 01:24

Um, I Oh, are you Is that done? I'm sorry. So I worked with Organization] in 2002 2020 Amidst the pandemic, as a garden coach, and so my experience stems from there. I, it was my responsibility to engage the community figure out ways we could get engage the community, interact with the Latinx community in Flint, and to find other areas that could benefit from a local garden, a community garden, gardening education, or resources for fresh food. That's pretty. So that that is my experience.

**Interviewer 2** 02:22

Okay, but wonderful. Thank you. Thank you for that. We're going to start with going over a few definitions. So I mentioned that we're focused on the local food sectors, so we're going to review and share with you five different food sectors that we're working with specifically, the fourth is production. So growing crops and raising, you know, livestock, regardless of scale, so it could be backyard, you know, all the way up to larger scale, you know, farms, processing and packaging sector. So taking, where those produce and animals have been been raised, and then being able to wash pack and even process them into other value added type products. For example, lovely tomatoes become amazing salsa by you adding things, you know to that. So we include the processors in that. And then our wholesale sector or the folks who are doing resale, where they're taking the products and the goods that are basically gathered, and then selling those. So those will be your resellers and your wholesalers, then our retailers, the folks who are actually getting the food to us where the food is actually sold. So you're looking at the grocery stores, the convenience stores, the farm stands the farmers market, looking at restaurants and caterers and boxes and other places, you know where full food is sold to customers. And then last but not least, not all of the food is edible. Not all parts of this edible and even what is edible was not all eaten. So we'll take a look at the waste, whether it's composted, or even in this category where some people are rescuing food and even sending it you know, to others is a consideration as well. Any questions or additions to the definitions here on the food sectors?

**Participant 211** 04:31

No, this looks complete to me.

**Interviewer 2** 04:34

Okay, awesome. Great. So based on your experience, what you told us about your experience, where would you see yourself having the greatest expertise, you know, in these in the sectors

**Participant 211** 04:51

production and processing packaging? And well, yeah, we'll just stick with those two because cuz I do, I don't have a lot of experience with the wholesale and resale side of things. Retail, I don't have much there only there was only one participating vendor with us at [Organization] for the farmers market and waste for compost that one. I know. But okay, so some of it, but not wholesale resale.

**Interviewer 2** 05:27

Okay, all right, great, wonderful, thank you for that, um, Chris is gonna take a few moments and introduce you to this mental modeling techniques that we use to, to map your understanding of a full system. Okay.

**Interviewer** 05:43

Um, so, I'm gonna go through a lot of information, but just know that I'm here to assist you in building your understanding of the system. So I'm going to go through the details, but it's really just to make sure that you can sort of check my work and make sure that it's accurate. So as you answer questions and share your knowledge and experience i'll be, you know, adding in concepts and making connections. So this is the program that we're going to use. Um, so there's basically two pieces, there's the concepts, which are the words and boxes, and then there's going to be connections that will draw between them. So if I'm looking at an issue like traffic in a fictional city, I might say that the number of cars really impacts how much traffic there is. And once I've decided that there's a connection, I basically have two choices to make. The first is if it's a positive or a negative connection, and that doesn't necessarily mean like good or bad. It just means if one increases, does the other one also increase or does it decrease. So for a number of cars and traffic, more cars, more traffic, less cars, less traffic, it's going to be a positive relationship, and it's going to be a blue arrow. Public transportation might be more of a negative relationship and an orange arrow because if there was more public transportation, or better public transportation, you might have less traffic because people are riding the bus, or they're taking a subway if it's a big city or something like that. So that's positive and negative. And my last choice is the connection strength, which is really like how impactful or influential is one thing on another. So for cars and traffic, this might be a really strong connection. And if tomorrow everyone decided to sell their car, or you know, just stopped driving, then we would probably have very little traffic. And public transportation might be more of a medium connection. Um, you know, just because, you know, some people love driving their cars, or even if they're the best public transportation system in the world, they wouldn't do it. Or, you know, they work or live somewhere that's really weird to get to, or something like that. So still pretty influential on the amount of traffic but you know, not the, the, it can account for everything, I guess. Um, and the last would be like, a weak connection might be something like, you know, the number of people biking places in the city, where yes, if we promoted and you know, ask people that bike more, it would have a little bit of an impact on traffic, but it's not a solution to a traffic problem. You know, like, it's not going to be good, you know, you're not going to carry your groceries home, you're not going to try to move a couch on a bicycle. So sure, is gonna have some impact, but not very much. Um, so those are my decisions. And you know, what direction is the connection? Is it positive? Or is it negative? And is it a weak medium or strong connection? Any questions about that process? No, that's, um, yeah. And we just want to make sure that you do have a sense of ownership over the map. So definitely, like, any last few questions, and then occasionally, I'll check in being like, okay, so I drew out how you talked about this thing this way? Does that make sense to you and really want you to feel welcome to jump in and say, like, I wouldn't connect it like that, or like, I think you did that wrong. Or even like, if I'm writing in a concept and like, I wouldn't word it that way. Like, I would call it something else. Please feel free to do that. It is your map. I'm just trying to, you know, make it as accurate as possible. Okay.

**Interviewer 2** 09:30

Awesome, wonderful. So the representation that you see on the screen now, Tessa, is the the sector's that we talked about a moment ago, as well as you see one for racial and equity and we'll address that as we go along the way. So what we want to do here so as you look at and you think about, you know, your work, how would you draw connections between you know, some of the The sector's here. So for example, you talked about your work around production, you had some experience with processing and packaging as well as composting. So sometimes it's just helpful just to start talking to us about your work. And then and Carissa, as she's listening will help build the kinds of connections. And you'll see her doing that on the map. So talk to us about the connections in the work that you do, and how they they connect between the other sectors, if you will.

**Participant 211** 10:30

Sure. So, when we're looking at the sectors, it is-I mean, they are linear, I mean, it's a drop down system. So the amount of producers you have, is going to influence everything down the rest of the chain. So when I was working in Flint, I was mostly working with potential producers, or backyard producers, and children. And we were not necessarily-we were trying to create an environment where the producers or the backyard growers were then also their own processor. And to empower those producers to combine efforts to be come their own retailer. The compost part of it was mostly education. So that part, I don't, there wasn't a whole lot of impact there, that was almost like an afterthought, for a lot of it just because in this in this case of working in Flint, we're using every part of our produce that we possibly can. So what I did notice in this area, is that it's one thing to be a producer, it's intimidating to be a processor. In it, it seems almost impossible for a lot of those producers to move on to make it be something that could benefit benefit them economically. So my focus was on food, food for family, food for friends, food for community, rather than food for for selling. Okay, sorry, my children are all around me.

**Interviewer 2** 12:38

that's okay. That's one of the beautiful benefits of COVID. Yes, absolutely. Yes, yes. Yes.

**Participant 211** 12:48

It has been good. So what can I focus on specifically here? Do you want me to start the...

**Interviewer 2** 12:57

Yeah, you're doing great. So you talk okay. You know, so that, so we're getting some of those connections. So if you want to talk a little bit about, you said food for friends, family, and community. So a little more about that. And then you mentioned the difficulty of, you know, food for sale. So just kind of talk a little bit about the production side a little bit.

**Participant 211** 13:21

Okay. So, um, production wise, what we had found was that in a lot of the communities around downtown Flint, not necessarily in downtown Flint, it's a food desert. So you have high end restaurants, you have a farmers market with produce, and different food that is out of a price range for most of the community. So it's drawing in people from outside, which is always great for the local economy. But it doesn't help anyone else who's 16 blocks away who hasn't had a fresh vegetable in a month. So we have this food desert, where the only available food for a good majority of the community is going to come from a bus trip to a grocery store that may make it so they can only do a couple bags at a time. Then their other option is going to be something like a party shop on a local corner that's only going to offer them the food that is already processed, packaged, nothing fresh, nothing frozen, even. So our goals were to put the power in the hands of the community by providing them growing education, providing them the seeds, helping them obtain space, and then teaching them how to maintain it. So that in a food desert, we have these little pockets of community health, where it's collaborative. And there's pride, there's, you know, in some of these cases, like, when I was working with LatinX, a family came, and the little girl had never had a fresh watermelon, and so taking her to the plant, showing her what it looked like, having her cut it from the vine, feeling the weight of the plants, I know that that experience is gonna stay with her, maybe for her entire life, and so the production part, steering away from one large producer, or many high end producers and putting it in the hands of the people is in downtown Flint or the general Flint area, the best way to get food-real food to community members.

**Interviewer 2** 16:04

Okay, okay. All right. I'm gonna play some of that back. And, as [Interviewer]'s showing us how she's getting this, you know, on the map, so as you start to kind of drill down into food, you talked about, you know, it being in particular, downtown and other areas of food desert, you spoke about, you know, the food in the downtown area, the restaurants and farmers market was high in or high priced, qnd out of the price range of locals. And that the downtown, higher end foods really drew in people from outside, you talked about access in terms of people taking bus trips, to grocery stores, getting a few bags of food at a time. And other options were the party shops, as you call them, where they get processed foods, no fresh, no frozen foods. So [Interviewer] you want to we got all of that. Um, okay, I just yeah, I'm just rolling it back so we can give you to make sure we go first.

**Interviewer** 17:20

Okay, I'm wrapping in like the differences between like downtown and other areas of Flint is like geographic differences or disparities, limiting the number of stores that are available that have an impact on food access, it also impacts food price, then also very much influenced by access to transportation can improve food access, but it also is your access to nutritious foods, that, you know, if people have limited access to transportation, that means I don't have a lot of nutritious foods available to them. But I'm also going to connect geographic differences and disparities to nutritious foods. And one way that that can be, you know, sort of managed or improved is through local producers, you know, creating nutritious foods within neighborhoods. I also added some of the things that [Organization] does. So things I heard, you know, seed giveaways, education for growing, but also other kinds of support that sort of help out producers. Does this seem correct? Any changes or additions you want to make?

**Participant 211** 18:26

And no, I was watching it as you made it.

**Interviewer 2** 18:30

Okay, um, a couple of quick things. And I'm not sure how these might be reflected, [Interviewer] Um, so [Participant 211] mentioned the exposure and experience of actually, you know, access for the first time to fresh foods. And that may already be captured, you know, the youth experience. Yes, that's where I was going. Okay. In terms of the actual access to food and that connection for you, for the youth. Okay. All right. That's awesome.

**Interviewer** 19:11

Um, I have one question. Something you talked about early on was, you know, that it's a challenge to to really make a profit from that, that has caused sort of your emphasis to go more towards, you know, producing for yourself or your family, or for your community. What are some of those challenges or barriers to to making growing into like a business for a family or an individual?

**Participant 211** 19:42

Sure. So a lot of the vacant land in plants is contaminated. So when you're looking at the lead levels in the soil, there's a lot of land available, but it would require significant and rehabilitation to be used again, either treatment or by bringing in more soil, revitalizing the soil. So most people are growing in raised beds, by container gardening, and when they do find a plot of land, that's what they're doing: building beds on it so that we're not directly growing in the soil. So the cost of that is prohibitive. I mean, the cost of wood alone is prohibitive, and because a lot of the people who we are reaching out to have not had experience growing in the past, they may not know what items they could use from their own home to make a container. So a lot of the time they're not going beyond what they need to create more for profit, those that do have plots of land that are outside of Flint, or they're more north in Flint, closer to like [inaudible] or Mount Morris, where there is a lot of property and using land from something like the land bank. So you've got a low cost. You can't alter the land, but you can use the land. And so there is one group of growers in Flint that does do that for a profit, but when I was talking about the making a profit, I was thinking specifically of the fact that at the farmers market, there's an organization of young students who have their own garden, and then they bring them so I-and the name fails me, so I apologize there-but they sell at the Flint farmers market. Well, if you go inside the Flint farmers market to one of the stands that are always there to buy potatoes, you might be paying $9 for a bag of potatoes, whereas your local community growers, the children, they are selling their potatoes for $4. So there's-I don't know if this is accurate or not, because I haven't studied it-but my guess is that in an area like Flint, there is not an education behind the value of food to help them price it appropriately. Or the education isn't there for market value. But like it, you know, and this is terrible, too, because people will go to the market and you know, do they buy from them as a producer? They absolutely do. Because they a lot of people because the farmer's market draws in a lot of people who are coming there to spend, they do also then have that mentality of that they'd like to support the local community, and they do buy the produce, but it doesn't further them which is sad to me, because, yes, they got $4 for those potatoes, but they probably broke even. And that's not support, that's acknowledging that they did it.

**Interviewer 2** 23:37

So a couple things I heard in there, it just tease them out to us is, you know, education on pricing. So you talked education before for growing, but also education for pricing. So more the business side, but is what I'm hearing you say in terms of price. So the economic benefit.

**Participant 211** 24:01

Right, that piece isn't there. You know, like I think about it to an effect of like, okay, if I'm, you know, I'm 15 years old, I want to be able to grow my own food because I'm struggling to do it. I'm struggling to feed with the rest of my family, I'm struggling to eat. So my access to food and my knowledge of food is going to come from the stores that I go to. And a lot of times in those communities, especially in those party shops or corner stores, we see price gouging. So if they did have, if for whatever reason they did have any fresh produce, the price isn't going to be accurate. Or you've got you know, the cost of a piece of produce at a grocery store which is also going to be elevated or depending on the grocery store. It might be underpriced because of the way that a grocery store prices their things you know, like they might charge you $5 extra for toilet paper because they know you're coming in for bananas, they're only going to charge you 20 cents for. So the education in terms of the value of a small scale producer just isn't there.

**Interviewer 2** 25:15

Okay, education. Okay. Yeah. As opposed to a large scale or a neighborhood shop. Okay. Got it. That's great. Thank you. Those are really, really good. So the whole education on pricing, comparative to corner stores, and also compared to large scale real retail operations.

**Participant 211** 25:43

Yeah, there's no farmers markets that are actual farmers markets in the community for them to learn from. So I applaud it because it is brave to go out and do those kind of things. But there, it's like, we're missing a mentor.

**Interviewer 2** 26:05

All right. Great. Great.

**Interviewer 2** 26:14

Any thing you want to ask [Interviewer], as we're connecting, that, we're good, okay. Um, other connections that you might see, because you talked about, you know, the production, this is beautiful already.

**Participant 211** 26:28

Beautiful chaos.

**Interviewer 2** 26:30

it's organized. Very, very informative. So, you talked a little bit about, there was one thing you mentioned in terms of farmers who grow outside of Flint, want to make sure that we pretty much understand that was because of both the price and the condition of the land itself. So both the price and the condition of the land, okay, got it. All right, want to make sure we made that. Okay. Other things, as you think about your work?

**Participant 211** 27:09

Sure, if we move into like the value added processors, so how it's being used. This is also another place where there's struggle because a lot of traditional modern ways of preservation require cost. So you have to buy the cans from scratch, you have, you know, like, you're the first generation, so there's no hand me down ball jars coming from Grandma, you are buying them. And you maybe you don't have the tools that a lot of modern, a lot of modern growers use, you know, a dehydrator, a food processor, even, you know, a canning of like a special canning pot, these things that they could use to preserve their food are economically out of reach. So part of my work was showcasing ways that you can process and preserve your food without having to buy extra things. So I'm not, like if I have a recipe for salsa, I'm going to show you how to process it. But I'm also going to show you how to freeze it, I'm going to show you how to make a small batch so that you're not wasting, I'm going to show you how to time your crops so that you're not trying to-you're not having waste because it all came due at once. So in terms of processors, that was where most of my work was, but also in finding those little pockets of the community that do have experience. Because when I was working at Latinx, a good majority of the children that go there for services, didn't have any experience, but a couple of the volunteers from the community did. So finding them, finding out ways that they remember from their childhood, or finding like those people who do have experience so reaching out to older generations who maybe have experienced from their youth, even if it's rusty is way more valuable than trying to you know, tell somebody how much a dehydrator costs and then how to process their own fruit leather. Because maybe they never will. It's not in their culture, it's not in you know, it's figuring out culturally what's going to be appropriate for you and and what you're going to benefit from. So that was our experience with processors. I'll stop there if you need to for a second.

**Interviewer 2** 30:05

Yeah, that's really good. And understanding talked about modern, traditional ways versus modern ways. And the traditional ways, accessing them through knowledge, and also resources, things that people have that they can hand down. And you talked about the cost of the modern ways being out of reach with people. And the other thing I heard was finding people who had experience that they share with youth in particular things that they could remember from their childhood. So that whole experience was also a factor. And I'll pause to so [Interviewer] we got all of that.

**Interviewer** 30:50

Yeah, I sunk into two concepts really high startup costs are process and then experience processing within the community and testing if you think that's not a good way to, to word it.

**Participant 211** 31:02

No, I, I think that is good. Because if we're looking-a lot of people who are unfamiliar with the concept of self preserving for yourself are thinking about it in terms of what we see that's already preserved in a store. So it's creating a or an educating them on what it looks like to preserve your own and why to preserve your own because is a bag of chips preserved, yeah, could we do that, yes, but it's not cost effective. So learning how to use what you grow, and only growing what you'll use is the key there when it comes to processing. So that you're not wasting your space, and you're not wasting your product.

**Interviewer 2** 31:52

That's a strong link. When you talk about waste, I want to make sure that we get that to that. You mentioned two practices, one preservation to use, what you grow, and then only growing what you use to, you know, to reduce waste. Is there is there more you can say about waste out of the system, you know?

**Participant 211** 32:19

So when working with [Organization] and we're working with different community members, we have different needs, we have different. We have different types of people, we have different heritage, we have different preferences. So when we are offering seeds, and we're offering education, it's equally important with offering it that we are offering them things that they can use. And so that was always an important part of the conversation is not me deciding what my friend on the other side of the city is going to use, asking them, like, would you use this? Because what we were finding is, I mean, it's obvious, and I don't, we missed it, but I think this happens a lot. When we're providing this food to like the Latinx community, they didn't want the broccoli, they've never used it before, and it went to waste. And so our first response was teach them a traditional recipe that could use broccoli ways that you could use broccoli, but it's just not in their palate. It's not part of their-it can't be used in a multitude of their foods. So why am I giving it to them? I'm now wasting, I'm wasting their time I'm wasting, you know. So there was it a lot of conversations about okay, what five things do you grow regularly? What are your five staple foods? And then what are your staple herbs. And then once I give you that power, once I pass the food to you, and you are growing it, if it's already in your wheelhouse, so you've got ingredients that you know, you've got ingredients that you're familiar with, now you have a power to preserve, you have a power to feed friends. But if I'm giving you something that you've never experienced before, I might now kill your desire to move forward because you would feel unsuccessful. So recognizing the needs of a specific community of people is maybe more important than even providing them anything in the first place.

**Interviewer 2** 34:45

That's good. So a couple things I want to pull out of that is, you know, one, recognizing the needs so actually asking about culturally appropriate foods. And then you talked about the motivation or lack of because if you don't recognize that, then you could kill the desire to actually grow.

**Participant 211** 35:08

And we saw that yeah, it happens. You know, it's something that like, you know, I didn't recognize my own privilege in this case until it was shown to me in this area where I'm like, would I try a new vegetable, yeah, sure, because I'm comfortable with all these vegetables. But thinking back on my very first growing season, if I had something that I didn't use, I remember feeling failure, not knowing how to use it like, so, yeah, you have to step out of your own comfort zone and your own preferences or your own ability. And maybe it's a part of an ability, because I have the garden space and I have, you know, the the privilege to be able to just try whatever I want, you know, I can try all these foods. You know, I am not in need of food. But there are people who are and that needs to come first. What will they-qhat will you eat? What's most important, and that's what I want to give you.

**Interviewer 2** 36:17

Okay? So [Interviewer] help me with, and forgive me if I'm missing something, because I'm not seeing it. That piece about the the connection to the giving food that people will eat, but also the connection that not doing so will create failure, which kills desire. I want to make sure that we get that somehow here. If you already have it, just show us where...

**Interviewer** 36:45

I think it's gonna... I'm going to connect it directly here is that, you know, part of what has been successful in programs is tailoring it to the needs of the community. But if you're not doing that, then then that would lead to people disengaging in that process.

**Interviewer 2** 37:09

Right. Okay. And disengagement

**Interviewer** 37:18

would be direct producers, I know it's a...

**Interviewer 2** 37:22

okay. All right.

**Interviewer** 37:26

little busy as I was trying to create a little more space, so you can see stuff better.

**Interviewer 2** 37:30

So maybe just a small note on that one, tailoring programs to needs to community and maybe in parenthesis, you know, avoid motivate success or avoid failure or something that just triggers to remember that, because that was very significant. I appreciate that. Yeah. Okay. Thanks. Yeah. Motivate success or avoid failure? Because that was a really strong statement, [Participant 211], appreciate that. Mm hmm. Yeah, haven't heard it deeply reflected like that. Okay. Um, anything else that you're seeing there that you want to connect? And as we go along, you may some other things may pop up as we ask additional questions.

**Participant 211** 38:15

Sure. Um, I don't know. You tell me.

**Interviewer 2** 38:23

Yeah. Right. Now, it looks like most things are connected to other things. So we can pose a couple of other questions to you, and then if other connections come up? Okay. We we started out indicating that in addition to the five sectors, we were interested in looking at connecting racial equity or inequity to the food system. So we're asking you the question, you know, what are some of the ways that racial inequity impacts participation in the local food system?

**Participant 211** 39:00

This is a huge one, it's going to touch every single part. So the racial inequity is not only prohibitive, sometimes in access to transportation, but in discrimination of who is a typical grower. So when you think about farming, the main image that most people think of is the white old man in his bib overalls out in his field, where that's not the case, that's not a modern farmer, a modern farmer is a lot of times right now, it's a second career. Those people are in their 30s and 40s. They're all ages, or they're all races. They're all genders. They're all over the country, and they're struggling. They're struggling because farming was not an opportunity or growing or any access, that was not a viable occupation or hobby that was presented to them during those years when they were deciding what they wanted to do. And that was not part of their education in school, it wasn't part of their extracurricular. So we see a lot of inequity in the food system. So as a producer, that inequity is there because they weren't given the opportunity to try. And a lot of times to when we think about that inequity, farming is one of those things where, unless you inherit the land, it's an uphill climb. So for, when I think specifically about the community in Flint, there's a lot of great opportunities now for all races and genders to access this information, but we're still not getting them there, we're still not driving home the importance of fresh food, or growing your own food. So that is part of the whole culture of where our food comes from, going back to a small community style of food access, would open doors for more races to participate in a fresh food system. This idea of only getting your produce from a vendor that is blocks or miles away from your community stifles interest, and ability to even access or want to be a part of it. So and I think about that, too, with like, the programs that we did, an [Organization]'s garden. So the big garden for [Organization] was downtown, accessible by bus bike car. But when I think about the actual physical communities that I want to be there, they're miles away. They're not getting there, the people who are touching that garden are volunteers that have a garden of their own home. So how do we get that to people, and the truth there is that it's going to take an organization or a group that has that access to get it going to show up in the community. And to make connections in the community. So that access to transportation is a big one. Access to land is a big one. Because there's still stereotypes, there's stereotypes everywhere, you know, with race, with gender,

**Participant 211** 43:13

You know, in terms of lending, building the credit to be able to get land building the credit to you know, even get equipment. It's, it's wild. And in that case, it's funny too, because, you know, I have a small farm of my own, and when applying for loans I called two different places to try to get loans for the land around me. And I got six words out of some of these lenders. And then my husband called and they set up a scheduled appointment for him. And even though a lot of places are gonna say that they have special programs for, you know, like, to celebrate women, to celebrate African Americans, all of these, they all come with stipulations that are hard to meet. So, yeah, we 100% back black loans, we're going to do as many as we possibly can, but you also have to have a 700 credit score, we're going to need you to drive to Detroit to do this and we're going to need you know, $10,000 up front. Okay, well, show me how that works. Show me how that plan is actually going to help. It's not. So there's-I mean it's difficult. There's a stereotype with farming that's almost shameful is not the right word but you know, is that how you want to spend your time kind of a thing like it's unfamiliar, so it it doesn't see Important. I don't know, I went on a rant there, I'm sorry.

**Interviewer 2** 45:06

Do not apologize. That's exactly the kind of thing that we need to that we need to understand. So you get a lot of things you talked about just the viability of it as an occupation, because of the exposure or education. You talked about, you know, the opportunity. You talked about access to land, big deal that if you don't hear it land, it's hard to get land because you may not be able to get the money, even from a lending institutions to afford to get the land. You talked about the culture of a community style culture, for the opportunity for localized food as opposed to big system food. And you talked about how that has an impact on interest ability and being a part. So all of that you've tied, you know, to equity. Um, you mentioned here was the last one I had. You talked also about the connection from an equity standpoint, inequity in access to transportation as well. You made the connection to discrimination based on stereotypes in you tie that also gender discrimination, as as a part of this, as well. And then that you also talked about the conditions, the stipulations for groups like women and others, that the stipulations are very hard to meet, and they don't help. Did I?

**Participant 211** 46:56

Yes. Okay.

**Interviewer 2** 46:59

And [Interviewer], you can let us know how we're doing.

**Participant 211** 47:03

I think about that, too, with even when providing education, almost everybody's got a smartphone, but not everybody's got a laptop, not everybody has reliable internet outside of their home. Technology is a huge part of it, too. Because now, you know, we're not meeting in person as much. We're relying on these high speed, excuse me, internet connections, we are the informations out, it's almost like we've got all the information out there that every person could ever need when it comes to growing. But unless it's accessible, what difference does it make? So if I'm doing a program for, you know, future farmers, like, even like Future Farmers of America, where are they in Flint? Where are they? They exist, but it's inaccessible because of how its presented. Okay.

**Interviewer 2** 48:11

So the technology piece, um, the, the technology barriers, okay, the laptop and the Internet specifically. So it's equipment and internet access. Our technology barriers, okay. Okay. Great. Question for you here. Are there ways that the food system actually contributes to racial inequity?

**Participant 211** 48:53

Yes, I'm sure that there is. I'm absolutely sure that there is. Especially when it comes to diversity of food. Yes. Because if we're looking at so yeah, the culturally appropriate appropriate foods. So it's that with the with the broccoli, you know, a free food drive in that Latinx community, if it's full of food that they are not familiar with and they are not going to cook then. It is a waste. So yes, it does, especially like sometimes it, I guess it can go both ways. Because if I think about-the food that they would have access to it like corner stores, so you're going to look at mostly processed foods. We're not going to have anything that would expand their palate., we're not going to have anything that would expose them to other cultures. So, you know, like, it's not like there's a Whole Foods in Flint where I could go and say, You know what I do want to try, you know, whatever for the first time. And it's just not there, there's no opportunity, regardless of cost, there just is no opportunity to expand beyond your current palette. So what you've got is what you've got, and those other things, like, try trying something. So let's say I go in, and I want to try, you know, tikka masala, I don't know. And it's cost prohibitive to try, because it comes at a premium. These considered specialty foods whenever we think about a dish that's inherently ethnic to a certain culture, those are considered specialty items, they're not accessible to all. So then that creates barriers between our knowledge and education of other cultures, and what they eat, and why they eat it. And it does create that inequity, because I don't have access to see, you know, you to see what is a traditional meal, because it's not available regularly. You know, if you think about the, if I go into Meijer, there's a, you know, there's an Asian end cap, there's a you know, Americanized Mexican aisle, and then you've got this tiny little piece of stuff that's gonna feel familiar. So how can we bring those and expose them as if they're not elite items? They're showcased as like, I don't have time to come up with the word here. I don't know. I can't think of it. But I think you know what I mean.

**Interviewer 2** 51:50

Exactly. Yeah. The whole, as you said, specialty slash elite, you know, limited access to these items, ends up framing them as specialty and elite and it makes them inaccessible. Okay, great. Great. Okay. Let's talk about shocks to the system or things that influence impact the food system. So what are some of the things that you think have major influence or impacts on the local food system?

**Participant 211** 52:38

Community involvement. So if it is important to the community, it's going to touch more people. So having a safe place to experience these type of things experience growing, I think that that is going to be really important. How can we tie that in? Can you repeat the question one more time so that I can rebrain?

**Interviewer 2** 53:11

If you're thinking about things that have a major influence on the local food system, so yeah, okay, yeah, the community involvement.

**Participant 211** 53:19

So community involvement, and how do I say this, so like in Flint, until the land is restored, or until people are given access to clean soil and clean water, it's not going to make a difference. You know, we're slowly going along, and we're helping to provide seeds, we're giving filters for your hose filters for your sink, we're teaching you how to build a race backs. But whether or not you're going to actually continue, because that's a lot of work. It's a lot of work to fix a problem that you didn't cause, you know, with the soil. So until somebody comes along and says, this land is accessible to your community, until the city or the government comes in and says, we are allocating this empty land to you, we are fixing it. I can give you all the tools you need, but they're just gonna sit there on that rotten soil. Because, you know, there's only so much there's only so much that an individual or a community can do without support. So, I think that especially in the community of Flint, you know, like, how is it that we are making individuals responsible for fixing a problem so that they can have food? It just seems wild to me that that that falls on the shoulders of someone who has never grown before, but needs to to feed their family. And we're saying, Yeah, sure, we'll give you these seeds, so you go ahead and spend the extra $70 to build that bed off the ground. And then we'll show you how to grow a carrot, you know, is it important work? Yes, it has to be done. But until there's a bigger force in play that heals that land, it's not going to, it's not going to move forward. So that I think has had an major impact. Plus the economy of the area. Flint has been revitalized in a lot of ways, but not for the people that live there. For the people that visit and the people who live in the outlying communities, it created a safe that they felt safe in. Well, Flint has always been there and its community members have always felt safe there because it's their community. So the revitalization hasn't done anything for the people who live in the blocks around it. It's just made it more difficult for them to access the things they need, because instead of having vacant land, maybe that they could have possibly grown on, well, now, whatever is being built on it. And we didn't even see that with [Organization] because they had that garden right off [Street]. But then there was homes across the street with some vacant land, that at one point they had considered trying to acquire to expand, but it was bought up by I don't know what it was the [Foundation], but I'm pretty sure it was bought. And then they're building like a three storey structure. Okay, well, that's a, you know, east west facing building. So now at certain times of the day when our crops would normally get light, they don't, because this building is now there. So, the revitalization has drawn attention but for reasons that are not helpful to the community, or only portions of the community.

**Interviewer 2** 57:11

Yeah. That was really key to so that the economic revitalization has been the impact of that has not been for the community members mostly is what I heard you say? Yes. Right. Yes. And it has also made it more difficult to access the kind of resources and things that they need, as you talked about the land, but also even access to natural resources to use, you know, the land to grow food. I heard that awesome. Okay. Okay. You mentioned, you mentioned the water. So just, you know, how do you see the water crisis impacting because you mentioned about providing the filters to share? And all of that, how are you seeing the water crisis impacting the food system?

**Participant 211** 58:14

In every way. So when working with Latinx, they had like a water tank that had been donated by some celebrity, I don't even think it was like Will Smith's son, or something had donated this water. So instead of showing up to a water drive, at where you'd get bottled water, this was where you brought your own containers. So this was community based, so this should have been walking distance come and get water whenever you need. But the thing is, is that 100% honestly, the water crisis, it felt like it was over. But then when you actually go into the community, it is far from over. You can fix pipes all day, you know, like they're going through and they're fixing these pipes are changing out these pipes, but it doesn't change the fact that you've already contaminated the lives of all these people. So it's not over, it won't be over for years. And in terms of food production, I mean, if I'm thinking about myself, if I knew, you know, I had children and I am wanting to give them the experience of growing and I want to feed them from my own backyard, I would feel afraid to do it. The fear of possibly hurting my own family, or, you know, like how do you trust it? They've lied this whole time about all of these things concerning the water. It's just been one lie after the other. So how do we know it's safe? You know, like, let's say that I give somebody a water filter, well are they going to trust that that's going to be enough to protect them? They maybe would rather take the bus and get their produce, you know, once a week from Kroger or Meijer, then grow with themselves if they're scared. And maybe that then limits them to what they try. It limits them to how much fresh food because, you know, if you think about when you actually think about a lot of the produce that you're getting in the store, and what conditions it's grown. And if you stop to think about it, it does become scary, it seems much better to have something that's already been processed for me, then to rely on something that you're not sure.

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:53

Got it. Thank you. So the trust factor is huge, is what I'm hearing you say, and it's impacting food production. Because people don't know if they can trust. You said the water...

**Participant 211** 1:01:08

And the land. At Latinx, they had a community garden established that they had been running before we came with [Organization] and helped to build a new one. And they were two or three years into it before they realized that they were growing in lead contaminated soil, and so the community now I think there was one week when I was there when hardly anybody came, and I think, okay, is this because nobody knew, or it's because they don't want to eat a potato out of the ground here. So.

**Interviewer 2** 1:01:46

Okay. So we talked about water... COVID?

1:01:58

And the food system? Okay. So, most of my work with [Organization] was done during COVID-19. And part of my job was to be actively involved in the community in person. So visiting gardens, visiting community centers, and that was few and far between the number of people that were interested in having me come to their personal homes or community gardens, to help them was low, because, I mean, who wants a stranger and their house during a pandemic, talking to them about their food. So COVID put extreme limitations on access to education. Because everybody's lives were so technology focused, so children doing virtual school, which was necessary and in 100%, for transmission, absolutely necessary, but it then made it to where every opportunity was also then virtual or technology driven. And when that happens, people get burned out, there's only so many hours, you can sit in front of a computer. And when we're talking about food, education and access, I can't do that for you, I, I can't do that for you well, through the computer, I can do it. But showing you a carrot and slicing you a carrot are two very different things. So COVID-19 put barriers on the way that food brings us together as a community. There's no shared plates, there's no shared meals. Everybody was for themselves. So in this case, we hadn't given given people any tools to be able to take care of themselves as a family unit before this happened. So now we have people scrambling because they don't have trust in their fellow community members. They don't have trust in you know, the safety of attending an event which most events didn't exist, but COVID-19 made it so that you really were on your own. It was a scramble to get food sometimes. And in these areas where there's no fresh food already available and you're choosing from preserved foods. It's it's already such slim pickings, but then that drops it down to an even smaller amount of variation that you're you have, you know, you don't get to choose from six brands of fried onions, you've got one and that might that one might be out of your budget. And then I think that a lot of people saw that with different things that maybe they bought occasionally. There was no variation of choice anymore. So unless you grow it yourself, or unless you know how to make it yourself, that's something that you don't have now during COVID-19. So that really changed the food market and how we think about preservation and preparation to because it's like it became this preservation especially became this like, holy grail of something that you wanted to know how to do. Because when you did find a bushel of, you know, apples or whatever, they only keep for so long. So we didn't prepare people to preserve their own food beforehand. I think that COVID-19 probably created a lot of waste. I know it did in my house. If you think about how many times I did a grocery order, and things were substituted. And I didn't really know or, you know, I didn't turn down that substitution, well, then that something I might never use, or I had to buy something I was unfamiliar with. And I didn't either I didn't like it, or I didn't know how to use it. So they created a whole other realm of waste of, you know, like, it's one thing to tell somebody to try new things on their own agenda. And it's another thing to have them try it when they're already scared, unprepared, and hungry.

**Interviewer 2** 1:06:32

Okay. Great. Thank you. So looking at this beautiful map, as you're looking at it, anything else of importance or concept that you would add, before we move to one last question for you? And I know, that's probably a crazy thing to add, that the answer is probably like, I don't know.

**Participant 211** 1:07:06

I feel like yeah, any of these I could, you know, expand on so we can ask the next one. We're good.

**Interviewer 2** 1:07:14

Okay, okay. So, as we look at this, the next thing we want to consider are leverage points, places where, you know, where we might be able to see change, to improve the system. Like, when [Interviewer] was giving you the early example of a model, you know, if we, if we added bike lanes, or we added more public transportation we could possibly improve and reduce traffic, for example. So when you think about this system, how would you make changes to improve it?

**Participant 211** 1:07:50

Oh, my, okay. Um, is there a certain area you want me to?

**Interviewer 2** 1:07:55

Oh, no, just want you to just in general, just yeah, go for it. With your familiarization with the system, you know, what would you do to change it and improve it? What do you think?

**Participant 211** 1:08:07

Well, sure. The first thing that I would change would be normalizing the community growing, normalizing a partnership with those in your community, or like a revitalization of a community group. Participating together, so regaining what we lost in these last few years and COVID-19, that separated everybody, we want to make sure that everybody safe, but bring everybody back together for a collaborative effort. Because if we've learned anything during COVID-19, it's that we are okay on our own, but we are better as a group. So I think that that's really important is encouraging people to share, to barter, to educate each other, and to be part of a community. I think that there needs to be some kind of initiative within these areas that is bigger than [Organization]. So we have an impact, but we have a very small impact. So how do we get this from birth through death? How do we bring this in because I talked a lot about youth, but the elderly population in these communities is way worse off than the children. So I think that something that needs to change in that aspect is giving equal access across the whole spectrum across the whole city, young, old, race, gender, giving access to resources that are reliable, that they're trustworthy and then creating those connections in the community to help. So I think about it like this. We've got one block where people are all living there, let's say there's 10 families, and there's one community garden plot that was given to them by the city, then an organization like [Organization] has come in and helped them to revitalize the soil or a government agency of some kind, there needs to be some kind of funding from somewhere that's going to bring this to a normal level. So we come in and we do that, we create-they'll naturally happen-but creating these are like events or get togethers or celebrations to celebrate our own community, those kinds of things, bring people together upfront, and then those connections and those partnerships are formed by communication. And then we can then kind of figure out exactly what needs to happen to make sure that this community can be self reliant.

**Participant 211** 1:11:00

And when we talk about the elderly, and the youth, so with the elderly, we're looking for their knowledge and we're looking for someone to help them too, because like even my own [family members] that lived in Flint, at the beginning of the pandemic, it was hard to even get them Meals on Wheels, some weeks, because there were no drivers, it wasn't safe, the meals were being dropped off on a porch where an elderly person couldn't get to it. So these are things that need to be fixed, we need to recognize the needs of the community. And then we need to act, we need to act on them big, we need to go big, and then break it down. Because we can do all of those small things all day long, but they're never going to sustain unless we fix the big problem, which is that racial inequity, and it's the safety of the land. So barriers there need to come down.

**Participant 211** 1:11:59

And we also need to create an environment in the main hub of Flint. So like downtown Flint, that's open for everybody. I mean, I want to walk into the farmers market with $3 in my pocket and be able to buy something, I want to be able to have some sort of deal where I can come there on a weekly basis and pick up my groceries like I could at a Meijer, you know, or have them delivered, if that's the case, for a reasonable price, or access to, you know, like something like your ride. I know there's your ride and there's another one of those kind of things. Like there's so many hoops to jump through. Why are we making people prove that they need their help more than one time before we offer it?

**Participant 211** 1:12:54

I think that taking down some of those barriers when it comes to the food industry or this food system. If somebody asks for help, you just give it I don't need to know how much you make. I don't need to know how much land you have. Do you want seeds for me? Here they are. If you want education, here they are. It's I think that we need to start trusting people in that regard that if someone's willing to ask for help than they deserve it, regardless of why they're asking for that help. So I think that creating that trust between the government and city or authority and communities is important. Because right now, like my my own [family member], he didn't want to sign up for Meals on Wheels, because he didn't want to answer the, you know, he didn't want to give them his financial statements. He didn't want to sit down and talk about all of those really private personal things, which really has nothing to do with the fact that I am hungry, I am hungry and I need help. So, why punish by creating a barrier that some people are uncomfortable with? So I think that again, with the birth through death kind of a thing, having those fresh vegetables in schools in Flint, it's a problem in Michigan because we have such a small growing season, but if there's people that are dedicated to preserving the harvest when children aren't in school, it can still be presented in a healthy and fun way for them. It can be used in their school lunches, though I do know that a lot of the Flint schools do have some connections with local growers so that in some seasons like late spring and early fall, they are getting some of their produce from local growers, which is good. And that does really limit us here in Michigan because a lot of those local growers are small because of the land in availability and the cost of having a hoop house, the cost of maintaining the land. So if we could increase the number of small community growers, so that if we do need 600, you know, apples, we've got it because I can get some from you, you and you. So normalizing it is important too.

**Interviewer 2** 1:15:24

Awesome. Awesome, [Participant 211] You're welcome. Thank you so much. I can't imagine this question. So did we forget to ask you anything? Is there anything that's really important in this that just we might not have thought to ask you or something that you would just add in closing?

**Participant 211** 1:15:48

Um, gosh, I don't think there's anything that you necessarily missed by any means. But I do think that it's a topic that is so broad, and it does touch so many things that it's hard to control. So it really does-everything really needs to be community specific. So in the food systems, we need to build the community and then share the community.

**Interviewer 2** 1:16:15

Okay, build the community and share the community. Wonderful, thank you. You're welcome. Thank you big time. patient, we really, really, there was a lot, you know, there that you shared, and we deeply appreciate it. Just reminding you again, that everything you talked about from an identification standpoint is private, obviously, the research team will be going over this and enhancing your map and using it to help deliver you know, resource results. If you feel that you need to follow up, you know you have with any questions or concerns or additional information, you have Chris's email to do that she'll be your, your point person for that. And then the last ask that we have of you is just to evaluate, give us some feedback, you know, on the process through some drop the link in the chat, you'll also get that same link in an email. So feel free to respond. And one of the questions in there, ask if there's anyone else you feel that we should have this kind of conversation with. And we're looking to do that here in March yet to finish up. So please, if there's anybody you feel that that would, you know, benefit from the process, and also, we would benefit from hearing their voice to add to these results we, we'd appreciate. We'd appreciate that as well. So again, thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

**Participant 211** 1:17:41

You're welcome. All right.

**Interviewer 2** 1:17:43

And we look forward to I think there's a question too about staying engaged. Right Carissa. So by all means, please let us know. Okay, sounds good.

**Participant 211** 1:17:51

Thank you so much.

**Interviewer 2** 1:17:53

Joy the rest of your day. You too. Bye, you guys. Bye