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Towards Food Justice: Strategies of Community Engagement for Local Food Nonprofits

Garrett Stern

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by

Garrett Stern

University of Richmond

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Advisors: Dr. Andrew Schoeneman & Dr. Kelly Merrill

Abstract

Over the past two decades there had been a significant shift in American values around food and health. The increase of diet-related illness and the growing awareness of the local food movement have helped to shape the discourse on healthy, nutritious, sustainably grown food. Food justice advocates and organization have inserted social justice principals of equity and self-determination into the dialogue of health and food. There has been a similar shift in the nonprofit sector in regard to local food programing, with local food nonprofits advocating for equity and inclusion in nonprofit food programing. Community engagement is key to putting the principals equity and inclusion into practice for local food nonprofits. It is one of the fundamental ways nonprofit organizations build relationships and increase impact with their client communities. Despite its importance to local food nonprofit success, there is little research on applied community engagement strategies used by local food nonprofits. This study helps address this gap in the research by collecting and analyzing data from semi-structured interviews of local food nonprofit leaders in Virginia on how they are using community engagement to achieve health and nutrition goals while also building on food justice principals of self-determination and equity with their client communities, specifically African-American communities in central and southwest Virginia. This study reports the findings, implications, and recommendations gained from a qualitative analysis of the interview data through categorizing the various community engagement strategies used by local food non-profits along a continuum of equity building practices adapted from Bowen et al.'s continuum of community engagement.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Over the past two decades there had been a significant shift in American values around health and diet. The food culture of America has seen renewed focus on healthy, nutritious food, especially among the middle and upper class. Many restaurant chains have altered their menus to include healthy options, such as McDonalds' salad options or Subway's Fresh Fit menu. Food manufactures have shifted to include health-related accolades on their advertisements, such as "all natural", "heart healthy", and "high in antioxidants". There are many factors that weigh into increased awareness of consumer food choices, but one of the biggest is the shift in the public understanding of diet-related illnesses, which have become the leading cause of death in Americans over the past decade (Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2018).

There has been a similar shift in the nonprofit sector in regard to food programs. Many new food programs now focus on long-term community changes, such as nutritional education and access to healthy food options, rather than simply providing food to the hungry. The expanded focus on health and nutrition, rather than focusing solely on hunger alleviation, is a significant change in strategy from the food bank model that is familiar to most Americans. The change in nonprofit program strategy is emblematic of a larger shift in the sector towards outcome and accountability metrics in the nonprofit sector and a paradigm shift from a charity-minded sector to an empowerment-minded sector. The growing subsector of food justice is a result of the paradigm shift from needs-based intervention to equity-based intervention. Food justice seeks to address inequities that occur within the food system that support the perpetuation of societal in-equity within the United States as a whole (Horst, McClintlock, and Hoey, 2017). Food justice supporters are urging nonprofits to actively engage their communities with their

program service delivery, specifically in regards to health, nutrition, and food. Organizations that are supporting long-term food related changes will ideally be actively engaged and culturally competent with their clients. Long-term structural changes can only be meaningfully accomplished if there are organizational strategies for community engagement. While research has been done on community engagement and food justice separately, there is little research on what specific strategies local food nonprofits are using to engage their clients in program creation and delivery. The aim of this research project is to shed light on effective community engagement strategies used by nonprofits working on food related issues. This project reports the findings and implications that emerged from a qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews.

Context

Due to the nature of their funding, nonprofits are subject to meeting the demands of the ever-developing narratives around the social issues that are considered most pressing at any given time. These narratives can be informed by several factors, such as new scientific research or news coverage of certain issues. Nonprofit organizations have a long history of addressing hunger in the US. Soup kitchens, food banks, and community meal programs might be the most familiar faces of the nonprofit sector to people in the US. Nonprofits are also expected to inform, respond to, and reflect the changes in ways the US population views particular social issues. Emerging trends in food and hunger have been informed by recent popular discourse that highlights issues within US food systems in terms of food production and equity within the food system and within the US society at large. The following subsections will give context to trends that are informing the work of food and health related nonprofits.

Emergence of the Local Food Movement. Local food has become part of the national discourse in America over the last two decades. The discourse of local food has been driven by

the publication of national bestselling books like the *Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan and feature length documentaries like *Food, Inc.* Exposure on popular media has begun to shape the discourse of how Americans interact with their food. It is difficult to enter a grocery store in the US and not see items labeled as all natural, organic, or healthy. This trend is largely due to the increasing awareness of food production in everyday life and popular media portrayals of food activists (Perrett & Jackson, 2014). The local food movement is tied directly to a new focus on health and wellness in the American home.

Health is trending. In their article, *Champions of the Movement or Fair-weather Heroes? Individualization and the (A)politics of Local Food,* Julianne Busa and Rebecca Garder (2014) discuss how food trends continue to shift amongst a variety of "alternative" foods, such as organic, local, and sustainable. They attempt to demonstrate how Americans, in the past several decades, have been drawn to trending buzzwords that promise to increase their overall health. The health food trend is a reflection of how food providers, wanting to appeal to health-conscious customers have led the expansion of the alternative food market beyond counter culture and into the sphere of the upper and middle-class masses. (Busa and Garder, 2014). The dialogue surrounding local food often focuses on the environmental agriculture practices, the humane treatment of animals, or the potential impacts of food choices on health. Well-educated consumers have been the driving factor for expansion of alternative food options, but the discourse, intentionally or not, often leaves out the issues that affect less affluent citizens. The local food movement puts a strong focus on agricultural systems and their environmental impact but may often ignore broader social issues that that shape human interactions with the food system. Food justice has emerged as a critical companion of the local food movement, expanding

the discussion of sustainable food systems include racial and socio-economic issues that perpetuate injustice.

Food Justice Movement. While much of mainstream culture in the US has become aware of local food through a health or environmental lens, food justice advocates and non-profit organizations recognize the local food movement as an opportunity to further engage marginalized communities, policy makers, and community leaders in dialogue on equality, access, and self-determination (Clendenning, Dressler, and Richards 2015). Food justice is grounded in the understanding of historical factors of segregation, racism, and economic discrimination that have disadvantaged communities of color. Food Justice seeks address inequality and marginalization through structural changes in the food system. More tactically, food justice advocates seek to empower communities by promoting democratic habits and norms and to develop alternative systems to deliver nutritious food to communities that lack access to nutrient dense food (McIvor and Hale, 2015).

Many food justice advocates and nonprofits are using urban agriculture projects, such as the creation of community gardens or small urban farms, as a way to empower communities. Advocates of food justice programs emphasize urban agriculture's civic potential and see production and consumption of local food as a part of the broader issues surrounding the community's health (McIvor and Hale, 2015). *Urban agriculture* can be defined as "the growing, processing and distribution of food through intensive plant cultivation and animal husbandry in and around cities (McIvor and Hale, 2015)." The past decade has seen a surge of activity and interest in urban agriculture in cities of the US. Many community groups and nonprofit organizations are increasing support for projects to expand food production and nutrition education through urban agriculture (Cohen and Reynolds 2014). Increasing evidence suggests

that "urban community gardens and farms help overcome social, health, and environmental justice challenges (Bellows et al 2004)." Urban community gardens empower people by facilitating connection through shared work to build community and improve neighborhoods. Research has shown a correlation between the presence of gardens or farms in inner-city neighborhoods and decreases in crime, trash dumping, juvenile delinquency, fires, violent deaths, and mental illness (Bellows et al 2004). The presence of gardens creates spaces for public socializing and can help people connect across multiple generations, racial groups, and socioeconomic classes (Bellows et al 2004). Food justice has been gaining a louder voice in the American public discourse and identified as one of the fastest growing facets of the local food movement (Clendenning et al., 2015).

Problem

Nonprofits and government agencies have been documenting the rise of diet-related diseases in the US population as a matter public health concern. Diet related illnesses and deaths have been on the rise across the developed world, but the US is particularly notable for its obesity rates and the prevalence of food deserts in low income communities. Nonprofits and government agencies are working to find solutions to what has become a public health crisis in the US.

Impact of Diet Related Disease. It is ironic that the growth of health-related food and diet trends is corollary to the increase in diet-related illness in America. The prevalence of fast food and processed food in American diets has increased dramatically over the past several decades and has been linked to an increase in chronic and dietary diseases. America is in the midst of a dietary disease crisis. The typical American diet contributes to many of the leading causes of death in the US and increases the risk of numerous diseases (Center for Science in the

Public Interest, 2018). The magnitude of America's diet-related disease problem is evident in the significant increase in obesity of the US population. Over the past 30 years, obesity rates in the US have doubled in adults and tripled in children (Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2018). The CDC recently reported that nearly 40% of adults and 19% of all youth are obese (Hales, Carroll, Fryar, and Ogden, 2017). An additional 30% of adults are considered overweight (Hales et al., 2017). This means that almost 70% of adults in the US are either overweight or obese, leading to a myriad of public health problems. Unhealthy eating habits lead to approximately 678,000 deaths each year in the US due to nutrition- and obesity-related diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, and type 2 diabetes (Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2018). These diseases are chronic and once acquired will affect the health and well-being of an individual for the rest of their life. Research shows that inner city populations, particularly low-income communities of color have higher rates of diet-related health problems because of the presence of barriers such as affordability, transportation, and time restrictions that prevent easy access to these foods (Block, Chavés, Allen, and Ramirez, 2012).

Food Insecurity and Food Deserts. Low-income families living in urban and rural communities have been disproportionately affected by the loss of small farms, small businesses, and the consolidation of the food retail industry. Less profitable supermarkets, usually located in marginalized communities, have closed and residents no longer have easy access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food (Pirog et al. ,2014). Lack of access has been coined *food insecurity* by researchers and defined as "the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate, safe food, or a person's inability to acquire personally acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (Mohan, Gopalakrishnan, and Mizzi, 2013)." The geographic areas where food insecurity occurs are commonly called *food deserts*(Richmond Food Policy Task Force 2013). The majority of

food deserts occur in urban areas (Block, Chavés, Allen and Ramirez 2012). Food deserts occur primarily in minority communities. According to Pirog et al, 32% African American and 23% or Native American and Alaskan households are food insecure compared to 15% of all US households (Pirog et al, 2014). Food insecurity is correlated with increased risk of diet related chronic disease and premature death. "Research shows that inner city populations, particularly low-income areas heavily populated by persons of color have higher rates of diet-related health problems because of the higher cost of securing a more nutritious diet (Pirog et al., 2014)." African Americans have the highest age-adjusted rates of obesity at 49.5%, compared to 34.5% of non-Hispanic whites. Significant research has been conducted that underscores the glaring inequality in access to nutritious and healthy food between socio-economic classes (Block et al. 2012) (Bellows, Brown and Smit 2004) (Pirog et al 2014).

Role of Nonprofits

New entries into the nonprofit food field have started to take the form of urban focused food organizations whose goal is to alleviate food deserts, especially in communities of color (Block et al 2012). These organizations have developed specifically around urban community gardening, urban agriculture, or farmers markets and they often combine food insecurity, environmental and community development goals (Block et al 2012). Many projects are focused on expanding food access by bringing growing areas or healthy food to the neighborhoods they serve. The food justice mindset is starting to permeate goals of other already established nonprofits, especially in the sub-sector of healthcare. Nonprofit healthcare providers are now helping support farmers markets and pop-up produce stands that serve low-income communities. An article by the Roanoke Times in August 2013 shows that Carillion, a nonprofit healthcare provider in Roanoke, Virginia, has been funding matching grants to double the amount of SNAP

dollars that low income residents can use at pop-up markets, helping to subsidize the cost of nutritious foods for these communities.

While food justice is a new realm for nonprofits to be working in, the nonprofit sector's role in delivering food to the impoverished is older than the sector itself. Community food banks and food pantries are familiar staples on the nonprofit world and still play a large role in helping to feed those who cannot afford food (Steinberg and Powell 2006). The food justice movement has challenged this model of food distribution with more equitable relationships between the organization providing resources and the people receiving help, while seeking to address the larger social constructs from where these disparities originate. While many organizations are now working towards food justice, many of these organizations are still white-led and largely staffed by white employees, creating an obvious racial and cultural divide between the nonprofit and the client community. In some cases, this has led to feelings of mistrust and resentment between the organizations and the communities that they are attempting to serve (Tarng, 2015).

Equity and Community Engagement

The shift from a charity-minded to an equity-minded framework has been long coming to the nonprofit sector. Community engagement, or the pattern of activities implemented by organizations to work collaboratively with the communities they serve, is becoming a common practice to understand and address social issues. As the emphasis on accountability and outcomes has increased with funders and watchdog organizations, nonprofits have had to alter their tried and true models of service delivery to meet the changing demands. It is becoming increasingly difficult for organizations that focus predominantly on treating the symptoms of social issues, such as providing food to the hungry, to justify their worth to the donor community. The symptomatic model of homeless shelters, food banks, and soup kitchens serve an immediate

need of their clients but organizations are increasingly being called to address the systemic

problems such as inequality that are at the root of hunger and food insecurity. The funding

environment for nonprofits has shifted to promote more holistic approaches to social problems.

Food justice advocates and their nonprofit allies are pushing the paradigm even further. Not only

do they seek to address the systemic issues that cause social problems, but they are calling on

nonprofits to be catalysts for community empowerment in addition to providing much needed

community services. The justice-minded paradigm is still relatively new to the nonprofit lexicon,

but can be seen in the emergence of the environmental justice and food justice movements in the

sector.

Research Objectives

The guiding question of this study is: What community engagement strategies are being

used by nonprofits working on local food issues and how do they build equity between

nonprofits and community? The main objective of this study is to better understand what types of

community engagement strategies are being used by nonprofits working on local food issues and

analyze how they align with the goals of the food justice movement. There is currently a gap in

research on community engagement strategies of local food nonprofits. There are numerous

theoretical critiques on the local food movement and some quantitative analysis on community

engagement strategies but there is little qualitative research linking the two topics. This research

study is designed to provide practical insights into the success and challenges of nonprofit

practitioners working within local food issues. The study is a qualitative analysis of semi-

structured interviews of five nonprofit leaders of local food initiatives. Three interviewer

organizations are involved in urban agriculture projects, one organization is a nonprofit

healthcare system working on food-access projects through its community health programs, and

the other is a child health and nutrition nonprofit that operates community learning gardens and

nutritional education lessons in partnership with public schools. The findings of this study have

implications for several stakeholder groups within the nonprofit sector and public sector and

inform the broader discourse around food justice and community engagement. This project will

contribute to the understanding of community engagement strategies and suggest best practices

for implementing nonprofit local food programs.

Overview

Chapter Two presents a review of the current literature. Topics include community

engagement, food justice theory, nonprofit approaches to local food, and challenges of

paternalism in nonprofit work. Chapter Three presents the methods used for this project and the

findings of the study. The principal investigator conducted five semi-structured interviews with

individuals working in various approaches to local food. The interviewees were nonprofit leaders

in local food, located in Virginia. Chapter Three concludes with the relevant findings gathered

from the interviews. Chapter Four discusses the implications of the research for practitioners,

funders, policy makers, and researchers.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This chapter begins with an investigation into the current literature on community engagement and its role in nonprofit local food projects. The researcher will then examine the literature on food justice and its critiques on the local food movement. This chapter will also review the nonprofit approaches to local food and the challenges faced by nonprofits attempting local food work.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is a key component of effective nonprofit programming. It generates social capital, Salamon discusses the importance of generating social capital between a nonprofit and their client base (Salamon 2012). Without social capital built on trust and mutual respect, a nonprofit organization will have a hard time successfully executing its mission (Sweeney et al., 2015). By engaging with the community, a nonprofit organization can understand the needs, desires, and aspirations of the population they are working with. Inviting clients to be a part of the decision-making process for nonprofits can restore agency and create possibilities for collaboration and community ownership of a particular intervention supported by the nonprofit.

Community engagement can mean different things to different people and organizations. Some consider it an evolving collaboration of research towards specific goals between an organization and the client population (Tanaka and Mooney 2010). For others, it means promoting and supporting local community leaders to take the reins of community change (Sweeney et al., 2015). It can also mean the establishment of ongoing dialogue between nonprofits and the community (Meenar, 2015). Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi, and Herremans (2010) provide the most comprehensive definition of community engagement, calling it "the

pattern of activities implemented by firms to work collaboratively with and through groups of people to address issues affecting the social well-being of those people (p.297)." Despite the varying specific types of community engagement between researchers, the common thread in the research literature is that community engagement consists of the tactics and strategies that nonprofits use to build shared trust and create a shared vision of success with their client community. The goal of community engagement is to enable transformational change that meets both the mission of the nonprofit and the expressed desires of the community.

  Theoretical Framework. Bowen, Neweham-Kahindi, and Herresmans (2010) conducted systematic review of over 200 academic and practitioner knowledge sources to create a typological continuum of community engagement strategies (Appendix B). The framework helps to make sense of the fragmented research of community engagement that has been primarily based on disciplinary anecdote and thematic studies. Though written primarily from a corporate social responsibility stand point, the findings of the study are easily transferable to the nonprofit sector. The continuum features three categories of community engagement strategies distinguished by the intensity of the engagement. The three categories, in order of increasing intensity of engagement, are transactional strategies, transitional strategies, and transformational strategies. Transactional strategies are identified by one-way communication channels and nonprofit control of the engagement and decision-making processes. Transactional strategies build awareness but do not necessarily build relationships, which are a key component to impactful community engagement. Transactional strategies are rooted in the idea of "giving back" and place agency firmly in the hands of the nonprofit and its volunteers (Bowen et al. 2010). Transitional strategies are characterized by "two-way communication, consultation, and collaboration." They aim to create a dialogue with community partners either through the

creation of feedback loops or the incorporation of community sourced data. At the transitional

stage, dialogue and collaboration between nonprofits and community partners will be issue

focused and the nonprofit remains largely in control of engagement and decision-making

processes (Bowen et al., 2010). Transformational strategies "move beyond symbolic engagement

activities" and aim to build a deep, long-term, co-equal partnership with community partners.

Transformational strategies rely on authentic dialogue between nonprofit and community

partners rooted in a desire for shared sense making and joint problem solving of pressing

community issues (Bowen et al., 2010). In transformational community engagement, community

partners take a leadership role in framing problems and developing interventions. Control over

the engagement and decision-making processes is shared by the nonprofit and community

partners (Bowen et al., 2010).

        As we will explore later, organizations involved in the local food movement will need to

find ways to build bridges of understanding between the nonprofit sector and community

partners. Changing expectations of programmatic outcomes and community involvement in

nonprofit programing, are likely to encourage local food nonprofits to move from transactional to

transformational strategies. By understanding the key elements of each type of community

engagement, nonprofits will be able to better assess their community engagement practices and

move their practices towards more transformational methods of engagement.

        Importance of Community Engagement in Local Food Projects. Within nonprofit

local food projects, community engagement is particularly important. The historical legacy of

farming in the US, especially in the South, is full of racial trauma for African-Americans. From

slavery to share cropping to discriminatory practices that created huge barriers to land

ownership, African-Americans in particular have been systematically abused by the US

agricultural system (Sweeney et al., 2015). This is true to a lesser degree for most minority populations in the US as well. Nonprofits working in local food often focus their efforts on engaging marginalized communities in food access, food production, and nutritional education. Given the racial trauma agricultural has imposed on the African-American community, nonprofits need to operate with awareness of this trauma if they are to be effective agents of change (Sweeney et al., 2015). Nonprofits will likely find more success if they commit to community engagement in ways that allow self-determination, generate trust, and enable community ownership of local food projects. Identifying and documenting community engagement strategies is important for understanding how organizations are viewing the role as agents of change. Additionally, understanding nonprofit community engagement strategies for local food projects provides a great opportunity for analyzing the different motivations for food systems change between different organizations.

Food Justice

Over the past several decades, the local food movement has started to push for change with in the US food system. The local food movement has largely focused on the power of consumers voting with their dollar to support local farmers and push for more sustainable systems of agriculture. The movement largely supports the adoption of organic techniques for food crops and the fair and humane treatment of animals raised for consumption. Overall, the largest discourses of the movement have largely focused on production of food as a consumptive product. The conditions of human workers in agriculture and inability of people to "vote with their dollars" due to economic, cultural, or geographic constraints seem to be less important or less understood to the vast majority of self-proclaimed foodies. Food justice has emerged as a constructive critique on the local food movement's paucity of perspectives from communities of

color and the muted discourse of the local food movement on the underlying economic and institutional systems within the food system that perpetuate socio-economic inequity.

Definition of Food Justice. Food justice as a concept grew out of the environmental justice movement and takes many of its key concepts from environmental justice and applies them to food. Several scholars offer their own definitions of food justice. Gottlieb and Josni (2010) characterize food justice as "ensuring the benefits and risks of where, what, and how food is grown and produced, transported and distributed, and accessed and eaten are shared fairly (p.6)." Horst, McClintlock, and Hoey (2017) provide a more person-oriented definition of food justice defining it as "the right of communities everywhere to produce, process, distribute, access, and eat good food regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, ability, religion, or community (2017, p. 279). The key themes that emerge in food justice literature are agency, self-determination, and equity. In contrast to the local food movement, which tends to focus on practices for growing and distributing food and the harm it does the ecosystem and the animals involved (Slocum, 2008). Food justice focuses on the inequities faced by marginalized communities in the food system. Food justice acknowledges that there are racial and socioeconomic problems in the food system that are related to the racial and socioeconomic problems of the US. Injustice within the food system is tied to injustice within US society as a whole, and food justice advocates and activists seek to use food and food production as a means to address disparities and raise-up voices that are missing in the broader food movement dialogue (Alkon and Agyeman 2011).

Food justice critiques of the local food movement. A significant amount of food justice research has focused on the critiquing the "whiteness" of the local food movement. Some scholars criticize the predominant white values of local food organizations endeavoring to bring

fresh fruits and vegetables to minority neighborhoods and those that seek to educate these

neighborhoods about the quality of locally grown, seasonal, organic food. (Slocum 2008);

(Guthman, 2008); (Kato, 2013). Solocum uses the term *whiteness*, "to refer to bodies with pale

skin color, the changing tendencies of those bodies to do certain things in a particular context

and the socio-spatial processes with which those tendencies are linked (Slocum, 2008, p.521)."

While not critical of the intentions of the local food movement, Slocum accuses the movement of

creating "white spaces" that promote the values and viewpoints of whiteness. Scholars in this

line of thinking, critique the lack of racial diversity that exists in spaces identified with local food

and the lack of cultural awareness that organizations and people promoting local food have when

trying to reach out to communities of color (Reese, 2018); (Guthman, 2008); (Goldberg, 2013).

Local food is largely present in "alternative food" spaces such as farmers' markets, Wholefoods,

and Co-ops, which have higher prices and cater to the needs of consumers that tend to be

wealthier and better educated. By identifying itself with spaces that are largely accessible only to

the middle and upper middle class and promote white values, the local food movement has made

itself separate from marginalized communities (Slocum, 2008).

     Guthman (2008) further supports Slocum's observations, claiming that the focus of the

local food movement has been on sustainable food production and supporting local farmers

through expanding market opportunities and pushing to secure decent prices for farmers. In

Guthman's view, even the voices in local food that are pushing for greater food access for low-

income communities are largely focused on the food itself rather than the structural inequalities

that are responsible for creating the disparities in the first place. Guthman also critiques the

"whiteness" of the dialogue that surrounds the local food movement. In the discourse around

local food consumers are encouraged to "vote with their dollars" to support local farms and to

buy organic produce (Slocum 2008). A message that implies that to be involved with the local

food movement, people need to have access to local and organic food, and the money to pay for

them. This kind of dialogue assumes a privileged position for all consumers and ignores the

structural barriers to "good food" experienced by people of color.

Alkon and Agyeman (2011) directly challenge the assumptions the whiteness of the local

food movement is based on "what white bodies do." Claiming that basing critiques on the racial

composition of current advocates ignores the fact that the place-based solutions advocated by

local food advocates, such as supporting local farms, eating seasonally, and advocating for

traditional cuisine are the same solutions being practiced by Native Americans, Chicana/o, and

other non-white indigenous groups. Alkon and Agyeman (2011) provide an assessment of how

"whiteness" or cultural privilege is *imposed* by white food justice advocates when they do not

acknowledge the diverse array of communities that are the source of their ideals but that does not

mean that "whiteness" is inherent to the local food movement. Slocum is examining whiteness

through the lens of race relations in the modern US, while Alcon and Agyeman are approaching

the subject with a more global food sovereignty mindset that brings perspectives of indigenous

voices from around the world in to the conversation of the food movement.   Both perspective fit

into the concept of food justice. Like most social justice movements, food justice is about the

power dynamics that exist between the dominant socio-economic group that holds formalized

power and the other socio-economic groups that have been either ignored, marginalized or

actively repressed by the dominant socio-economic class. By discussing the lack of voices of

color in the US local food movement, scholars are delving into power dynamics of race in the

US. The cultural privilege assumed by local food advocates that are ignorant of the contributions

of communities of color to the local food movement is another manifestation of the inequitable power dynamics that exist between the dominant social class and marginalized communities.

Whiteness of the local food movement is critiqued from a different perspective by several other scholars. They point to the lack of representation of people of color in leadership positions among local food organizations, despite the fact that many of the organizations are working predominantly or entirely in communities of color (Horst, McClintlock and Hoey, 2017); (Solocum, 2008). Horst, McClintlock, and Hoey (2017), also point to the advantages that white-led professionalized organizations have when it comes to funding and political support when compared to the organizations that are led by people of color. Food justice advocates are attempting to address the deficit of diverse voices in the local food movement be directly challenging the local food movement to be equity-minded, actively support self-determination in communities of color, and to be aware of the socio-economic challenges that communities of color face due to historical repression (Reese, 2018).

This research project is focused on the engagement of local communities by local food nonprofits, the literature suggests that the whiteness of organizational leadership and spaces of operation, in both race and values, may hinder community engagement and the success of nonprofits without adequate diversity. Food justice ideals such as equity, agency, and self-determination, create a lens through which to view and assess community engagement practices and their ability to push local food nonprofits towards food justice.

Nonprofit Approaches to Local Food

In order to provide a better framework of understanding for this project and to cover the scope of work happening in the food movement, this section of the literature review will focus on the different aspects of nonprofit work in the local food movement. A review of literature

shows that much of the work being done in the nonprofit sector can be sorted into either health-oriented, agriculture-oriented, or justice-oriented approaches to local food (Goldberg, 2013); (Slocum, 2008); (Holt-Giménez, 2011). The approaches signify how organizations are identifying different social problems within the food system and seeking to address them.

Health-oriented approach. Nonprofits undertaking local food project in a health-oriented approach focus predominantly on the public health issues such as obesity and poor diet. Organizations in this camp view obesity as a "particularly acute threat to the poor (p.43)," due to increased prevalence of obesity in low-income minority communities. This type of approach is focused on the absence of healthy foods in low-income communities, viewing access through the lens of food deserts. Health-oriented organizations are involved in work to push for calorie information on fast food meals, support policies that tax unhealthy foods, and oppose marketing for processed foods to children (Goldberg, 2013). They are also involved in food-access projects and nutritional education programs but approach these projects as a way to change health outcomes. Health-oriented organizations tend to be working with institutions such as public schools and hospitals to increase awareness of healthy lifestyle choices and access to nutritional food, predominantly in low-income communities (Slocum 2008). Health oriented organizations tend to promote solutions that alleviate issues with the food system through improving the existing social safety net programs and expanding education (Holt-Giménez, 2011). Health-oriented approaches are often the most removed from food justice principles because they tend to be focused on alleviating the effects of and inequitable food systems rather that addressing the underlying causes of inequity (Holt-Giménez, 2011).

Agriculture-oriented approach. Agriculture-oriented organizations are largely focused on the agricultural and environmental impacts of the food system. This group consists of

organizations that are much more focused on social advocacy and policy change for agriculture rather than on direct programing interventions. Agricultural orientated organizations may be local farmer advocacy organizations, environmental groups, or animal rights groups. Local farmer advocacy groups concentrate on the economic well-being and political voice of small farmers. These types of organizations run "buy local" campaigns, encourage consumers to support local farms and push for agricultural policy changes that benefit small farmers (Slocum, 2008). Environmental and animal rights groups focus on the environmental and ethical issues caused by large scale agriculture and often push for policy changes that support sustainable organic food production, free-range, antibiotic/hormone free animal raising, and seasonal eating. Their efforts are also focused on the use of native plants, increasing soil fertility, and promoting traditional mixed planting systems of food production (Slocum, 2008). Agriculture-oriented organizations are most closely related to the trends of the middle and upper middle class and as such may struggle to incorporate voices of marginalized communities in their discussion of local food (Holt-Giménez, 2011).

       Justice-oriented approach. Justice oriented organizations approach local food through the lens of the socio-economic inequities of the food system (Goldberg, 2013). Justice-oriented organizations advocate for social justice for both producer/worker rights and equitable agency to access healthy nutritious food. They point to the abuses that the current food system enacts on people of color, the poor, and the environment as evidence for the need to fundamentally change the food system (Slocum, 2008). The justice-oriented approach promotes community involvement in decision-making and promotes the development of new models of business and food production that better-serve low-income and minority communities. Organizations in this

category seek to use food to empower the marginalized to be the agents of change in their

community through gradual grass-roots driven initiatives (Holt-Giménez, 2011).

The Challenge of Paternalism in Nonprofit Work

Nonprofits sector as a whole can approach societal problems from a multitude of

perspectives. Their proposed interventions can be informed by various research, observations,

and hunches. Nonprofits run into issues with implementation when they assume a parental role in

assuming what intervention is best for a particular community, without involving any community

input into making this decision. Paternalism can be particularly prevalent in community health

centered initiatives, such as anti-obesity, food access, and nutritional education that utilize

"expert" advice to help solve what are viewed as public health issues (Buchanan, 2015). Smith

and Grønbjerg (2006) claim that "nonprofits suffer from paternalism [when] their definition of a

community problem is determined by the vision and preferences of those who control the

organization (p. 125)." They go on to claim that paternalistic organizations are representing the

interests of their donor base rather than the interests of those they purport to serve (Smith &

Grønbjerg, 2006). Steinberg expands the scope of paternalistic tendencies beyond donors and

decisionmakers to include when staff and volunteers treat social problems in ways that contrast

with the desires of the clients (Steinberg, 2006). Paternalism, at its heart, is the process of

withholding power and agency from clients who are being served by a nonprofit (Steinberg,

2006). When nonprofits are controlled by people who are not immersed in or familiar with needs

and desires within the communities that they serve, they are less able to be effective agents of

change alongside their clients.

Paternalism in local food. Paternalism can be unintentionally created by nonprofits

implementing projects related to local food. Inherent in many aspects of local food programing

are values placed on expert opinion, which can be in direct opposition to the desires of a particular communities. The public health approach to food access often treats obesity and diet related illnesses as diseases that are eroding the health of the community, which lends itself to paternalistic tendencies. In treating diet related diseases as something to be cured, organizations can feel justified in overriding the desires of the community in the interest of long-term community health benefit (Buchanan, 2015).

When implementing national education and food access programs, nonprofits often emphasize food choices for their health characteristics. The nonprofit promotes food that is the most healthy and nutritious according to current scientific research, often without considered similar foods that may be more culturally appropriate or familiar to the population they are working with. Organizations operating in a health-oriented approach often focus on getting nutritionally dense food to low-income populations, either through SNAP initiatives that give extra money for nutrient dense food, the establishment of farmers markets in low-income communities, or government initiatives that incentivize the establishment of retail supermarkets to provide access to health food options (Rosenberg and Cohen, 2018). Food access projects are often implemented with little input or involvement from the community, as the community is viewed as the receiver of expert services, much like a patient at a doctor's office. (Buchanan, 2015). While this approach does make healthy food more available in communities, research shows that this approach often does not produce the desired outcomes in diet changes (Rosenberg and Cohen, 2018). Moreover, while all organizations endeavor to create better lives for clients, the long-term success of nonprofit interventions depend on the ability for organizations to support community self-determination and empowerment, which are inhibited by paternalism. (Smith and Grønbjerg, 2006); (Buchanan, 2015).

Paternalistic approaches are focused on a top down approach of service-delivery and education in hopes that the lessons learned through their programing will help clients to change their eating habits (Heynen, Kurtz & Trauger, 2012). The approaches do not often consider familiar or culturally appropriate food as they are more focused on the dissemination of the nutritional knowledge of the dominate cultural, rather than considering similar alternatives that may make more sense for specific communities (Heynen, Kurtz & Trauger, 2012) ; (Slocum, 2008). By promoting the nutritionist's definition of healthy food without understanding which healthy alternatives may be more culturally relevant for a particular client group, nonprofits set themselves up to be viewed as outsiders imposing their own belief system on a community they are attempting to help.

Chapter 3: Methods and Findings

Local food initiatives are being undertaken with increasing frequency by the nonprofit sector in step with the developing cultural dialogue on diet, nutrition, and health. This project seeks to understand what types of community engagement strategies local food nonprofits are using to engage with their client communities and what helps to make them successful. As stated earlier, community engagement is the interface of the nonprofit and community relationship. Understanding what strategies local food nonprofits use to engage with their client communities will help us better understand how they are building equity and food justice into their work. This chapter provides a description of the methods and findings of the qualitative analysis of the interview data. The methods section provides a description of the research method and design, the recruitment and selection process for study participants, a description of the data collection and analysis procedures, and the challenges and limitations of the study. The findings section breaks down the findings of the study into community three themes of community engagement: community engagement strategies, perceived challenges to community engagement for local food nonprofits, and equity mindset. *Community Engagement Strategies* is broken into five subsections that reflect distinct community engagement practices of the local food nonprofits that were interviewed. *Challenges to Local Community Engagement* is broken down into three separate challenges faced by local food nonprofits.

Research Method and Design

Given that the purpose of this project is to identify specific community engaging strategies and to understand their effectiveness, I used the qualitative research method. Qualitative research method enabled the researcher to generate an ongoing dialogue that was essential for obtaining the required data. The form of qualitative method I used was the semi-

structured interview. Semi-structured interviews allowed the participants and the researcher to follow a list of pre-establish questions that created a purposeful framework for the interview while also allowing for open dialogue and new ideas brought up by participants to be further explored (Brown and Hale, 2014).

Each semi structured interview used the same set of pre-established questions to guide the discussion. The creation of the interview questions was informed by a review of literature on local food nonprofits, related social movements, and nonprofit community engagement. This review helped to identify key themes for the questions and establish the need for deeper understanding of community engagement in local food nonprofits.

The researcher was trained on ethical guidelines and procedures through the University of Richmond's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Training consisted of a multi-module online training on ethical research guidelines and procedures, a project proposal process, and the subsequent approval of the project and its research methods by the IRB. After receiving IRB approval recruitment for research participants was conducted.

Research Participants. Participants were selected through a purposeful sampling of key informants (Brown and Hale, 2014). The participants for this project were all leaders or decision-making program staff at nonprofits that are working on local food programing. These individuals have responsibility for either creating or implementing community engagement initiatives at the nonprofits that they represent, which make them ideal participants for this research project. The participants were comprised of leaders of nonprofit health care providers, urban agriculture nonprofits, and school nutrition nonprofits. The diverse nature of nonprofits reflects the diverse nature of organizations who are implementing local food programs and is essential to understanding the nature of community engagement undertaken by these organizations.

Demographic identifiers played a role in participant selection; effort was made to include diversity across race and gender identity understand how community engagement is viewed from different perspectives. All participants received a detailed consent form and were asked to fill out the form prior to scheduling the interview.

Recruitment. The researcher requested participation in the study through email approved by the University's IRB, with the consent form sent as an attachment. All participants signed the consent form in order to participate. Participants were notified that their consent was voluntary and could withdraw from the interview and project at any time. Consent for the interview was also confirmed verbally before the interviews took place. Participants were also given an overview of the project in the initial email. Eleven inquiries were sent to prospective interviewees, six responses were received, and five interviews were conducted. The interview questions were sent to confirmed participants once an interview was scheduled. The interviews were conducted either in-person or over the phone and were recorded with a voice recorder for later analysis.

Procedure. The interview questions were designed to explore community engagement strategies used by food focused nonprofit, discuss their effectiveness, and understand the organizational motivation for implementing such strategies. The interview consisted of seven questions (Appendix A) and was specifically designed to unpack organizational motivations for community engagement and allow the interviewees to define key terms such as community engagement and food justice for themselves in order to understand the organizational perceptions of such terms. The semi-structured interview format created a comfortable environment that fostered deeper exploration of community engagement strategies and their underlying

motivations through probing, prompting, and clarification. Interview questions were structured to prompt reflection on key terms and concepts.

The data for this study was collected over the course of a three-week period. The data collection device for the semi-structured interviews was a handheld voice recorder and a tablet with a voice recorder app was used as a backup device. No notes were taken in the interview. Audio files were saved using a numbered naming convention to mask the identity of the interviewee. Interviews were transcribed to text using Microsoft Word and then coded for thematic analysis. In cooperation with the University of Richmond IRB requirements for data integrity, the data collected during the interviews is housed on a password protected computer until completion of the project in July 2018. To insure confidentiality, all transcripts had any personally identifiable information redacted. The primary method of analysis for this project was the identification of patterns and themes, via thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2012). Analysis of the qualitative data was accomplished by transcribing interviews and coding them. Coding was used to identify the core themes and concepts of the interviews. A conceptual model was created to represent key discoveries in the analysis.

Challenges and Limitations

Key constraints on the project were the timeframe of the project, availability of key stakeholders for interviews, the limited sample of participants, and the wide variety of nonprofit initiatives in local food. This study could be improved in a number of ways. Collection of data from a larger sample could provide more information on the community engagement strategies of local nonprofits. A narrower focus on a particular type of local food nonprofit, i.e. Urban Agriculture, Health Care System, School Nutrition Education, could provide deeper insights into community engagement strategies that are effective within a particular client community rather

than looking for broad based themes across all local food nonprofits. Continuing this research in the future, it would be helpful to interview community members who have experienced the community engagement process as practiced by local food nonprofits. This study was focused on the strategies used by local food organizations rather than the individual experience of community engagement. Understanding the experience of community members who have participated in the community engagement process could help provide a more holistic assessment of successful community engagement.

Findings

Based on the data analysis described above, the study revealed a number of themes about community engagement and its relationship to organizational alignment with food justice. There is general agreement among participants about the changing role of the nonprofit sector as it relates to food. Participating nonprofits expressed an increased desire to partner with other nonprofits and community partners. Some, but not all participants discussed their role in empowering their client communities to take over and lead the work the nonprofit started. Participants discussed the tactics of community engagement used by their organization, the varying degree of success they have had with community engagement, and the perceived barriers that exist for effective community engagement. The specific strategies were mapped onto Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi, and Herremans' continuum of community engagement that ranged from transactional to transformational. The term transactional refers to the one-way exchange of information and resources; the term transformational implies a proactive process of shared sensemaking and collaboration. Transactional strategies are strategies that reinforce existing power structures between nonprofits and client communities, transformational strategies are strategies that divest nonprofit authority and power to the client community.

I. Community Engagement Strategies.

Questions in the interview were designed to guide conversation to community engagement strategies undertaken by the participating nonprofits and other nonprofits that the participant was familiar with. Through the interview process, participants discussed community engagement strategies that can be classified into five distinct categories: information dissemination, trust building, cross-sector collaboration, shared decision-making, and intentional hiring practices. Participating nonprofits also identified challenges they faced when implementing community engagement. Challenges to community engagement were classified into three distinct categories: lack of capacity and resources, misalignment of community and nonprofit goals, and community mistrust of nonprofits. In referring to community engagement and program development every participant stressed that their nonprofit was trying to "work with the community, rather than for the community." The phrase was used to express the desire to view the community as a co-equal partner in pursuit of its organizational mission. Some participating nonprofits are closer to meeting this desire than others. These organizations placed a significant emphasis on using community engagement strategies that build equity between the nonprofit and the client community.

1. Information dissemination. The most basic form of community engagement that was discussed by participants in the study was *information dissemination*. This strategy is very typical of most nonprofits and involves getting information about the nonprofit and its programing into the community. Participants conducted community outreach through social media postings, hosting community events, tabling at community events, and conducting informational sessions focused on specific programing. Information dissemination is mapped as a transactional strategy of community engagement on Bowen, Neweham-Kahindi, and

Herresmans's continuum of community engagement. The smaller participating nonprofits in the study had a higher prevalence of information dissemination in their community engagement portfolios compared to the larger organizations in the study. Smaller nonprofit participants acknowledged that information dissemination strategies needed to be accompanied by more robust community engagement, but that they faced challenges of capacity when attempting to undertake more robust community engagement strategies.

        2. Trust building. A foundational strategy for impactful community engagement is trust building between nonprofits and their client communities. All interviewees expressed the importance of "relationship building" and "cultural sensitivity" when attempting to establish long-term shared goals with their client communities. An emphasis was placed on long-term vision among participating nonprofits, viewing community engagement as a long-term strategy to success. Relationships naturally develop between people as they have more shared experiences. Nonprofits engaging in trust building are using tactics such as "shared meals" and "community events" to create shared experiences between individuals in the client community and individual nonprofit staff. Additionally, participating nonprofits are emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity to staff that are out in the community. The interviewees discussed the extra emphasis of cultural sensitivity when conducting local food work. Food and identity are inextricably linked according to the interviewees. To emphasize this point, interviewees discussed the association of recipes with loved ones, family memories around the dinner table, and how food culture is tied to directly to memories. Several participants emphasized that cultural sensitivity of culinary traditions is key for successful engagement. They note that the strong sense of identity that is imparted by food memories can make it very hard for nonprofits to enact changes in food choice if not done with the appropriate respect for the

culinary traditions of communities. Cultural sensitivity was viewed as central to trust building. Cultural sensitively can help to validate the identity of the client community and help facilitate dialogue and understanding between the nonprofit and the community in an authentic way. One participant nicely summarized the success that can be had from rooting the work of nonprofits in trust building, saying:

"I think that understanding culture is essential to making sure that when you are working with marginalized populations, it's a true partnership. You have to be genuine, transparent and focused on relationship building, which takes time. This work can have generational impacts, but you have to be in it for the long haul, it can't be a short-term investment."

In addition to cultural awareness, authenticity was seen as essential to the formation of trust between NPOs and the community. Participants emphasized the importance of authenticity and "realness" in building trust and relationships. One interviewee emphasized the importance of authenticity saying that:

"People get so attached to the garden that they forget what allows you to build, manage and steward the garden in the first place is the relationships that are built. That type of person to person community engagement is all about authenticity, transparency, honesty, inclusivity, being able to dialogue, being able to build a team. Trying to not be the owner of all of it."

Here the interviewee supports the establishment of authentic relationships between nonprofits and the client communities. Authenticity in this context is used to emphasis not only the importance of shared work and goals but in building meaningful relationships that transcend the scope of a nonprofit's work. Authenticity is about creating a personal investment in the well-

being of an individual, understanding their challenges, hopes, and dreams and being able to share one's own in exchange. Trust building is what creates the foundation for a community to exist in the first place. In order to engage with people outside an existing community, in order to create share community across lines of difference, trust is essential.

3. Organizational collaboration. All of the interviewees stated that their organization was part a of community coalition and expressed the success that they have had in community engagement through partnership and collaboration. Community coalitions were widely seen as ways to share resources, deepen community impact and avoid duplication of work. Other motivations for collaboration varied between organizations and was influenced by of the size and budget of the participants organizations. Participants from larger NPOs discussed the importance of working with smaller, more localized nonprofits as a way to limit community mistrust of larger NPOs. One NPO staff member reported:

> "These agencies have already been working with their clients and have already built trust, so if I or {my organization} were to speak with these communities about vulnerable health care needs, I am not going to be able to get the same information as the organizations that have already built relationships with the community."

Another participant discussed the importance of working through a coalition for his organization, a botanical garden with a history of being viewed as an exclusively white space. Being a part of a coalition that operated by a different name allowed the participant to "navigate uncharted territory" for the NPO and work with communities of color that may not have been receptive to working with the organization by itself due to the organizations historical relationship with that community. It seems that working through coalitions allows larger NPOs to borrow legitimacy

from other community partners that may be seen as more closely representative of a particular

population.

Smaller organizations involved in community coalitions seem to be motivated to join

them for different reasons than the larger ones. One participant referred to coalitions as an

opportunity for "capacity building" for their organization, allowing them to have access to

resources that would otherwise be unavailable if the nonprofit was forced to work by itself.

Smaller NGOs in the study sought the financial support of larger organization, either through

grants from the larger NPOs or from foundations and governments that were more familiar with

the larger NPOs and therefore more likely to support initiatives associated with the larger NPOs.

Evidence for larger nonprofits financial supporting smaller local food organizations was given by

a staff member of a large NPO saying, "Since we began our local food work in 2012, we have

invested over a quarter of a million dollars in our local food nonprofits and that number

continues to grow." Participant comments suggest that coalitions and collaborations allow

nonprofits to borrow different forms of legitimacy from their collaborators. Smaller NPOs are

seeking to validate their work in the eyes of funders and government agencies through the

support of well-established institutional organizations. As one participant reported: "By being a

part of the {healthy kids coalition}, we are able to leverage our relationship with {a large health

care organization} to access shared government and foundation grants that would not be

accessible to us on our own." On the other hand, larger NPOs are trying to emphasize their

commitment to specific communities by supporting smaller "hyper local" organizations that can

bring community recognition, community trust, and cultural awareness to the table.

Collaboration is also occurring between nonprofits and other sectors. In the study, a large

healthcare nonprofit with significant financial resources is changing its business relationships to

be more aligned with their mission. One healthcare nonprofit is involved in an innovative financial collaboration with private and nonprofit organizations to leverage its financial resources to support local, sustainable food production in the region and push for change in the food system.

> "Internally, we have the infrastructure to increase our local and sustainable food purchases... We've significantly supported a local food for profit company, which is a farm collaborative. We have been partnering with them for over 5 years for our farm share program and we have been able to see local farms expand through that initiative. It's nice for our employees because they can have access to produce through the entire growing season, but it's nice for the farmers too because we are able to upfront that money to {the farm collaborative} and to pay all our farmers a livable wage."

This type of collaboration shows a deep awareness of the food system and a desire to work within and outside the nonprofit sector to enact changes in the way food is produced, distributed, and consumed. By expanding the definition of collaboration to include nonprofit and private partnerships not related to programming, this organization has been able to use its financial resources to support the economic development of small businesses in their region that are aligned to the organization's desired outcomes of local sustainable food production, but outside the scope of the organizations programmatic mission.

4. Shared decision-making. An important finding of the study was the strong support of shared decision-making as a community engagement strategy. As mentioned previously, the phrase "working with the community rather than for the community" appeared at least once in all interviews. The use of this phrase was often followed by an explanation of a shared decision-making strategy adopted by the organizations. Individual nonprofits used multiple shared

decision-making strategies. The choice of strategy depended on the nature of the decision and the

willingness of the NPO to let go of controlling the decision made. The strategies used fell into

two sub-themes, *community-informed decision making* and *community-led decision making*.

Community informed decision-making was the most commonly adopted strategy because it

allowed for community input but left the nonprofit in full control of decisions based on the input.

> ***Community informed decision-making***. All nonprofits interviewed participated in some

form of community-informed decision making. These strategies all aimed to gather some form of

feedback to inform the intervention that an NPO was attempting to implement. The participants

used surveys, focus groups, and community meetings to solicit opinions and feedback from the

community about upcoming initiatives. On some occasions, the feedback was sought for a

specific project (ex). Other times the feedback was more general and revolved around what the

community thought were some of the biggest barriers it faced around food. In one example, a

participant discussed the significant effort that goes into getting community input for a needs

assessment:

> "So we directly engage with our underserved communities through focus groups and
>
> community health surveys, were we can really get a deeper dive into what some of the
>
> barriers, but also what some of the strengths are for some of those communities... we
>
> really use all this data mining in order to make sure that we can show what our
>
> neighborhoods want"

This effort involved gathering data directly from the community, digesting that information, and

the making a three-year strategic plan to address the need that was uncovered through the

organizations analysis. Again, the nonprofit retains the decision-making authority, but makes its

decision through consultation with the community.

    In another example of community informed decision making, a participant applauded a fellow NPOs efforts to solicit input from the community about significant barriers they were facing to access food:

> "{The organization} was asking questions about food accessibility and trying to understand what the local community felt about their accessibility to food. The community felt like there were members that were wheelchair bound or elderly and couldn't get to neighborhood resources center. They took that info and developed a garden that would serve the sick and shut-in, folks that couldn't get to their food pantry... They were responsive to what the community said they needed…. This was all done through surveying and talking to members of the community. It was a really amazing strategy for engagement because they *listened*."

This participant placed significant emphasis on the need for organizations to truly listening to the feedback that the organization asked for. Several participants noted that it is common for NPO to come to the table with their ideas already fully formed and try to convince the community that they need this initiative. Community-informed decision making requires the nonprofit to come to the community with more of a rough idea rather than a specific intervention, solicit feedback on the idea that was presented and then take that feedback and modify the idea accordingly. The consultation stage, asking for input, rather than trying to convince a community to support a particular idea, is what marks community-informed decision-making as an engagement strategy.

    Community-led decision making. One of the most innovative examples of community engagement in this study came from two organizations, one working in urban green space development and one working in healthcare. These organizations have acknowledged that when it comes to establishing long-term successful programs in a particular community, one of the best

strategies is to present the community with an issue related to an organization mission, commit

resources to a solution, and facilitate the community itself to decide on the solution through

community-led decision making. This requires a tremendous amount of trust and faith between

the community and the NPO, as one participant stated:

> "Organizations have to ask themselves if they are willing to be authentic, are they willing
>
> to be vulnerable…Are you willing to quash your ego so that others can stand up and
>
> speak for themselves? Especially for white folks, can they go into communities and
>
> listen, and let go of what they think should be there. Can they remove that paternalism
>
> and allow the community to come forth with the solution and support them in their
>
> activation?"

These two NPOs implement community-led decision making in slightly different ways. The

healthcare NPO distilled the information from its community needs assessment into an easily

understandable description of the barriers to health identified by the community. It then brought

that information back to the community and formed a community steering committee led by

community members. It supported this committee with financial and informational resources but

asked it to come up with a solution for itself.

> "{The urban farm} came out of our 2015 Community Health Assessment... we learned
>
> that that community grew up with agricultural background, where their parents or
>
> grandparents might have been from a farming culture where they lost those skills but
>
> would still like to benefit from healthy produce and learn those skills back. We gave the
>
> neighborhood complete control of this project, from coming up with the idea, down to
>
> where we built the farm…even down to how we operate the farm. So, we have a
>
> community steering committee that continues to lead that work."

The NPO working on urban greenspace approached its community-led decision making through a specific training program. This program trains community members in technical skills for green space design and facilitations skills for engaging the community in equity-based dialogue. Once participants graduate from the program, they are assigned a potential urban green space in the community that they live in and are expected to use those skills to engage their fellow community members in the creation and maintenance of the space. The point of the program is not for the organization to own and control urban green space development, but rather to train community members to lead and own the development of their own community's urban green space.

> "We try to find a potential green space close to the graduates or sometimes they will come into the program with a particular project in mind. So, we will walk with them and help them with the development of that project. Again, connecting the project to community and helping them with technical expertise, financial resources, in kind resources, whatever they need in order to be sustainable so that you don't need us anymore. Our whole vision and ethos behind the Urban Gardener program is that we're not a permanent feature in the work. Our goal is to help be able to build the communities capacity and be able to step away."

The quote reflects the intention of the organization to train and facilitate community leaders to oversee the development of community projects. By training community leaders in technical skills and dialogue facilitation, this nonprofit is delegating local food development back to the client community. Having a truly community-led project will most likely ensure better long-term sustainability because it grew out of the community rather than being suggested to the community. It puts the ownership of the project on the trained community champion rather than

the nonprofit and allows the nonprofit to step back and move on to the next project with some assurance that the time and resources invested will be left in capable hands.

      5. Leadership and staff diversity. Most participants recognized the lack of diversity in both organizational staff and leadership. Participants discussed how this can lead to a feeling "otherness" between the client community and NPOs working with them. Most participants mentioned the need for increased diversity in program staff and expressed aspirational desires of having their organizational staff reflect the community population more closely. One participant talked at length about how lack of diversity in staff reinforces inequality between nonprofits and the client community, which can lead to significant barriers for community engagement. Only two nonprofits were taking actionable steps towards increasing their staff diversity. One nonprofit, which conducts food and nutrition programing in the public-school system, talked about the importance of having more program level staff that looked like their student population, in this case African American. This organization hopes to generate more student participation and engagement in their program by having staff members that interface with the community be more representative of the community they are serving. The organization is still in the early implementation of this strategy, so it is too soon to what success they may have with the change.

      The other nonprofit, an urban green space organization, was the only participant to demonstrate both organizational awareness of the lack of diversity in staff and be in the process of undertaking significant changes internally to address the lack of diversity in both staff and leadership level positions.

      "{The organization} knew they had a noticeable gap in the diversity of their staff,

      Richmond is about 50% African-American, and there are other ethnic backgrounds that

are not white. They recognized they needed to increase their own internal diversity first,

especially if they are going to be committed to community engagement and working with

the community externally."

This organization tried to recruit the participant to join the organization as the Community

Engagement Coordinator and quickly established an organizational commitment to the person:

"I came on {with the organization} as grant position and it was switched immediately to

a full-time position and in the two years I've been here I've gone from community

engagement coordinator, to commuter engagement manager, from being under the

education department, to now building a community engagement department."

There was also intentionality by the nonprofit to hire a person with a very different background

from traditional philanthropy and the existing staff of the organization. This demonstrates a real

commitment to undertake disruptive change within the organization in order to better serve their

community.

"My background is radical left community organizing communities of color, cultural

identity building self-determination. When they hired me, it was a huge jump for {the

organization}, which had no connection to that world. To make an investment and front

facing commitment to hire someone one with that background and a person of color, it's a

disruption to the non-profit ecosystem, especially in Richmond."

The theme of community engagement strategies focuses on the practices used by nonprofits to

engage communities in local food nonprofits. There is variation between organizations as to what

actual practices are being used by a specific nonprofit, but they fall into the five general

categories of community engagement strategies: information dissemination, trust building,

organizational collaboration, shared decision- making, and leadership and staff diversity. As

stated previously, community engagement strategies are the interface of nonprofit and client communities and shape the ability of the two parties to work together towards shared goals. Navigating the different needs and expectations of both parties when implementing meaningful community engagement strategies does not come without challenges.

II. Challenges for Local Food Community Engagement

During my interviews with participants, there several significant challenges that NPOs faced when trying to conduct community engagement. As expected, there were significant differences in the challenges that Local Food NPOs faced based on the size of the organization and the type of local food work being attempted by the nonprofit. Despite the different challenges faced by each of the individual organizations, there seems to be three broad categories of barriers that the majority of these challenges fit into: capacity and resources, misalignment of goals, and mistrust of institutional actors.

1. Capacity and resources. Capacity and resources are a barrier to community engagement, especially for the smaller two smaller nonprofits. These two NPOs' staff members described the lack of financial resources available for conducting community engagement. Their budgets were just enough to support the programing that they were conducting and the few staff that they employed, with little left over to support community engagement activities. Community engagement often requires an upfront investment and significant planning implement successfully. The newer, smaller nonprofit's interview for this study are still in their start-up phase, subsequently, their staff is often over-extended due to lack of resources to support additional staff members. This only leaves the existing staff to plan and implement community engagement, who are already being stretched thin. This can be particularly challenging when working on local food initiative that involve actually producing food due to the significant

amount of work hours needed to have a successful growing season. At the urban farm NPO interviewed for this study the executive director was also the farm manger, and heavily involved in program implementation. This participant discussed the struggles of running a farm in addition to providing educational programing at the schools:

> "We are a small nonprofit and I do a lot, I do most of the administrative work, and I do all of the operation work too. I'm doing everything from crop planting, harvesting, and weeding to program development, fund development, book keeping. I do all of the machine work, all of the outreach, I do a bunch of different stuff and definitely don't have not enough time to do it all"

If an organization's leadership is not able to pull back from program implementation and take the necessary time needed to plan for effective community engagement, it can have repercussion for community investment in the program and lead to unsuccessful engagement. This was apparent when the urban farm NPO hosted a volunteer day,

> "The earth day event was supposed to double as fundraiser and a community event. It was great and it was fun, but we were expecting like 500 folks and only around 100 came out, which was pretty disappointing."

The participant went on to discuss the ways in which he felt that he could have improved participation in the event if he had the time, but the organization has a bandwidth issue. The earth day event is a great example of an NPO running at or above capacity and the repercussions that weaken community engagement can have for a nonprofit. In this case, the repercussions are a loss of potential donors and a significant amount of volunteer labor.

2. Misalignment of Goals. One challenge mentioned by all participants is that the NPOs goals do not always align with the goals of the community that they are trying to support.

Misalignment can happen due to a wide variety of factors. Sometimes it is the strong attachment of an NPO to specific program ideas that worked in other communities but are not wanted in the current community. This can be discouraging for both nonprofits and community members.

> "Our nonprofit partners and our own staff are passionate about community health, but sometimes what we are passionate about doesn't necessarily mean that the community values it as much as we do. So, I think that it is challenging and sometimes discouraging if you go into a community and, say, try to offer a nutrition class and no one shows up. That's what we used to do… Now, we partner with the community so that we are offering programming that is actually of interest to that community, which might not be, necessarily, what we think we should be teaching."

Other times it can be a lack of cultural awareness and an assumption of a particular behavior pattern that makes a particular initiative feel unrelatable to the community, such as the one mentioned by Healthcare NPO.

> "When they first started {this initiative}, they were growing standard crops, our standards in our culture, like tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, zucchini, and they realized that the client base that they served were Latin American and while some of the tomatoes fit with their culture, they wanted more peppers and different types of crops. So that first year was really a learning curve of learning what types of things should be planted for those types of populations. If staff would have gone in up front and talked with their community, they would have known that that community doesn't know what to do with cucumbers."

The two participant organizations that were successful in overcoming this barrier were quick to admit their failures and then look for solutions. They created feedback loops with the community, listened to the feedback, and changed their programming accordingly.

      3. Mistrust of Nonprofits. One of the most significant challenges for successful community engagement found in this study was when a community demonstrated a strong distrust of nonprofit interventions. Examples of distrust that were found in the results of this study suggest that all nonprofits have to overcome some level of historical mistrust in communities that have been taken advantage of by bad actors in the nonprofit, government, and private sectors. As Participant A describes,

> "Without a doubt, there is mistrust of institutional actors. Especially in our African-American communities that have a history of being taken advantage of. There can be a huge disconnect between nonprofits and communities due to the history of exploitation that has occurred here. That is why we feel that it is important to connect with community members as people first."

At other times, there can be a more recent incident that has sparked significant mistrust in a community due to other nonprofits actions. Participant B, who is active in communities of color said, "I've seen {white nonprofit leaders} use their privilege and access to block communities of color from building self-efficacy and self-determination." Participant B said that the underlying cause of this "paternalistic exploitation" was due to the "nonprofit industrial complex" in which nonprofits are afraid that if the community no longer is dependent on them, they will no longer receive funding.

III. Equity Mindset

The most successful strategies and tactics of nonprofits in this study shared one key theme in common, equity. Equity-minded nonprofits viewed their client community as a co-equal partner in meeting their mission. They placed an importance on community engagement, not only for program participation, but also for decision making and community trust building. These organizations understand that they are playing a discreet role within a larger movement of societal change, not just addressing immediate need in communities. They use their power, privilege, and resources to empower communities. Equity minded nonprofits are working with to train community members to lead the changes sought in their own communities.

IV. Conceptual Model

Using the *Continuum of Community Engagement created* by Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi, and Herremans as a base model, I created a conceptual model that maps the strategies used by the interviewed local food nonprofits based on the increasing equity that each strategy created. In both the review of the literature and the finding of the study, equity was viewed as a central concept to food justice. The conceptual model (Appendix C) demonstrates which community engagement strategies move nonprofits towards food justice.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to better understand the community engagement strategies used by nonprofits working in some capacity in the local food movement and learn how they related to the concept of food justice. The findings of this study have relevance to nonprofit organizations, funders, policy makers, and researchers. In conducting this research, I identified five key categories of community engagement practices used by local food nonprofits. I also identified three key challenges local food nonprofits face when conducting community engagement. Additionally, I noted the consistent theme of equity that underpinned successful community engagement for local food nonprofits. This chapter will include a discussion of the findings and potential implications of these findings. This study may potentially contribute to changes in nonprofit practice, policy and funding decisions, and for pursuits of future research.

Discussion

The food and health programing in the nonprofit sector has been evolving over the past decade. Nonprofit leaders, funders, and policy makers have put increasing emphasis on holistic programs that address not just immediate needs of clients but also address the underlying symptoms of the hunger and health. The results of this study seem to support the existence of this trend in nonprofit organizations. The local food movement has been a leading voice on diet and food change at a systems level in the US. The emergence of the local food movement has been accompanied by an evolution in nonprofit programming around local food. Interviews from this study suggest that the public discourse on local food is shaping what types of choices nonprofits make in terms of food and health programing, at least within organizations that participated in the study. As the local food movement has grown, so have critiques of it. The results of this study support the evidence of critiques on the exclusivity and elitism in the local food movement

and in nonprofits that implement local food programing. The results of the study seem to indicate that nonprofits are at least aware of this critique, and some are actively working to combat the paternalism that can accompany food and health programing. As the review of the literature shows, community engagement is one of the most significant ways that nonprofits interact with the communities they are serving. Results of this study suggest that local food nonprofits are viewing community engagement as key to the long-term success of their program and using community engagement strategies to overcome the challenges nonprofits face when implementing food and health programing related to local food across lines of difference.

The overall findings of this research provide qualitative, practical examples of how community engagement strategies are being implemented by local food nonprofits. The research question guiding this study was: What community engagement strategies are being used by nonprofits working on local food issues and how do they build equity between nonprofits and community? The findings and analysis answered the research question, though with some limitations. Five categories of community engagement strategies were found through analyzing interviews with nonprofits leaders in Virginia. Community engagement strategies being implemented by local food nonprofits include: Information dissemination, trust building, organizational collaboration, shared-decision making, nonprofit staff/leadership diversity.

Implications for Theory

All strategies except for nonprofit staff/leadership diversity fit within the *Continuum of Community Engagement*. The research further supports the conceptual framework of Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi, and Herremans by providing concrete examples of community engagement practice within the local food nonprofit subsector. The research suggests that the framework may benefit by expanding to include internal organizational changes as a category of high impact of

community engagement. Expanding to include internal processes would reflect the community engagement strategy of hiring diverse staff and leadership, documented in this research.

The findings of the study also support existing critiques of the "whiteness" of the local food movement put forth in the literature review. The findings suggest that whiteness is prevalent in nonprofit local food work but also documents that some organizations are aware of their whiteness. Organizations that are aware of the whiteness of local food work are using impactful community engagement strategies to correct this bias. By engaging the community in the decision-making process of program implementation, nonprofits are hoping to generate significant community investment into the success of the program. The results of this study suggest that organizations interviewed are also hoping to rebalance the power dynamic that exist between nonprofits and their client communities. Rebalancing power dynamics between nonprofits and their client communities supports the movement of nonprofits towards food justice. Organizations that were more familiar with the food justice movement tended to have a stronger focus on equity-based practices. The findings of this study suggest that local food nonprofits are pushing for more equity-based community engagement to address the perceived gap between the local food movement and communities of color. In their interviews, the nonprofits acknowledged past paternalism in heath and food programming. The interviews also revealed nonprofits are moving away from paternalistic practices and towards equity-based practices. Nonprofit reformation of paternalistic tendencies did not match up fully with the existing narratives of paternalistic practices suggested in the review of the literature, indicating that further research in community engagement in local food may be needed.

The findings of this study were subject to some limitations. Data was gathered from five semi-structured interviews of about one hour in length. The people interviewed were nonprofit

leaders in Virginia working on various aspects of local food programing. Two organizations

focused on urban agriculture, one organization on community health, one on school nutrition,

and another on student workforce development. I chose to sample a wide range of organizations

working in local food because of the limited numbers of organizations solely focused on food

justice or local food. Local food is often a component of a nonprofits overall portfolio of work

rather than the main focus. While the sampling allowed me to understand the breadth of

community engagement across local food programing, it was difficult to compare participating

organizations to each other because the full scope of their work could vary significantly. Four of

the five people interviewed were from a single metro area in Virginia, limiting the scope of the

findings geographically. As it stands, the findings of this study provide insight into local food

community engagement as it is happening in the Richmond metro area and provides some insight

in to the community engagement happening in Virginia as a whole and may be transferable to

other communities.

Implications of Practice for the Nonprofit Sector

The findings of this study have several implications for nonprofit practice in local food

initiatives. The nonprofit sector may benefit significantly by more widely adopting equity-based

community engagement strategies towards meeting mission goals. Findings from this research

suggest that local food organizations adopting equity-minded practices have a better chance of

long-term success for their programs and interventions due to the increased community

investment in the success of the intervention. Strategies that work toward building equity

between nonprofits and communities include trust-building, shared-decision making, and hiring

diverse staff and leadership. By adopting equity minded practices, organizations may better

engage in activities that activate and empower their client communities rather than exclusively treating the symptoms of systematic inequity.

According to the findings, trust-building is the foundation from which all other effective community engagement strategies build. Nonprofit organizations may benefit from devoting more resources to activities that allow informal interactions between community members and nonprofit staff. As the review of the literature discussed, shared experience builds social bonds between people. Based on findings from this study, I would suggest that local food nonprofits leverage their ability to create opportunities of shared experience between nonprofit staff and community members before, during, and after an individual program or initiative is implemented. Shared experiences might include working in a community garden together, attending community events or holiday celebrations, or even hosting community meals. According to the study, trust-building activities create opportunities for authentic exchange between nonprofit staff and members of the client community, which may break down barriers between nonprofits and the community. In the process of trust-building, nonprofits may gain valuable community input and investment, creating a shared sense of ownership of the nonprofits' mission and programing. Nonprofits may also encourage trust building by encouraging staff and leadership to participate in community events, which may further erode barriers between nonprofits and the community.

Local food nonprofits may also benefit from creating organizational structures and strategies that facilitate shared decision-making. According to the findings, by adopting shared decision-making strategies, a nonprofit will likely receive community feedback before making a decision, saving financial and staff resources from being devoted to a project that the community does not support. Practicing shared decision-making requires nonprofits to establish formal

feedback loops with the community, so that community input is given with the understanding and trust that it will be acted on by the nonprofit. If nonprofits wish to use community-led decision- making in their community engagement strategies, they will likely need to create a formal structure to facilitate the community decision-making process. The study suggests that it would be worth the investment of time and finances by the nonprofit to create a formal structure to support community-led decision making. Structures might be the creation of community steering committees, developing training programs for local community leaders, and/or creating a fund for community developed projects. Through community-led decision making, nonprofits are still meeting needs in line with their mission and giving the community ownership of their own space and allowing them self-determination and agency, which help build equity. Nonprofits have expertise and resources that can benefit the community in many ways. Engaging in shared-decision making may allow a nonprofit to use its expertise and resources more effectively and acknowledge the community as a co-equal partner in their own empowerment.

As discussed in the literature review, most nonprofits, and local food nonprofits in particular, are white-led and are working with communities of color. Nonprofits may benefit by increasing the number of staff that are people of color, especially in leadership roles. In this study, there are examples of a nonprofit hiring people that are familiar to and engaged with the client community. The findings suggest that diversifying nonprofit staff and leadership to be more representative of communities of color may add to the legitimacy and authenticity of a nonprofit's commitment to communities of color. Diverse staff and leadership may also begin to dispel feelings of skepticism and mistrust that prevent full community investment into a nonprofit's work. Building a diverse staff may make it easier for the community to believe their viewpoints are represented from within the organization. Diverse staffing practices also further

break down the racial divides that still exist between nonprofit sector professionals and the communities they seek to help. Based on the findings in my research, I believe that if the nonprofit sector is trying to meet needs in communities of color, it should commit to hiring people with a similar background and experience, giving the community equal legitimacy and power in making decisions about its future.

Implications for Policy and Funding

Policy makers and funders play a key role in building capacity for nonprofits to meet their mission through grant requirements, financial support, and policy recommendations. Funders and policy makers are largely in control of how nonprofits measure success of their programs because they are able to attach certain outcomes to funding mechanisms and control the conversation on what is viewed as impactful. There seems to be a continuing trend in the nonprofit sector that values quantifying measurable outcomes. While this trend has increased accountability, it also hinders the ability of a nonprofit to be responsive and nimble to community needs. Policy makers and funders may better equip nonprofit organizations for success if they recognize the importance of trust building to long-term program success. Funders that base successful program implementation on year-to-year quantifiable outcomes create unrealistic expectations for nonprofits to live up. Many of the community engagement strategies discussed in this research require a significant investment of time and resources to implement effectively. This would be especially helpful for smaller nonprofits that may be in their first funding cycle as an organization. Extending a grant cycle to include 3-5 years of guaranteed funding, with a portion approved for community trust building and engagement, could go a long way towards ensuring the sustainability of small nonprofit organizations. Also, it would likely

ensure stability and continuity for the community partners of the nonprofit, helping to reinforce trust-building between both parties.

Nonprofit funders play a key role in shaping the practices of the sector. Funders can tie expectations, outcomes, and policies to grant money that can nudge the nonprofit sector towards changes in practice. By emphasizing the importance of community voice and representation in nonprofit interventions, funders may be able to push organizations within their sphere of influence to adopt more equity-minded practices. A key change could include supporting cross-sector collaboration by encouraging joint applications for funding by nonprofits and businesses working in local food that focus on economic empowerment. Another possibility might include specifically funding community liaison positions as part of the overall grant awards. In this case, the community liaison may be a part-time or full-time paid position attached to a project or initiative that is grounded within a community. The community liaison would ideally be a member from the specific community in which the project or initiative is located. By funding a community liaison position, funders may begin to break down the barriers of power and influence that exist between nonprofits and marginalized communities.

Similarly, on an organizational level, nonprofits may benefit from instituting organizational policy that encourages or requires the nonprofit board to resemble the demographics of the surrounding community. Governing bodies of most nonprofits are predominately white and middle or upper income, this limits the ability of a nonprofit to understand and relate to issues affecting client communities in an authentic way. A governing body with community representatives that are deeply familiar with the client community can provide both context and community perspective to decisions made by the nonprofit. This policy could help break down the barriers between communities and nonprofits, by having local

community leaders as part of the nonprofit's leadership team. Having a more representative board may also bring new and innovative perspectives on community engagement and programing that would benefit both the community and the nonprofit sector as a whole.

At the local, state, and federal government level, the findings could help policy makers apply an equity lens to food access projects. As discussed in the literature review, government entities have been heavily involved in funding and overseeing food access programing and policy. For the most part, government initiatives have focused on alleviating food deserts by increasing the prevalence of healthy foods in low-income communities. While food access is certainly an important component of meeting the day to day needs of citizens, it is a symptom of inequality in the food system. Policy makers may see better long-term investment of tax payer dollars, if they shape policies that use food to build self-determination and resilience in marginalized communities. By taking a justice-oriented approach, policy makers may begin to address the issues of food deserts, public health, and poverty simultaneously rather than treating them as separate issues.

Policy makers might better address food access issues by applying an equity lens not just to programing and policy, but also to broader organizational functions such as purchasing supplies. Large nonprofit organizations and government institutions have significant purchasing power. As shown in the research, it is possible for organizations to make supply chain choices that will deepen inequity or that will build a more equitable society. Policy makers may want to institute policy that encourage both nonprofits and government programs to take a long-term view on how local, state, and federal dollars could be spent to support marginalized communities. Support can come in many forms, not just government programs and grants, but also through sourcing institutional supply needs from local businesses, farms, or urban gardens.

If institutions begin supporting local businesses, farms, or urban gardens, these organizations would have a dependable income stream to build long-term financial viability, increasing the economic opportunities in their respective communities and thereby helping to address both food access and poverty.

Implications for Future Research

It was the intention of this study to provide an overview of the community engagement strategies that local food nonprofits are practicing and to connect them to the food justice principle of equity. As mentioned in the discussion, the study was limited in scope of geography, its ability to make comparisons across similar organizations, and sample audience. Several avenues of future research were made clear in the findings. This study was centered on nonprofit practices of community engagement; therefore, no data was gathered from people within the community on their experience of community engagement practices. It would be beneficial to understand how community engagement is perceived and experienced by the individuals that make up a client community. The study was limited to nonprofits in a single Virginia metro area, with one exception of a nonprofit from another part of Virginia. Future research may include a larger sample size of nonprofits working on local food and food justice that would be more representative of the region. Alternatively, a future study may want to focus on a specific type of local food intuitive, such as urban agriculture or school nutrition, to determine what types of community engagement strategies work best for specific types of local food projects.

Conclusion

Understanding community engagement strategies for local food nonprofits is essential for aligning practices of local food nonprofits towards food justice. This study was designed to fill some gaps in research practices of community engagement used by local food nonprofits. My

qualitative analysis of community engagement strategies implemented by local food nonprofits

uncovered five types of community strategies. Each of these strategies aligns with Bowen,

Neweham-Kahindi, and Herresmans's continuum of community engagement and is likely

indicative of a nonprofits commitment to equity-based practices. The findings of the study have

implications for nonprofit practitioners, funders, and policy makers. The findings also

demonstrate further research is needed in community engagement experiences of community

members to better understand the effectiveness of community engagement for building equity

between nonprofits and their client communities.

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Appendix A: Research Interview Questions

Interview Questions:

1. What is your position and what do you do at (organization name)?

2. How important is community engagement to your organization?
    a. How does it fit into in your organizational mission or strategic plan?
    b. How does it inform your organizational activities and initiatives?
    c. Why is community engagement important to you and your organization?

3. What type of community engagement initiatives or strategies does your organizations conduct?
    a. Which ones have been the most effective? What are some of the challenges?

4. Can you tell me of any examples of community engagement from other organizations? What do you think are their successes and challenges?

5. How do you see your organizations work interplaying with the larger social justice movements?

6. Does your organization identify with the concept of food justice?

    a. If yes, what role do you see your organization playing in food justice in Virginia?

7. Is there anything else that you think would be important to understand?

Appendix B: The Continuum of Community Engagement by Bowen et al. (2010)

Frances Bowen et al.

Increasing community engagement

| GOVERNMENT (Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand, 2007) | Information provision | | One-off consultation | Collaborative processes | Community decision making |

| TRAINING ORGANIZATION (International Association for Public Participation, 2007) | Inform | | Consult | Involve | Collaborate | Empower |

| VOLUNTARY SECTOR (The Rowntree Foundation, 1994) | Information | | Consultation | Deciding together | Acting together | Supporting |

| COMMUNITY STANCE (Hashagan, 2002) | Passive | Reactive | Participative | Empowerment | Leadership |

| CORPORATE (Altria Inc, 2004) | Monitor | Push communications | Educate | Lobby | Engage | Collaborate |

| NON-PROFIT CORPORATE ALLIANCES (Rondinelli & London, 2003) | Arm's length | Interactive collaborations | Intensive alliances |

Transactional Engagement   **Transitional Engagement**   **Transformational Engagement**

The continuum of community engagement.

Appendix C: Conceptual Model

Towards Food Justice: Map of Community Engagement Strategies Used by Local Food Nonprofits

- **Transactional Strategies**
- **Transitional Strategies**
- **Tranformational Strategies**

- Information Dissemination
- Organizational Collaboration
- Trust-building
- Community-Informed Decision Making
- Community-Led Decision Making
- Building Staff Diversity
- Building Leadership Diversity

Increasing Equity