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**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

flint, people, food, connection, grocery store, restaurants, inequity, groceries, folks, money, access, curbside pickup, mhmm, interviewer, system, question, sectors, producers, convenience stores, impacting

**SPEAKERS**

Interviewer, Participant 216, Interviewer 2

**Interviewer 2** 00:03

All righty. So thanks for your permission to record so the record is on now, again, your participation is voluntary. You can choose not to answer any questions or even to withdraw from the research at any time body will keep the recording confidential within our team. And we won't share or use your name or any other identifying information in the research results that we report. However, you might be mindful that there might be anyone around you nearby that can hear your comments so you can maintain your confidentiality as well. Carissa will remain your contact point in terms of email if there are comments or questions or things that you have. After we finished the day, feel free to reach out to her You can also call me to your consent to participate is demonstrated by your continued participation in the actual interview. Do you have any questions or before we move forward? No, ma'am. All right, great, perfect. Okay, so the first question we have is, how would you describe your role, or your experience with the local food system or even local food systems in

**Participant 216** 01:23

general? Current currently, is that current, their current

**Interviewer 2** 01:30

role and experience as well.

**Participant 216** 01:36

So currently, as as part of municipal government, I've got some connections with the creation of the new food policy council. I've got some decision making with the American rescue plan Act dollars, which if they apply will go to the creation of a new grocery store in the city of Flint. Um, so my, my, my connection currently is is really policy and funding related.

**Interviewer 2** 02:23

Okay, okay. All right. Great. Great, great, great.

**Participant 216** 02:27

previous experiences were a bit more direct and hands on but but now we know from policy, oh, policy and funding.

**Interviewer 2** 02:36

What share about your previous awesome your previous experience to

**Participant 216** 02:40

Oh, my family owned restaurants in fine. So we were you know, before it before my, my grandfather and his brother in law passed away, you know, pretty successful restaurants in in the north Flint area. My grandfather's spot was also a small grocery store. So, you know, people walked to his place to get their groceries for the week. He helped out families who didn't have money for groceries. So I grew up seeing what happens when people are food insecure, and when systems and processes don't work for them in order to be able to have access to food, and then what happens when when those places leave. So when, when my grandfather's restaurant and store closed, my uncle's restaurant closed, it devastated the neighborhood. So I I've seen firsthand what happens when a viable food source leaves the community or leaves the neighborhood.

**Interviewer 2** 03:54

Okay, thank you, Laurie. Appreciate that. Appreciate that. We want to start by taking a look at some definitions, system definitions. So there's five sectors in the food system that we're going to concentrate on for these interviews, and the first being production. So the folks that are growing food are raising livestock, and that could be anywhere from the scale of your backyard all we up to you know, our larger farms. Secondly, recoupling processing and packaging. So the folks who are responsible for washing and packing and and those who also create value added products. So we start out with this luscious tomato, and we mix it with some other things and come up with salt so or ketchup or whatever we decide to make from it. Then we look at our folks that are doing the wholesale and reselling of those products and goods so they gather things made by others and they help sell them Then we have the retail operations, much like what you described with your, your grandfather's experience and your uncle's experience where they're the places where the food is actually sold, through our grocery stores, the convenience stores, farm stands, farmers markets, the produce boxes, restaurants, catering, all those places where food is sold directly to customers. And then last but not least, waste. So not all things are edible, we don't eat all the food. So we want to take a look at what happens to the food we don't eat, whether it's composted, or even, in some cases rescued, you know, and, and, and move forward in some other way. So those are the the five sectors that we're looking at. Any questions or comments about them? Nope. Okay, great. Well, let's jump in. So based on, on what you Oh, I'm sorry, before we before we go there, bate? No, no, no, I'm fine. Based on these sectors, and and what you described as your role and experience, where would you say that you have the most expertise?

**Participant 216** 06:19

Retail.

**Interviewer 2** 06:20

Okay, most expertise in retail. Alright, great. Great, great. It's been a while since we've done this with you. So [Interviewer] is gonna take a few minutes and just refresh you on how we do these mental models/interviews.

**Interviewer** 06:42

Awesome. So yeah, as it's been like, over a year, since we've done this, I wanted to go through a little example, before we start, just to refresh the process. But before I go through, like the details, overarching like, this is very much going to be a map of your experience, your expertise, your knowledge, and so I want you to have ownership over it. So even though I'll be the one making connections, and adding in concepts based on what you say, really feel free to jump in and correct what I'm doing. So I wouldn't connect it like that. I wouldn't word it like that. Because it's very much your map, even though I'm the one, you know, controlling it on my computer, it is very much. It's your creation. So please, correct anything, I want it to be as accurate as possible to your understanding of the system. Awesome. So then the the really nitty gritty details is that when we're building out an understanding of a system, and how things are connected, if I'm looking at like an issue of traffic, and I make a connection to it, I basically have two decisions I need to make. The first is if it's a positive or negative connection, which is not like good or bad. It just means if one goes up, does the other one also go up? Or does it go down. So for number of cars, if there's more cars, there's also more traffic, less cars, less traffic, it's going to be a positive connection, and we'll end up with a blue arrow, a negative connection might be something like public transportation. So you know, if there was more public transportation options, or a better, more efficient public transportation system, then we would have less traffic and acidity and we would have an orange arrow for this negative connection. So that's positive and negative. And then my final decision is how strong the relationship is. And this is really like how impactful or influential is one thing on another. So number of cars to traffic, I might put that as a really strong relationship. If tomorrow everyone decided to not drive their car, we wouldn't really have a traffic problem, it's not likely that that would happen, but you know, really influential, um, whereas public transportation might be more of a medium connection, that it has a lot of influence on traffic, but you know, there's always going to be those people who really love driving their cars, or, you know, they live or they work somewhere that's really inconvenient to access to a public transportation system. So more of a medium connection. And a weak connection might be something like the number of cyclists that if there was, you know, a program promoting people, you know, biking to work or something, you know, it might have some impact on traffic, but it's not going to be, you know, a solution to a traffic problem. We currently carry your groceries on a bike, you can't move a couch on a bike, it's not like a solution for a whole town to get around or something. So that's basically the basics, um, you know, a positive or negative connection and then strongest connection, weak, medium and strong. Do you have any questions about that process? Nope. Awesome. That's

**Participant 216** 09:55

Cool. So I'm still listening. I just want to close my door.

**Interviewer** 09:58

Oh, no. Okay. Yes. So [Interviewer 2] will be guiding you through, but I'll step in and check every so often of like, I mapped something this way. Does that make sense to you? Alright.

**Interviewer 2** 10:16

Awesome. Alright. So now what you see [Participant 216], is those sectors, the five sectors that we talked about on the on the map. And then also a concept for racial equity and inequity, which we'll get to along the way. But based on your expertise, and experience, you know, share with us how you see connections between these sectors in the food system, and you can start anywhere you'd like. If you want to start retail, where you're most experienced or anywhere that you would like to start on this map to show us-talk to us about the connections and sometimes it's just easier just to talk about it. And [Interviewer] does the wonderful magic of connecting concepts and stuff as you talk.

**Participant 216** 11:11

Well, wholesalers and resellers have a direct connection to retailers, they've got to be able to get supply from someplace. Also, producers and retailers, sometimes they skip the middleman and they want farm to table which seems to be popular right now.

**Interviewer** 11:36

What do you think about the difference in those strengths? So for like local retailers, are they getting most of their product from wholesalers and like a little bit from producers, or about even? What is your-?

**Participant 216** 11:49

Yeah most of it is coming from wholesalers and a small part of is coming from local producers. And then obviously there is a-well see, I don't know that retailers in Flint, they've got to get rid of waste-I don't think they're composting or using-yeah, it's going out through, yes, municipal waste is where it's going. It's not going to-I mean it might in some cases, I don't even think farmers market is doing it. Yeah, it's going out through municipal waste. I think it should be in a lot of cases composted but Flint just doesn't do that, some producers probably do though, if they're local producers, they probably are doing that but others are not. Could you move your pictures out of the way so I could see what's going on on the other side of the screen here? Wholesalers and resellers certainly have some direct market. You've got retailers-I'm sure wholesalers and resellers have some direct to consumers or direct to restaurants and direct to stores and that those also go to the value added processors, which is less common in this area. Like we don't have very many processors in the area.

**Interviewer** 14:33

What are some reasons that you see for that, that lack of processors?

**Participant 216** 14:39

Like the processors and the reasons?

**Interviewer 2** 14:41

Mm hmm. Yeah. I was just about to ask that question too.

**Participant 216** 14:50

I mean, those facilities just aren't here. Flint's been primarily industrial in the way that, you know, cars and seats and spark plugs and that sort of thing. It just-food processing has not typically been an industry here.

**Interviewer 2** 15:17

Okay. Okay.

**Participant 216** 15:24

And I don't know that I would. If I was a food processing plant, would I come to a community that is known for water that isn't great or you know, we are still learning all of the environmental effects that General Motors and other plants have had on the city. So if you created a food processing plant here, and then you distributed that food, does that mean the pollutants that are left over here from those plants travel with those foods that were processed and produced here?

**Interviewer 2** 16:06

Good point.

**Participant 216** 16:07

I mean, if I were general mills, I would not have a plant here.

**Interviewer 2** 16:22

Mhmm. And I see you made that connection to the water.

**Participant 216** 16:28

It always goes back to that.

**Interviewer 2** 16:30

Okay, so would you say, okay, Mm hmm. Gotcha. Okay. Curious about one other thing that you said. You said that-you made the point that the farmers market and others, other than the producers, may not be composting. What do you think are some of the reasons why they don't do that? Or what might be perceived barriers, if you know of any of those?

**Participant 216** 17:03

So like, I know, there are certain people at the farmers market that might compos, but they do it, you know, like the local grocer, Franklin and Aaron will compost within their facility; they're not going to use public composting because it really isn't available.

**Interviewer 2** 17:25

Not available. Okay. Okay. Gotcha. In their case, they're both a retailer and a producer. So, okay. And the local grocery. Gotcha. Okay. Just curious about that. Alright, other connections that you're seeing other ways that you would connect these sectors? When you were chatting about your areas of expertise, you talked about policy, and you also talked about decision making on funding. But two other things that you spoke to as areas of your expertise, maybe you see-there's some connections you can draw there on policy and funding.

**Participant 216** 18:31

So funding right now would would be helpful for markets... And that that is a direct result of the pandemic, wanting Flint to be able to help small businesses who've lost money, who've lost-especially the smaller businesses who were not able to do the online ordering and curbside pickup. You know, Kroger and Walmart pretty much wiped out the profits of these smaller stores because people just didn't have-okay, now that leads to a bigger problem. So people didn't have access to curbside pickup at some of the smaller grocery stores. But even with the larger grocery stores, they had to pivot because that's a premium service and and folks who are using EBT or SNAP for groceries, before the pandemic they couldn't use premium services like curbside pickup, because it just wasn't available for customers. Mm hmm. Not that way.

**Interviewer 2** 20:03

Mhmm. Okay. Yeah, that's a little bit to unpack there. So obviously the connection of COVID-that the actual retailers didn't have the money to offer premium services, I heard you say.

**Participant 216** 20:20

The smaller retailers didn't have the money to offer premium services. And so, you know, when people are afraid to go to the grocery store, they went to places like Kroger and Walmart, because they could get curbside service.

**Interviewer 2** 20:38

Okay. Oh, so they shifted. Okay.

**Participant 216** 20:42

If they could get there. Transportation is another another issue around here. I don't think Flint doesn't have-there are-food is available. People just don't have transportation access to get some food.

**Interviewer 2** 20:55

Mm hmm. Okay, so the transportation connection-

**Participant 216** 21:03

the fact that they needed to go to the smaller grocery stores, which were struggling, because people who were driving to those stores were now driving to big box retailers to take advantage of the curbside pickup.

**Interviewer 2** 21:15

Curbside, okay. Got it. Okay, for curbside. Online. You also mentioned online, I'm not sure I see that. Let me look. Yeah, the online as well. Okay.

**Participant 216** 21:34

And the online was the same for restaurants. People-grants and funding will assist hopefully also assist the restaurant folks who lost a lot during COVID.

**Interviewer 2** 21:49

Mhmm. Okay. So when you make the connection of online to the restaurants, you're saying they were able to pivot and offer that premium service?

**Participant 216** 22:02

The chains were, the small ones were not. And so we're hoping that some of these funds will benefit-businesses will have and will benefit businesses, restaurants, specifically who lost a lot of business over the last two years.

**Interviewer 2** 22:21

Okay, so that dynamic, what I'm seeing and hearing is that is the distinction between what small and chains could do, whether it was the restaurant or the stores, they both had the same paradigm, they couldn't afford to offer these premium services. And people went to the chains instead, you know. Okay. So that was part of their choice. Okay. Okay. Other ways that funding is connecting to any of the other other sectors as well? Any connection in the funding with the production by any chance?

**Participant 216** 23:10

Not, not really.

**Interviewer 2** 23:13

Okay.

**Participant 216** 23:15

They've not-I've not seen a big ask from producers for pandemic related funding. Okay. Not at the local level. Gotcha. Maybe there's some conversations at the state level on that, but not at local. Okay.

**Interviewer 2** 23:37

Got it. Alright, great. Alright. What about your policies, policy work? How's that connecting to the sectors? You mentioned the formation, you're engaged with the formation of a policy council itself, right?

**Participant 216** 23:59

Yeah, so we're still learning what that's gonna look like since Flint's not had a food policy council. So we're not totally sure what that looks like. The only thing that local government doesn't usually dictate policy on food systems. It's more state government, I think, than anything. And so being able to help the state inform some of those decisions, especially how they affect local retailers and local restaurants and markets. We don't-the only ordinances per se that we would have would be related to zoning. For example, Detroit Wing Company wants to put a grocery-not a grocery store-a restaurant on a corner that has already some traffic concerns. And so residents came out to say, hey, we don't want to Detroit Wing Company to show up here because this is an area where there's already traffic concerns, and there's a preschool across the street, and we don't want people coming to get wings and you know, harming the children who might be getting picked up from preschool across the street. That sort of thing.

**Interviewer 2** 25:46

Gotcha. Mm hmm. Oh, Sony related. Okay. Okay. Other ways that you see policy or the formation of the council itself impacting other sectors?

**Participant 216** 26:06

Hopefully it means an increase in markets, retailers. Okay. Finding ways to bring back some of the business that was lost. I'm hopeful that maybe the policy council comes up with some ways to help-to provide education so folks know that, hey, we've got all these health disparities in Flint, and things could change your health could change if you chose the banana over the bag of Doritos.

**Interviewer 2** 26:50

Mm hmm. Okay, so education. Education, health choices, I heard you say also food choices. Choices are healthy food versus unhealthy food. So disparities. And you mentioned disparities. How do you see the health disparities as it relates to the system itself? What's the connection?

**Participant 216** 27:21

People don't have-you don't have transportation. Flint is not real walkable in the sense that if somebody needs groceries, they can simply walk to a grocery store. And so what is available are, what my husband calls, stop and robs [laughter] convenience stores, and convenience stores don't have fresh fruits and vegetables. They have some but they're really expensive. And so people tend to gravitate towards what they can get access to, which is highly processed food, which we know leads to poor health outcomes. So, you know, areas of the country where grocery stores and transportation to those grocery stores are readily available, those folks tend to have better health outcomes and then the folks who are living in a community where the air quality is poor and there are few grocery stores and the ones that they do have access to don't have access to or don't sell fresh fruits and vegetables, because people aren't buying them, because they cost too much, because you know, it's a vicious cycle.

**Interviewer 2** 28:55

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, you made those connections, grocery stores, transportation, health outcomes. Right. And the fact that the prices-not accessible fresh food and expensive prices, as well are those connections to. Okay. Alright. [Interviewer], you want to check anything in while you're going?

**Participant 216** 29:37

She's just flipping through this.

**Interviewer 2** 29:38

Oh, she is.

**Participant 216** 29:39

I'm getting distracted. I'm trying to get a thought out, and I'm watching her and it's because it's amazing how she's just grabbing all this stuff out of my brain and putting on there.

**Interviewer 2** 29:50

There you go, exactly. Yeah. A picture of your beautiful brain. Exactly. That's exactly what it. I get zagged about this kind of stuff; my brain thinks and systems, I really like the process. So I'm having a great time. But if it ever gets too distracting, we've had people who have been like, I can't even look at that [inaudible] just talk. So right now I've linked food price and income as an impact on food access, which has impact on health disparities. Other impacts are, the lack of grocery stores, which I guess, maybe it could be more impacting food access. Also healthy food choices and access to transportation, as pretty big influences. Any changes you want to make of how those are currently connected? Any other connections that come to mind?

**Participant 216** 31:00

Income is tied to SNAP benefits, income and food pricing are tied to SNAP benefits. I think in some of these convenience stores, they charge a lot one because they don't have economies of scale, so they have to charge a lot. But they also I think, are taking advantage of the fact that people are not spending their money for groceries, and so the prices go even more, because they're getting reimbursed. So they don't-and then that means the families have access to as much food as they could if they saw the same prices that maybe some of the big box stores were. $4 for a gallon of milk versus $2.50 for a gallon of milk. You know, that extra dollar 50 means that maybe we could have had a bag of rice with that too, you know?

**Interviewer** 31:59

Mm hmm. Yeah. So in some ways it-supplemental nutrition-lowers food price, but the prevalence of them also means that convenience stores and smaller stores are raising prices, which raises the price. So it's kind of a pro in one and a con in the other.

**Participant 216** 32:22

Right. So it's less money out of the consumers pocket. But it doesn't, yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 32:30

Yeah, it's less money. Like, that's an interesting concept. I want to zone in on that a little bit, because you made a distinction that I've not heard anyone make thus far, is that how the source of the money is impacting the pricing. So people feel that, you're not spending your money, you're spending somebody else's money, so I'm going to raise the price that I charge you, because it's not your money. But what I also heard you say, so those are two things. One, the source of where the money is coming from is influencing the price, whether it's the consumers money, or somebody else's money, so I'm not quite sure how to get that on the map. But that's the distinction I heard. And then the other thing that you said was that, because that happens, now people are buying-they get less food because the prices are higher, so because the price is higher, they now have less food that they can buy, because of the higher price. I'm sure you got that one on there. Yeah, I got that. I see that one. So thank you for calling that out. Because that's the first I've heard that distinction teased out where the source of the money is affecting the retail prices at the convenience stores. It's elevating the price, because money's coming from somewhere else other than a direct consumer themselves. Right. Yeah. And good. You got that [Interviewer] I was coming for that one too, the economy of scales. Got it. Okay.

**Participant 216** 34:10

Awesome. That's good.

**Interviewer 2** 34:13

That's good. Yeah. Let's see. Okay, let's see, you talked a bit about education, [Participant 216]. Do you see-are there any connections of that to any of the other sectors? Because you made that connection to the policy council in terms of what it can do in terms of educating around healthy choices and things of that nature. I'm just wondering about that. To any of the others, and I'm not, don't-you know-

**Participant 216** 35:08

So education was big around the water crisis because we needed people to understand that you've got to feed children lead mitigating foods, you know, give them some spinach and some broccoli and some fruit and vegetables. Just don't know how well that went over, because, you know, if you tell me that I need to buy better foods for my kids, and you give me benefits to be able to purchase those, but the places that I'd need to go purchase them don't have them, then I'm not going to change my habit. I'm not going to change the way- and I'm sure that's got to be frustrating for parents who you know, they say, if you know better, you do better. But if you know better, and you don't have the means to do better? What does that do to your mental health?

**Interviewer 2** 36:10

Mmm. Impact on mental health. Well, so yeah, you just drew a bunch of connections there in terms of-so what came out of it was attention around lead mitigating foods, but you tie it to the fact that yes, it brought in additional resources and money. But if the places where you shop don't have the foods, you can't buy the foods. And you made a new connection to mental health. Yeah, due to your mental-

**Participant 216** 36:48

Due to your mental health when you know-or even when you're diabetic, and you can't get to a grocery store that has food, and so the only thing you have available to you is is boxed macaroni and cheese, which you know you shouldn't be eating,

**Interviewer 2** 37:04

Right.

**Participant 216** 37:07

How does that affect your mental health? I'm stuck at the office because I'm not doing a ton of driving and I don't remember to bring a decent lunch with me. And I end up at the vending machine when I know I shouldn't be eating that. It's about access. If you don't have access, but you have the knowledge to know that you're supposed to be doing better, how does that affect your mental health?

**Interviewer 2** 37:36

Your mental health? Yeah. Wow, you have a knowledge but you don't have access. So there's a connection between access and knowledge, because you've got it but you don't have access then you can't make the decision. Okay. Okay. Thank you.

**Participant 216** 38:05

And so if you have the knowledge and you have access to a decent grocery store but you don't have the money to pay for those groceries

**Interviewer 2** 38:25

Mhmm, nice, money. Yeah.

**Participant 216** 38:27

So I mean Flint's got a lot of folks living in poverty you know. Maybe you got a car, maybe you can get to Meijer, but you can't buy-you're a middle class family that doesn't have access to SNAP benefits because you just make $12 more than what they said you supposed to make to get access to those benefits. We got folks from low income to middle income who are still food insecure.

**Interviewer 2** 39:02

Yeah, you just drew a whole nother connection here too, because the income is either low income or you're ineligible for the benefits but you still don't have enough income. So I heard low income which is one we hear a lot. But the second that you added was you're not necessarily low income but you have inadequate income to still purchase healthy. Okay, so it's not just low income. It's also adequate income, because you might not be considered low, you might not be considered in poverty, but you still don't have enough money. Okay, so yeah, that's in income.

**Participant 216** 39:53

You don't have enough money or you're working a bunch of jobs and you don't have enough time.

**Interviewer 2** 39:59

Ah, there we go, time.

**Participant 216** 40:03

My kids have access to food, I can go buy the food. But tonight is a council meeting. We could be here two o'clock in the morning and my husband will go to McDonald's and get the Happy Meals. Because we don't have time to prepare the food that we have purchased that is in the refrigerator. How many times have you thrown away-you bought a bag of spinach and threw it away, never opened?

**Interviewer 2** 40:30

Yeah. Unfortunately. Yeah, so time, healthy choice. Leads to waste. Yes. Yeah, gotcha. Yeah. So time is another factor. Multiple jobs, and you tie it back to income and time. [laughter] Yeah. Income and time. Yeah. Mm hmm. Okay. Lots of connections. Lots of connections. [Participant 216], you talked about the power of local government, because that's where you sit. You talked about it in terms of its connection to the the Policy Council itself, and to zoning. Are there any other connections? Were those the only ones as far as what the local government can do?

**Participant 216** 41:55

So there's a difference between what the local government can do and what they're willing to do.

**Interviewer 2** 42:00

Okay, well, okay.

**Participant 216** 42:04

In the case of Flint, government has not been very involved in food systems. And so, because the government-local government, city of Flint-has access to this $94.7 million that the federal government has sent to help mitigate the effects of the pandemic and in communities like ours. Now, we are sort of forced into this space because we are being asked and granting and will soon be granting funding to a lot of the players in the food system, but information is probably lacking in order to be able to make the types of decisions that we need to make.

**Interviewer 2** 43:10

Okay, for decision making. So when you meant your players, you called out earlier, the food co op, which is part of our retail. Are there other players-you mentioned you're going to be granting to players in the food system?

**Participant 216** 43:30

Restaurants.

**Interviewer 2** 43:31

Restaurants? Okay. Oh, yeah, you did answer that. I apologize. You did. You said restaurants and you said at the co op, and you hadn't heard much demand from the producers. Yes. Right. Never that now. Sorry gotta piece it together in my brain. Okay. Okay. Ah, let's see. What other connections here. Anything you want to explore, [Interviewer]? I think, in my mind, I'm just scanning and I'm not seeing anything else on the notes to pick up on. Yes, that's your beautiful brain on paper.

**Interviewer** 44:20

Yeah, I don't think there's anything in particular that I'm like, oh, let's...

**Interviewer 2** 44:29

Okay. Well, let's explore a couple of things here, [Participant 216], of questions for you. So we talked about one of the factors we want to take a look at was the implications of racial equity or inequity on the localized food system. Can you speak to that? What are some of the ways that you see racial equity or inequity impacting participation in the local food system?

**Participant 216** 44:56

Just blow up-blow that up in a really big rectangle and just stamp it right in the middle of there.

**Interviewer 2** 45:05

Wow.

**Participant 216** 45:10

It is tied to every single thing. We don't have access-I don't even know where to start, like. So, Flint water crisis: never would have happened in a predominantly white community. People are recognizing the racial inequalities, and that's why Flint got so much money in funding. It's one of the reasons why Flint receives so much in funding. So people are recognizing that there's a problem and so they're trying to fix it. So increased funding is coming to the area. Gosh, there are so many-COVID-19. There are folks who are-we know that if black and brown folks go to the hospital, they're not going to get the same treatment as other people, so they don't go to the hospital and then they end up dying unnecessarily from COVID-19 because they don't trust the government so they're not getting vaccinated. So I mean that is... Probably could-mental health services. Black folks don't need mental health services we just gonna pray it away. And you know, we don't talk to the pastor, we gonna pray it away, and then that's it. Because we don't think about our-we don't have a lot of counselors and people of color and there's stigma around mental health, especially in the black community. And no, they're not going to go-they're not-sorry, [Interviewer]-but they're not going to talk to some white lady about their problems. And racial inequality in education. Flint has done-so Flint Promise offers tuition free help for folks who graduate from Flint schools and live in the city of Flint, which is fantastic. But the people who are taking advantage of Flint Promise are the ones who were probably already going to college. It's not somebody who never really had any intentions on going, now they just got a free ride to college and they don't have a support system to stay there. So then that means they end up working multiple jobs in low income and can't afford groceries and... The demand for online ordering and curbside pickup, that wasn't happening in black communities. The grocery store that has the most black shoppers is the Kroger on Corunna Road, and to this day, they still don't have curbside pickup, and it's a Kroger. Why would they not have curbside pickup there?

**Interviewer 2** 48:57

Okay, inequity what you just said.

**Participant 216** 49:06

Yep. This food system, the policy council, I am really hopeful that they are inclusive in the creation of this. That way they can make sure that they've got the voices of-the voices on that council reflect the voices in Flint. I don't think that's going to happen. It'd be a bunch of you know-there's going to be me and 15 white men at the table.

**Interviewer 2** 49:39

Mmm. [Participant 216], why do you think that is? When you think about the from an equity or inequity standpoint, why would you envision that it's going to end up being the way you described it?

**Participant 216** 50:07

I don't think it'll be that extreme.

**Interviewer 2** 50:10

Yeah, yeah. I figured that, but what do you think contributes to it still being as you describe inequitable representation?

**Participant 216** 50:19

Fear?

**Interviewer 2** 50:20

Fear.

**Participant 216** 50:21

Yes. You know, fear of having to confront some of the issues that we know, continue racial inequity. If you don't understand it, or you don't know it, then avoid it.

**Interviewer 2** 50:38

Mmm. Okay.

**Participant 216** 50:41

So I'll get called to the table because-I am still struggling with this though, but I am in a position of influence-I am-I can code switch, so I'm not threatening. But the minute I put on my sneakers and my hoodie, and I take off this suit, I won't be getting that phone call.

**Interviewer 2** 51:26

Yes, so some of those things that we see there. When we look at inequity, even in a position of influence, the inequity of code switching as you described it-

**Participant 216** 51:44

Why do I have to be two different people?

**Interviewer 2** 51:47

Right? That in and of itself, is an inequity.

**Participant 216** 51:52

And it's so terrible because we just do it fluently. We just-we walk in the room, we assess the situation, and I can switch from from Selby hood to a University of Michigan graduate in seconds.

**Interviewer 2** 52:09

Mm hm. Okay.

**Participant 216** 52:17

You know what, I did an experiment this weekend. I was a speaker at Tulane University's climate Jedi conference and I wore my big hoop earrings and my bedrock hoodie to see if the folks at that conference would relate to me the same as if I had on a suit. I'm a completely different person in that hoodie and I'm hoop earrings.

**Interviewer 2** 52:58

Mm hmm. Code switching. Mmm. I won't even ask you what happened, that's an over coffee conversation. For sure. Okay.

**Participant 216** 53:19

The short story. I was ignored until I opened my mouth. Wait a minute, she got something say. Maybe we should listen. She just looks like she don't belong here.

**Interviewer 2** 53:29

Ah, look like you don't belong. Wow. Mmm. Unwelcome. Okay. Yeah, we need that concept on the map. Belonging and not belonging. Yes. Racial equity.

**Participant 216** 53:46

And that's the same thing with food access. If I drive out to Fenton because I'm looking for a specialty item, I don't-do I look like I belong there? If I'm dressed like I am today, sure. But if I had on my jeans and my hoodies and my sneakers and my big hoop earrings, do I want to stick around that grocery store and shop because I'm getting the side eye from somebody who doesn't think I belong? My kids running around the grocery store with their fluffy hair? My kids wouldn't be running around the grocery store, but you know.

**Interviewer 2** 54:27

They got fluffy hair though.

**Participant 216** 54:28

They got fluffy heair. Mhmm.

**Interviewer 2** 54:40

I'm going to flip the question. Okay. Are there ways that the food system contributes to racial inequity?

**Participant 216** 54:58

Yes. Marketing of different types of foods just to certain people. So there's sugar in everything, right? If you read the back of any given package you could see I don't think-I don't have any candy or anything in here, but pack of m&ms-one of the regular sized packs of m&ms has about seven teaspoons of sugar in it. We continue to market highly processed foods that unnecessarily have high amounts of sugar in them to communities of color who don't have access to what they should be eating. So let's make it more attractive to give them foods that they shouldn't be eating. Because we know that that's all they have access to so. Doritos and the whole potato chip aisle, the potato chip aisle at some of these grocery stores is larger than the produce section... Or if you go to the grocery store, and really take a look at the tags at the Kroger and what they say is WIC approved and what isn't, the stuff that folks should be buying doesn't really have the WIC approved label on it, because it costs more. Right so if you're using state money we want you to buy the stuff that you probably shouldn't be purchasing because it's cheaper for us. It's not necessarily better for you. Also, until recently, imagery of people of color in the branding of foods has not been particularly flattering. Does that mean that they did the switch from Aunt Jemima to Pearl mining company to try to get around some of that, or they took Uncle Ben off of the rice. Those things unconsciously fed into stereotypes that others had of people of color. Do I have this guy that looks like a butler cooking my meals? So sure, why not, I'll just bring this brand of rice home because it subconsciously helps me feel better about myself.

**Interviewer 2** 59:03

Marketing. Okay. Okay.

**Participant 216** 59:14

I went to-I don't, I think that the nearest Whole Foods is in Troy, which is about 50 miles from my house. And the branding in that store is completely different. The branding, the placement of foods, it's completely different. Then, my Flint Kroger. So I understand Northland food market wanting to have premium services available at the time that they open, but as a decision maker on how we spend funds, do I say no to that? Because he doesn't really need a popcorn machine to open the store, so I know there's a difference, because I've seen premium grocery stores before, and I got somebody here that wants to open a premium grocery store. But do I-what kind of decisions do I make based on that information? Do I deny him $250,000, because that's how much it costs to do all these extra premium services that he wants to do? Because I want to use the money somewhere else?

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:47

Decision Making.

**Participant 216** 1:00:49

Yeah, decision making. Mm hmm.

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:56

I heard you-so the implication... Hmm, just thinking out loud. Okay, we see that question you've already shared quite a bit about the shocks, the Flint water crisis, COVID. Anything you want to add about either of the two of those that you may not have already mentioned?

**Participant 216** 1:01:40

I'm tired of talking about both of them, honestly.

**Interviewer 2** 1:01:44

I hear you, or nothing, they you go, or nothing to add. Are there any other types of shocks or influences that you feel maybe affecting the food system in Flint?

**Participant 216** 1:01:57

Availability of jobs that pay living wages?

**Interviewer 2** 1:02:05

Mm hmm. Okay, Mm hmm. And that's impacting where and how?

**Participant 216** 1:02:17

Oh my gosh, income, access to transportation, mental health, food access. If we had better paying jobs, then more people would be here, and we would have a better tax base in which to support the stuff the city needs.

**Interviewer 2** 1:02:48

Mm hmm.

**Participant 216** 1:02:52

If we-for example, housing. Flint is in desperate need of single family homes. I mean, I work for the city, I would love to move back into city proper, but I can't find a house. So I am contributing to the loss of taxes because I can't find a place inside the city to live. And so I'm living outside of the city, I'm still in the county but I'm outside of the city, and I have a job that makes a living wage. But that also means I'm not shopping inside the city which contributes to the case study that we don't have enough folks shopping, so why are we opening stores? Why are we opening more restaurants?

**Interviewer 2** 1:03:55

Why open more, got it. I heard a lot of connections there. That availability of living wage jobs affecting income connected to transportation, mental health, food access housing, population, you connected it to the population because if there were living wage jobs, you'd have more people and if you have more people, you'd have more tech space and so on. Okay. And the lack of those things means that those things are happening outside the city Okay, got it. Okay. Got them [Interviewer]? Alright, thank you. Okay, if we would ask you this crazy question right here is that as you look at that lovely map, that beautiful picture of your brain, is there anything else that you would add? You said the influence was jobs, anything else you would add? Living wage pay jobs, anything else? That was big.

**Participant 216** 1:05:17

There's so much here.

**Interviewer 2** 1:05:19

Yeah, there's a lot here.

**Interviewer** 1:05:23

I have a few tricks. So if there's anything that you want to look at, specifically, I can show you like, just the ones that it's connected to. If that would be useful.

**Participant 216** 1:05:35

I don't know, this is-I am very much a person that likes things neat and in order. I guess this is causing anxiety right now. I don't know.

**Interviewer 2** 1:05:50

Don't look at it. But do know that that's the inside-that's a segment of your pretty little brain about this conversation. So it's in there, it's in order, it's connected. It's just visually kind of scary. Yeah, as you said.

**Participant 216** 1:06:07

This looks like the floor of my kid's room right now. [laughter]

**Interviewer 2** 1:06:09

[laughter] Okay, well, let's switch it up a little bit. And because there's a lot there, and you know, if something else comes up later you'll be able to reach out to us. But we do have a question as you think about this, [Participant 216]. Whether you look at the image or not, all of this you already have in you, right? When you think about this system, we want to consider leverage points, points of leverage where change might improve the system. [Interviewer] gave you examples when she did the traffic thing, hey, what if we, you know, had more transit, public transit and less people in cars? Less traffic, right. So when you think about this, what kinds of changes-what changes would you make to improve the food system in Flint?

**Participant 216** 1:07:03

To get rid of racial inequities. That would improve so much? Well, yes. But that's not realistic. Increase the population of Flint; if we could get more people here instead of people leaving we can make a case for you know, I really hate saying we can make a case for more grocery stores or more food access in Flint. Why do we have to make a case for something that people should just be able to have? Why do I need to make a case for that? When I look at this, I am seeing that local and state government probably aren't great leverage points and that's unfortunate.

**Interviewer 2** 1:08:44

What's your gut say about what you would change? What you would improve?

**Participant 216** 1:08:55

You know, my response. You really don't know where to start. What I'd like to do is take out all of the stressors in the system. But that's not possible. I take out the water crisis and COVID and the declining population and racial inequity. How much better would be if those weren't even a thing? We have the bones for fabulousness here and we're getting in our own way. But I think the reason that we're getting in our own way is because that's what we've been trained to do. So I think education is probably a good leverage point, but people have gotta want it, it can't be forced on them. If there were available houses, would people move to Flint? If we built a nice shiny new neighborhood on the water, would people move here? I think we got rid of it-this isn't even on here, but blight. Blight has a lot to do with the location of markets and stores and restaurants. Nobody's going to put their nice shiny new restaurant next to a vacant and abandoned structure. Mental health, probably. You know people talk all the time about how resilient Flint is. Why do we have to keep getting knocked down? Why do we have to continue to be resilient? Why can't we just have some good stuff happen to where we don't have to find ways to be resilient or things that happen that don't take a toll on them, the mental health and the morale community. Things like when Clarissa Shields won the gold medal, the entire city was cheering for her. There were bars full of people in the middle of the work day. I remember standing in Blackstone's, they had a big screen TV out, and it was packed and everybody was just happy for her and sharing for her. I heard something-I was listening to a podcast the other day and heard someone say that history is a series of surprises and the future is determined by how we respond to those surprises. COVID-19 was a surprise that pointed out all of the inequities and communities like Flint, but how how did we respond to that surprise? We responded in a way that I think further erodes the trust that communities like Flint have with the government. We didn't know what was going on from-it was today it was you don't need mask, tomorrow you need a mask and then we got masks, and then, well you need better masks. And three different vaccines and this vaccine does this, you know the information was so scattered that it further eroded trust in government Hmm I don't know, I'm just rambling on now.

**Interviewer 2** 1:14:04

No, you're fine. You're fine. No, no, no, no it's fine it's that's exactly how this works [Participant 216]. It's the thoughts that open up ways forward.

**Participant 216** 1:14:17

When we're working, you know, the markets, the stores, the restaurants, the producers, the composters, wholesalers, and resellers. If they looked at things through an equity lens, how would that change the system? We know kids in Flint need more fruits and vegetables. So how do we get those fruits and vegetables to those kids and make it appealing enough that they would choose the fruits and vegetables over Hot Cheetos? We've got a table full of free fruits and vegetables at a school and you got a vending machine full of Hot Cheetos, that vending machine would clear before the free stuff would. They might take the free stuff, but would they actually eat it? I think it's gonna have to be something drastic that happens, it changes the course--there's got to be a disrupter somewhere. That disrupter is going to have to be another one of the surprises that you know,something's gonna have to happen. And so look at what's happening in Russia right now. You know. I had spent some time in Russia, I was an exchange student just after high school, my first year of college. And so they don't have access to McDonald's and Starbucks and Burger King anymore because this iron curtain is falling around Russia. But they don't really need access to that. I mean, I lived in [inaudible] for a month and not once did I pull up to a restaurant with a drive up window. There were no processed foods. If that happened here, people would starve. It's gonna need a big disrupter.

**Interviewer 2** 1:18:00

Disrupter. Okay. Okay. Thank you, [Participant 216].

**Participant 216** 1:18:08

You're welcome.

**Interviewer 2** 1:18:09

Thank you so much. We really appreciate you making the time to do this, we know that. We talked a lot about what can happen in the hall and up in a city hall and having a voice, we're really happy to have that as a part of this conversation. Again, it'll be kept confidential in terms of names and that kind of stuff. We'll use it to inform, you know, the research and and you have a if something else comes up, you think about it, reach out to Carissa, I would gladly, you know, extend the conversation, you know, with you. The last small ask that we have today, as we always do, we always want to invite people to take our evaluation afterwards. And so Chris will drop one in the in the chat, but also we'll send you a link via email. And you can complete those. We in there. There's always a question about if you think there's someone else that we should talk to. we're winding down. But we do have a few available spots still next week. So if there's anyone that you feel strongly about, hey, you really ought to talk to this person. Let us know who they are. So we can reach out and invite them and get them. You know, hear their voice, you know? So that would be awesome. Okay, okay. All right. Well, you have a great day to day and we'll be seeing you again soon. Yes. All right. Do your day. Yeah, you too. All right. Bye bye.