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**SPEAKERS**

Participant 221, Interviewer, Interviewer 2

**Interviewer 2** 00:02

All righty, so thank you for your permission to record so the recorder is now on. And your participation can is voluntary. So you can choose to not answer any of the questions or to even withdraw from the research at any point in time, if you would choose will keep this recording confidential within our research team, we use it to person I primarily use it to make sure that we've captured all the great things that you share with us, and your name. And any identifying information will also not be used in any of the research results that are sent out. However, you might want to be mindful of who's hanging out around you in the room for your own confidential ality around the comments that you would be sharing with us. And your consent is demonstrated by your continued participation in the interview. Do you have any questions before we move forward?

**Participant 221** 01:03

Great IRB language. I love it. No questions. Okay,

**Interviewer 2** 01:08

thank you. All right, great. So we're going to start with first asking you how you would describe your role and or your experience in local food systems. Particularly influence.

**Participant 221** 01:27

So definitely a role as a consumer. As a resident, I purchase food from grocery stores, farmers, markets, restaurants, vendors, etc. So definitely, as a consumer, as a public health professional. I role as somewhat an educator when we're looking at obesity and diabetes rates and trying to educate the broader community about the impacts of not only certain foods, but also the preparation of foods, and how that can contribute to those factors. And then, as a resident who's lived here, all my life, so let me now turn to the water crisis, understanding, lead mitigating foods that could address or assist in the recovery of those who are exposed to me. Um, and so I will say those have been my main roles are for engagement. If you say, with the system, I consider myself a good cook, but I don't cook people. So I would not be. Yeah, so that would be my world.

**Interviewer 2** 02:47

Okay, all right. Great. And that knowledge about being great cookbook could pay off anyway, in some of these questions. Did you have perspective from that? So thanks. Um, what we'll do is we're going to walk through the definitions of the five localized sectors that we're focusing on. And we'll get started with that. So the Okay, so the first sector is production. So all the folks that are growing crops or raising livestock, and anywhere from right outside in your backyard to the larger scale, producers. The second category, we've coupled, processing and packaging together. So that's basically where the produce and items are being washed, packed, or also turned into value added. products, like the lovely tomatoes, people grow being turned into salts, or some other item will be an example. The third sector is our wholesalers and resellers. So those are the folks that are they take the produce and the goods, and then they, they sell those to others, someone other than these other people other than the producers of them. And then we have the retailers, the folks where you go to get who sell the food. And that's where you were talking earlier about restaurants, farmers markets, farm stands, convenience stores, grocery stores, our caterers, the folks that do the inbox, you know, the box meals, as well as any place where where food is being sold to consumers. And then last but not least, not everything is edible, nor do we eat everything. So we're taking a look at the waste category. And that could be whether it's wasted, and it becomes composted, or also, some people were rescuing food and moving it, you know, on through the system. So those are the five sectors that we're going to be focusing on. Do you have any questions or comments about those

**Participant 221** 04:53

Just for clarification, wholesale and resale is different from retail how?

**Interviewer 2** 04:53

In that they receive-the wholesalers and resellers typically are receiving the products from the people who created them, like the growers themselves or the value added processors, and they're reselling them to someone else, like the retail operations. The retailers are selling directly to the consumers.

**Participant 221** 04:53

So that's the middleman. Okay, got it.

**Interviewer 2** 05:21

Yes. Yes. Okay. All right. So based on those sectors, and then based on the experience that you've shared-your roles, where would you say you have the most experience or expertise in these sectors?

**Participant 221** 05:38

Retail-well most engagement, as opposed to expertise? Is that the question? Cause when you say expertise, I'm not an expert in any of these, but-

**Interviewer 2** 05:53

Your engagement, how you see yourself engaged in the food system space-where would you say your most engaged?

**Participant 221** 06:03

In the retail space?

**Interviewer 2** 06:05

Okay. Alright. Great, okay. That'll come in handy as we-

**Participant 221** 06:14

We've done some gardens and stuff. Like, I'm not a gardener, but I have assisted others that do small gardens and we, you know, I've been in programs that have done them, but I don't consider myself engaged like that in that area. But, yeah,

**Interviewer 2** 06:31

Okay. Alright, great. So what we're going to do-because it may have been a little while, almost a year, probably since we did the last session interview with you. So Chris is going to refresh your recall, if you think you need it, um, mental modeling? Do you? Would you like her to do that? Or are you good? I think I'm good to go. Okay, all right, well, let's jump in. So the sectors are here, you see them in green, and you see the expanded one on retail. So we got Market stores and and restaurants. And then we're also going to explore the implications of racial equity and inequity on the system. And as you know, this is a fluid conversation. So you want to just talk with us about how you see connections between these different sectors, you know, in the in the localized food system in Flint, so you can start anywhere you'd like the conversation can, where you see yourself in terms of your engagement, if you want to talk with retail, since that's where you're most engaged, start there, and versus going to do the magic of capturing things. And I'm just going to ask clarification and experience in questions along the way.

**Participant 221** 07:42

Okay, so a connection between racial equity or racial inequity and retailers is cost. And that cost will depend on people socioeconomics, right? So the cost of food, you have social economics that will determine how-f people-if cost is a positive or negative, if you will. And social economics ties directly to race equity. Yeah. Okay. And then the cost of food, that'll determine exactly-determine if that's positive or negative. And then depending on the cost, and then also-and that's the same thing for the markets. Well, retailers are the markets, the stores, and the restaurants. Correct?

**Interviewer 2** 08:47

And you have the chance to go deeper if it's a specific one that you want to tie it to.

**Participant 221** 08:51

Got it, okay. Then also education-specifically food education or education around foods determines what is purchased at the markets or at the retailers, if you will.

**Interviewer 2** 09:18

Okay.

**Interviewer** 09:25

I guess, can you speak a little bit more to what specifically-how it influences food choices? Like, in what direction?

**Participant 221** 09:35

Well so for example, people were introduced to new foods because of the water crisis, and a lot of people didn't necessarily know how to prepare those foods. They didn't know what those foods and so they weren't-they were not a part of their culture. So culture has a big piece to do with this too, that impacts food choice. I was going to say, both culture and education impact food choice, because you can just eat foods that are culturally what you know, and what has been passed down. And you can eat foods that you've been educated, if you will, that maybe was not a part of your culture, but as you grew wiser and older, if you will, you learn to do certain things. So yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 10:30

And you also mentioned that was also-that came into play with the water crisis as well. So there's a link here that you may have new introductions of foods, due to the water crisis, so. Okay. And you're seeing that happening at the retail level? Is that true at all retail levels, or certain places, are you saying? So should that be connected just to the retailers in general?

**Participant 221** 10:54

I would say to the markets and stores as it relates to food choices, yeah. For me, more so my [inaudible] store is not so much restaurants, because they have their set menu and you go there because you already have the dish in mind, that you like. But more so it influences what you buy at the store and the market. Now-it was something I was gonna say before you asked the last one. So, the water crisis was also social economics, like it was driven by social economics, so there should be a connection between that and the water crisis-and in between-and I would also say-link that to government. So, I think government is linked to social economics and is linked to the water crisis, because it was apparent-allegedly a decision based off of social economics that contributed to the water crisis. But then, this government also played out in programs for food-so I don't know what I want to call it-was it government subsidy programs or-I don't know what's the right word for like SNAP and all of those other things that they were doing-but they create those supplemental programs that are then connected to the retailers.

**Interviewer 2** 12:36

Supplemental?

**Participant 221** 12:37

Yeah. But then, I think there's a negative connection between culture from my experience-culture and government, because culturally there's just no trust and so that may have also impacted how well people engage in the supplement programs or not, I'm not quite sure what the data says, but just from logic. I also think because of the water crisis people-how can I word this? I think there was an increased interest to produce your own food for some, so when we think about food production, there was this interest to produce food and that was probably tied to education as well. A lot of that came from the education Can you, [Interviewer], can you blow-can you make the screen a little bit bigger? Or if it gets too big, let me know because I know you have to do it with where you can get the entire model in.

**Interviewer** 14:31

Oh, you want a bigger-zoom out?

**Participant 221** 14:34

Yeah, just like a bigger-?

**Interviewer** 14:44

Wait a second, like you want more space?

**Participant 221** 14:47

Okay, that's okay. Okay, that's fine. I wanted the words bigger that's all.

**Interviewer** 14:53

Ah, yes.

**Participant 221** 15:29

Okay. I will say because-I think the water crisis did bring more consciousness around food processing, people wanted to know what was in the foods more because again, you were told that certain things helped to offset lead. So I don't know if that goes into value added processors or not, but I know that the whole concept of processing like what's in it-people became more interested in it. And again, that stemmed from the education, like the community-wide education around lead mitigating foods, fruits, and vegetables, etc.

**Interviewer 2** 16:41

Would you say that was true also around the production too? People wanted to know about the growing aspects of it too, or just really what was in it?

**Participant 221** 16:53

I would agree, I think it just-it created an inquiry around the entire process more than what was before.

**Interviewer 2** 17:04

Okay.

**Participant 221** 17:11

But then we also had a lot of the distribution centers for water that also gave food away, and that was also a result of the water crisis specifically. But I guess it would be a piece of like, supplemental plus the water crisis, if you will. So you had these distribution places that were also water and food distribution, but they also had information, like community-level information, like they will give away flyers and pamphlets and where other resources and things like that could be. So that created almost these community hubs for resources and information related to food and water and on lead, if you will. And also in many of these sorts of places, they actually had an almost an exhibit there, where you had the health department, you have different tables set up where people actually managed those tables. So they can also get questions-ask questions and sign up for services, or referrals, or those types of things.

**Interviewer 2** 18:24

So it's almost like a fair, right?

**Participant 221** 18:31

Mm hmm. Awesome. For services. I will say-well, I still can't say because by definition, that's not what that is, so when I think of wholesale, I'm thinking like Sam's and Costco, and stuff like that. But that's not what we mean by definition. So I'll remember that.

**Interviewer 2** 19:06

We're talking wholesale-

**Participant 221** 19:07

I'm eating my healthy foods right now, that's what I'm snacking.

**Interviewer 2** 19:13

Thank you for offering [laughter]. So in this case, when we talk wholesale, we're talking more like your Flint Fresh you know, the folks who are-and GCCard, I guess GCCcard or some of the others that are getting food to people who are selling it and distributing it out, almost so like Flint Fresh. So can you talk about retail-go ahead. You were gonna say something.

**Participant 221** 19:48

I'm just-I'm just leaning into-like there are other things I could talk about just looking at the map, but it may not be specific to your question. So when I think about culture and markets, there's not enough cultural foods and markets, like there's things I can say. But I don't know if that's relevant to the question that you're asking.

**Interviewer 2** 20:10

That is relevant, because what we're looking at is, what's important to you, and what your understanding is about a localized system in Flint, in particular, so.

**Participant 221** 20:21

There aqre not enough cultural food in the markets, the stores, or enough variety of cultural restaurants. Like we just got our first Cuban restaurant here, literally just got one. But as it relates to good Jamaican restaurants, or, you know, Ethiopian or other African, like, we don't have those here. So we lacked that culture, we lack it in the markets, the stores, and the restaurants-literally in retail, period. It's just not. And then sometimes we have to drive all the way down to Detroit to get some-I go to a couple of the big Asian markets in Detroit to get food, certain things-get my rice noodles and things that I really like. And that also is a socioeconomic factor, that having to drive that far to get food and then if you don't have a car, you just don't get to get it, you know? [Participant 221], with all your work around equity and racial equity? Cause you've talked a little bit-we touched on that a little bit. When you think about the food system itself, how would you-are there areas that you would talk about or you could share with us in terms of racial equity or inequity in the food system? You've made a couple of connections, can you say more about that? Well, it's probably a lack of minority wholesalers and resellers. It's probably a lack of minority producers. I mean, I can speak to the national trends when we think about black farmers or farmers of color. I mean, there's some national trends that I can go into. I'm not an expert in it, but I've read the literature quite often, and when we think about that, there is a racial inequity when it comes to people of color benefiting from state and government and federal bills that strengthen and encourage that type of work. And we know that black farmers and other farmers of color tend to not benefit from the legislation-oftentimes don't get anything from the legislation and predominantly white farmers do. And that could create that could-I'm sorry-that could be an important factor in less African Americans wanting to choose that as a lifestyle or an occupation. Yeah, then I'm sure there's inequity just because I'm American, I can just foresee there are inequities in how certain wholesalers choose which farms they get their products to. I'm sure there's some good old boy antics, and some handshaking behind closed doors, where it's probably not going to be farms of color more so than it will be farms. I mean, that's just kind of the trend of this country, and so I'm sure there are some things at play that is [inaudible].

**Interviewer 2** 25:21

So the selection of suppliers. So you talked about the connection between wholesalers and the farmers that they select the suppliers.

**Participant 221** 25:49

And what I do know about the food system in any urban city is that there is heavier marketing and higher concentration of unhealthy fast food outlets, and that goes into access as well as economics.

**Interviewer 2** 26:29

It's interesting too that you bring the marketing piece into it, because a lot of times people don't talk about that that much.

**Participant 221** 26:36

Oh, everything is marketing. Everything is marketing. It's subliminal messaging number one. And we saw that-we see that in trends with alcohol and tobacco marketing, when we did a photo voice with our youth here in Flint, we took them to local corner stores here, and when we took them out to Fenton and to Grand Blanc to do the same thing, they noticed that there was way less-like significantly less posters. Like in the urban community, from the base of the ground of outside the store all the way up is nothing but-you can't even see the wall. It's all Newport and co 45 and all of that. The marketing was eye level to a little toddler who's holding their parents hands, they didn't see that out in the outskirts of the city. And when they did see it, the marketing was elevated out of the eyesight of little kids, like you would have to look up to find it. They noticed the different things around saturation in marketing, and not only that, but the placement of the marketing. So yeah, marketing is very important.

**Interviewer 2** 27:47

Absolutely. Absolutely. [Participant 221], when you-?

**Participant 221** 27:54

I want to stop right here, I want to stop right here because my system is clean and I can follow it, but if we go anymore it's gonna be a mess. Oh, stop [laughter]. Oh, you know what's gonna happen.

**Interviewer 2** 28:06

Yeah, yeah. Well, now's the time when you probably don't want to look, you just want to know that [Interviewer]'s got it. So when you when you think about it, you mentioned some barriers. Are there any other racialized barriers that you think exist for participation in the food system itself? You know, you talked about a few things that happen inside, like the wholesaler choices of suppliers. Are there other factors that you feel serve as barriers to participation? You talked about legislation a little bit, and people don't benefit from that. Are there other barriers?

**Participant 221** 28:47

Well it's the legislation, it's the policies, it's the bias treatment. It's the social economics I think is going to be the biggest one, the biggest barrier, and-

**Interviewer 2** 29:06

Are there things particular to social economics, as far as the barriers go? Is there something explicit there that-?

**Participant 221** 29:19

Well, it's just the trend that most communities of color have lower socio economics and that's historical. That's dealing with the lack of generational wealth that goes all the way back to slavery, that goes back to racial bias and employment, that goes back to, I mean, so many things.

**Interviewer 2** 29:44

Okay, income and employment. Okay. Let me ask this question in a different way for you. Are there ways-do you think there are ways that the food system contributes to racial inequity?

**Participant 221** 30:09

And so I would also connect racial inequity to the lack of generation of wealth, too, [Interviewer]. Like, that's the cause of it, it's racial inequity, and that stems from racism. The word racism is not necessarily just racial inequity. Racism-racial inequity is a product of racism.

**Interviewer 2** 30:34

Mm hmm.

**Participant 221** 30:37

And that's systemic and structural, so.

**Interviewer 2** 30:50

Okay. Um, okay. Well-

**Participant 221** 31:03

Okay, so do this-I want you to put racism on there, and I want it to lead into racial inequity, and I want it to also feed into government. Because historically, we still are dealing with the outcomes of racism being embedded in government, which leads to those biases in policies, so government as well as in policies and equitable bias policies. Yeah. Because to me, racism is-it's nuanced and different than racial inequity. Racial inequity-the root cause of it is racism. And racism has also impacted the lack of generational wealth, so when we think about redlining, and not being able to own homes, and we think about all the historical things that have impacted generational wealth, so yeah. That to me, I mean, if we're going to get to root causes, that's root causes. And all of this other stuff really stems from that one domino falling, which is racism. Now all these other dominos are-I don't have a lot of information around compost. That's something I'm learning.

**Interviewer 2** 32:37

Okay. Mhm.

**Participant 221** 32:38

So, I don't really have a lot of-

**Interviewer 2** 32:43

Okay. Alright. When you-you mentioned the water crisis. Are there other connections you want to make about the impact that the water crisis had on the food system in Flint? We've got-you've got some here. Just wondering if there any others before we-there's a couple of other questions I want to ask you.

**Participant 221** 33:16

Well I know-it drained? Well, I don't know-it put a strain on the system. But I got to figure out how I want to word that, because what I mean by that is I think people were less likely to eat out. People were more skeptical about if the foods like at restaurants, did they use Flint water? Like people were... People didn't feel safe, engaging with the food system. During the water crisis, more-I mean, they were-they didn't feel safe doing it at home. I think they felt like they had a better chance, if they could control-like they knew they were bringing in gallons of water and cooking with it or whatever. So I think it just made people more skeptical and probably more uneasy. But I know it hurt the restaurants.

**Interviewer 2** 34:23

Mm hm.

**Participant 221** 34:25

They weren't making as much money and hurt the retailer, well maybe not so much the retailer, but the restaurants for sure. In fact, I think water sales probably went up even though we have free water. Water sales probably went up so for retail, it probably helped them. But for restaurants, it probably hurt them. I mean, people have to literally put on a sign, we don't use Flint here, or something like that, you know, people were actually putting those signs up.

**Interviewer 2** 35:07

And then there was the shock that went around the globe: COVID. Your perspectives on its impact on the system in Flint?

**Participant 221** 35:21

Oh, yeah, definitely put a real bad hurt on the retail, and when I say retail, I mean the restaurants. I think it-I want to say it impacted the stores, but I'm not quite sure because people still went grocery shopping. The only things that were limited was sanitizers and stuff like that, but other than that, people went to stores. I think they were-it may have slowed down, some of the-because I remember at one point in time, you only could have so many people in the store. So it may have slowed down, purchasing food slower. COVID may have also impacted the distribution of food, with the truck drivers, and all of that.

**Interviewer 2** 36:33

Okay. Any other major influences you think that have impacted local food in Flint? You talked about legislation, you've talked about the crisis, you know, the water and COVID, you've talked about government. Is there anything else that you feel is had any major influences or impacts on the system?

**Participant 221** 37:14

None that I can think of at this time.

**Interviewer 2** 37:17

Okay. Alright. Let's talk a little bit about change. Yeah, when you look at this-yeah let's talk about change. So when you look at at this, your representation of understanding, when we look for leverage or leverage points or opportunities for change in the food system, hat would you see as-or ideas that you have about ways to change the food system?

**Participant 221** 37:58

Well, I'll say this: there are some key nodes on this map, that if we could do some type of intervention, we can create change. One, of course will be dealing with racism and racial inequity. If we could also impact social economics and education, I think some of the other things will correct itself as we go on, if we create sustainable change in those areas. Yeah, I think those are the core ones.

**Interviewer 2** 39:07

Any thoughts? Any specifics around the kinds of change you would think in those notes? So if you're-if we're thinking about some particular kinds of elements that would happen or ways to facilitate?

**Participant 221** 39:22

So we would have to center-we would have to center racial inequity into racial equity-whatever that change looks like, right? For racism, we would have to center anti-racism work or anti racism theologies and pathologies, and and those types of things, and that should feed into government, that should feed into the policies, and those types of things. We need-in urban communities-a greater understanding of the food system. That needs to be its own education area, if you will. You know, like my great grandmother used to say, on my dad's side, food is your first medicine. Like that's the first medicine beyond what the doctors prescribe, you know, that's your medicine. And I think if it's not looked at like that.

**Interviewer 2** 40:28

Mm hmm.

**Participant 221** 40:34

Again, if we deal with racism and racial equity, that should impact socioeconomics. Let's see. Oh, the marketing piece, the marketing of unhealthy foods and the saturation of fast foods, we need interventions around that. We need policies or requirements. I mean, there are comparisons with the United States and other countries like a large fry in England is the equivalent of a medium fry in the United States, right? Like we overindulge in everything in this country. So even when we think about size and portions, those [inaudible], some type of zoning or policies around that and then how those foods are marketed. Even zoning around where outlets are. There used to be-they used to say rather that-like a liquor store could not be in so many feet or miles to elementary school or something. There used to be some similar types of zones around fast foods. If there are two or three fast foods here on this street, they can't-you can't-I don't know. There should be some type of zoning policies around the location of fast foods

**Interviewer 2** 42:22

Okay. Good. You got the one. What other changes might you consider?

**Participant 221** 42:40

I'm thinking. Well, there needs to be more cultural foods offered in these retail stores. And I think in that education, culture needs to be part of that general food education, it can't just be a westernized approach to what a westernized lens of what healthy eating is, because what may work in the western world may not be true in Africa and Asia, and other places. And so there has to be some cultural education as well because if not, you're just forcing people to eat one culture's thing, and that just doesn't work. We definitely need to have some policy changed around the farmers and the wholesalers, and especially for farmers of color. There needs to be some some equity lenses or some equity influenced bills that, you know, equity is giving the greatest need to those who need it the most, and there needs to be some equity-centered intervention in those areas. Oh, I do see something I left out, so we got health right there. So next to health would be, disease, illness, and death. So they could all be one: disease, illness or death. So if you don't eat healthy, not only is your health impacted, but it can lead to the onset of disease, illness, or death, and so I think that that's the end goal that we're trying to avoid. Because I'm thinking about diabetes and heart disease and all these things-chronic illnesses that come from a really bad diet over time. And we do know, that-[Interviewer], you could actually draw a line also from racism and racial inequity to disease, illness, and death, because we have the data that supports that across health indicators, be it diabetes, be it stroke, be it all of these things, that poor diet and those things contribute to so. These disparities are definitely something that we've seen over time.

**Interviewer 2** 46:31

Okay, and we've got that direct connection to the food choices. Got it.

**Participant 221** 46:34

Yep.

**Interviewer 2** 46:36

So between the death, illness-got it? Okay. I see that.

**Participant 221** 46:48

Okay. That's it for me, though.

**Interviewer 2** 46:56

We done tapped your brain out [laughter], well thank you so much. That's exactly what we wanted to do here today. So as always, [Participant 221], it's good.e deeply appreciate you know, you're sharing your experience

**Participant 221** 47:10

to Congress.

**Interviewer 2** 47:13

For today, nice little snack bowl there, you got

**Participant 221** 47:17

been doing this since COVID. I told you, because if not, this will be Doritos. And Lay's potato chip. And I just like if I put this in front of me, and have it at arm's reach, I'm less likely to go get a Twinkie or tea.

**Interviewer 2** 47:31

Right? We're so happy that you are shifting in a positive direction because the COVID stick with COVID.

**Participant 221** 47:41

I don't know hold your weight. I don't want to call it.

**Interviewer 2** 47:44

There you go. There you go. All right. Well, thanks a whole lot. Um, you, we always end these with an opportunity to do the evaluation. So Carissa put the link in, but she will also send it to you. If you have any other insights, you know, things you want to share with us, you know, how to get a hold of both of us.

**Participant 221** 48:03

And the evaluation of this session?

**Interviewer 2** 48:07

Yes, of this session. Yes, yes. Yeah. And so we are actually closing out the process. So there's a questionnaire that talks about it, you know, other people, but actually, as of this week, we're pretty much wrapping it up. There's one or two people that we're still hoping to get, like, you know, Pastor Flynn with the Co Op, but other than that, we're pretty much we're pretty much where we need to where we need to be on this round of interviews, but if you have thoughts afterwards, reach out, or if there is somebody you feel like man, you know, you really got to talk to this person, but we may not have let us know, like, ASAP. And we'll reach out. Any, any party thoughts?

**Participant 221** 48:55

Well, I do have a question. So I'm looking at the second question on the survey, I would consider myself to be a producer, a processor packager, wholesaler, reseller retailer compositor composter, I'm sorry none of the above but have experienced I guess I would just say none of the above have experienced because is the consumer is not on here at all.

**Interviewer 2** 49:15

Right we are We soon everybody's eating.

**Participant 221** 49:21

You would hope okay.

**Interviewer 2** 49:25

Alright, start. Thank you. So take good care. Talk to you later. Bye bye.