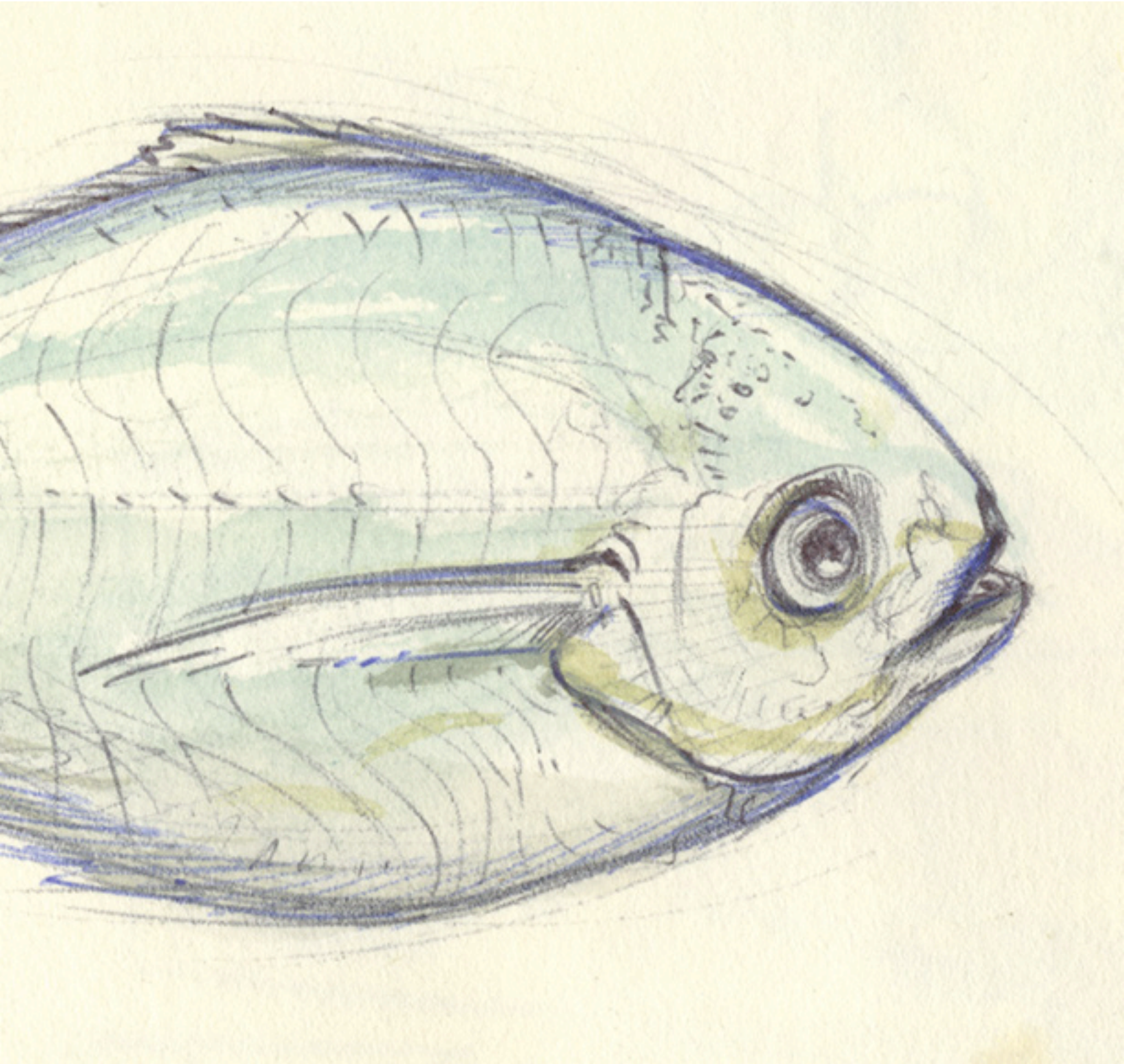


# GRADUATE JOURNAL *of* **FOOD STUDIES**

*a peer-reviewed journal  
on food studies  
for graduate students*



**WINTER 2014 | VOLUME 1**

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GRADUATE JOURNAL *of* **FOOD STUDIES**

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## Greetings food scholars! Welcome to the

*Graduate Journal of Food Studies*. It is with great joy that I present to you the first edition of a journal that I hope helps to encourage the continued growth of food scholarship at an institutional level—engaging students and professional educators alike in meaningful conversations about food. The articles featured here were reviewed blindly and selected from a pool of many fantastic submissions by a board of graduate student peers. They well represent the tremendous quality of research occurring at the graduate level and the diversity of a fundamentally interdisciplinary subject matter.

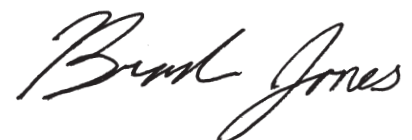
Emily Contois takes us inside the contemporary trophy kitchen to explore how its value transcends the preparation of food and extends to the production of social and cultural capital as well. Gretchen Sneegas shows that the citizens of Detroit, empowered by social justice initiatives, are challenging the myopic dominant discourse of widespread urban decay. Analyzing the gendered meanings of food-related propaganda in North Korea, Miki Kawasaki argues that the government actively reinforces the subservient status of both women and the land. Lastly, Madore et al. take a quantitative “best practices” approach, proposing ways in which farmer’s market incentives programs can be improved. Taken together, they show that food scholarship at the graduate level is not only well rooted but that it’s blossoming.

In addition to these original articles, the journal features a Book Review section in which graduate students, who I dare say do a great deal of reading, reflect on the contribution of recently published scholastic books that are inspiring and informing their own research in meaningful ways. This edition features reviews of Charlotte Biltekoff’s *Eating Right in America*, Rachel Black and Robert Ulin’s *Wine and Culture*, and Heather Paxson’s *Life of Cheese* by Maria Carabello, Chris Maggiolo, and Brad Jones respectively. You’ll also notice the accompaniment of various artistic mediums in addition to the text. More than just adding aesthetic appeal, these multimedia contributions reiterate that food can stimulate the eyes and intellect as well as the appetite.

I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to the many parties instrumental in taking a seed of an idea and helping it to germinate. The faculty advisory board, and especially Dr. Rachel Black and Dr. Carole Counihan, have been tremendously helpful. The voluntary support of a sharp and discerning peer-review committee has been critical. I’d like to thank Claudia Catalano for her considerable time and design talent, Zachary Nowak for his astute feedback and eye for style, and the rest of the Editorial Board who have been invaluable.

As a community of food-studies scholars, we show that food and drink can be valuable lenses through which interdisciplinary questions can fruitfully explored, while at the same time being mindful that in seeing through food we don’t continue to ignore the medium itself as a mere means to other ends. The specificity of food matters. *The Graduate Journal of Food Studies* hopes to be a forum that furthers the study of food by giving voice to a nascent cohort of interested scholars and encouraging dialogue that transcends disciplinary boundaries.

In satiating more insistent hungers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brad Jones". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Brad" and "Jones" being capitalized and prominent.



## CONTRIBUTORS

**Maria Carabello** is a MS candidate at the University of Vermont (UVM) studying Food Systems, with research interests in cooking, health, and pedagogy. Maria received her BS in Nutrition and Food Sciences with a minor in Anthropology from UVM in May of 2013. She works as a graduate teaching assistant for courses in the Nutrition and Food Sciences department, and also serves as a research assistant to her advisor, Dr. Amy Trubek. When Maria is not writing, reading, and researching she enjoys exploring Vermont's artisanal food and beverage scene; a hobby healthily offset by weekends skiing in the Green Mountains.

**Emily Contois** is a Ph.D. student in the American Studies program at Brown University. She holds a BA in Letters from the University of Oklahoma and an MPH with a concentration in public health nutrition from the University of California, Berkeley. She is a 2013 graduate of the MLA in Gastronomy program at Boston University. Her work explores the connections between food studies, nutrition, and public health in the American experience and can be found on her blog at [emilycontois.com](http://emilycontois.com).

**Brad Jones** is a recent graduate of the MLA in Gastronomy program at Boston University. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Wabash College '10. When not working as a graduate assistant, he can be found behind the cheese counter at Formaggio Kitchen, writing about food artisans for *Artisan & Apprentice*, and contributing to online food magazine *Zester Daily*. His research explores socio-cultural aspects of contemporary food production in America—namely the lingering moral and social relevance of culinary craftsmanship.



Noel Bielaczyc

**Miki Kawasaki** is a current student in the Gastronomy M.L.A. program at Boston University, where she is pursuing a concentration in communication. She holds a B.A. with honors in art history and East Asian studies from Oberlin College. She has completed several other projects related to the intersections of food, gender, politics, and visual culture.

**Chris Maggiolo** Hailing originally from Virginia's beautiful Shenandoah Valley, Chris is a recent graduate of the Masters of Liberal Arts in Gastronomy program at Boston University. His research interests include the anthropology and history of alcohol, craftsmanship and artisanship, ethnobotany, concepts in space and place, and the application of anthropology towards issues in agriculture and artisanal food production. Chris currently works as an independent consultant for the beverage industry and small food businesses and is the co-founder of *Cask and Culture*: a fledgling beer and cheese events and education company based in Boston, Massachusetts. Having recently finished a thesis on Italian American home winemaking and masculinity, Chris looks forward to continuing to write about beer, wine, spirits, and the craft food economy.



**Gretchen Sneegas** is pursuing a Masters of Food Studies at Chatham University with a focus in food policy. Her thesis research uses Q methodology to explore first person perspectives on raw milk and pasteurization within the context of politics of risk in the U.S. She is a graduate research assistant for the Chatham University Food Studies Department, and recently completed a Heinz Grant Fellowship for the Pittsburgh Food Policy Council. She has presented on her research at the 2013 Association for the Study of Food and Society Conference, and has been accepted to present at the 2014 Eastern Sociological Society Meeting and 2014 Roger Smith Conference on Food.

*The following authors produced their research together in the spring of 2013 as part of an independently designed food policy course at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas, Austin.*

**Amy Madore** graduated with a Master of Public Affairs in May of 2013, and currently works as a Planner with the Travis County Criminal Justice Planning Department in Austin, Texas.

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Noel Bielaczyc

# Not Just for Cooking Anymore: Exploring the Twenty-First-Century Trophy Kitchen

**abstract** | *The ideal American kitchen of the twenty-first century, often referred to as a trophy kitchen, in many ways breaks the mold that defines the kitchen itself. In opposition to how the kitchen has been historically understood as a room for cooking and despite predictions that technological innovations would render the space obsolete, today's ideal kitchen is now considered the central hub of the home, hosting a variety of functions other than food preparation. Drawing from design history, popular culture, home improvement trends, and kitchen consumption research, this paper discusses the multiple meanings of the trophy kitchen in the United States. Using the work of Pierre Bourdieu, this paper demonstrates the trophy kitchen's role as a potent status symbol, as well as its additional roles, including a social space for entertaining that merges the public and private spheres, a theatrical site for future hopes and dreams, and a space where gender roles are negotiated. This analysis elucidates the evolution, role, and meaning of the trophy kitchen, especially in scenarios where it is not used for cooking.*

More than ever before, the American kitchen is center stage. With a deluge of television networks, TV shows, magazines, and websites, images of the dream kitchens used by famous chefs, owned by celebrities, and purchased by aspiring homebuyers bombard American viewers. The near constant barrage of ideal kitchen images has contributed to the redefinition of the kitchen, explaining in part its ascent within the home and the American consciousness. This paper draws from kitchen design history, American popular culture, current U.S. home improvement trends, and kitchen consumption research from the United States, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand, demonstrating that today's ideal kitchen breaks the mold that defines the kitchen itself. Once a space for cooking alone, the trophy kitchen now takes on a new meaning that is often disassociated from cooking and food preparation. As function has become secondary, status has become primary and the kitchen has emerged as a potent status symbol among both middle and upper class demographics. The trophy kitchen also exists as a social space that combines the public and private spheres, a site for future hopes, dreams, and fantasy, a performance theater for entertainment and leisure, and a space where

domestic gender roles are negotiated. This analysis elucidates the evolution, role, and meaning of the twenty-first-century trophy kitchen, especially in scenarios where it is not used as a space for cooking.

## A SHORT HISTORY OF THE TROPHY KITCHEN

The kitchen has been defined as, "The domestic space where food is prepared... primarily an indoor space, the place where people go to chop, mix, roast, boil, and bake" (Carlisle and Nasardinov 8). For hundreds of years, the American kitchen has served these purposes. Although early colonial kitchens hosted a range of domestic duties, the kitchen eventually became a space for cooking alone. Starting with running water and electricity, technological innovations greatly revolutionized the kitchen space and filled it with an ever-growing array of appliances, gadgets, equipment, and specialized décor. Kitchen design and architecture have also evolved, particularly in affluent homes. At one time detached from the house and run by domestic servants, the kitchen was reintegrated into the home in the mid-twentieth century, featuring the more open floor plan common in contemporary kitchen design.

In opposition to how the kitchen has been historically positioned and understood within the home, the twenty-first-century trophy kitchen is now considered the central hub of all domestic activities, serving the combined purpose of multiple rooms—the dining room, living room, study, and kitchen—in one open and coordinated space (Carlisle and Nasardinov; Hand and Shove; Plante). One can observe this evolving role by analyzing three kitchen design books published in successive decades from the 1980s to the 2000s.

Published in 1986, Robin Murell's planning resource, *Small Kitchens: Making Every Inch Count*, presents kitchen designs for small spaces with a primary focus on kitchen function and a secondary focus on design and style. Emphasizing functionality, nearly all photographs in the book include depictions of food being prepared in the kitchen, including a scene where a cake is being prepared with bags of flour, sugar, and other ingredients opened near a mixing bowl. Published in 1993, *Terence Conran's Kitchen Book* reveals a shift in the balance between kitchen function and style, as well as the new influence of the public world of professional food preparation on the domestic kitchen. This public energy is clearly apparent as the first chapter addresses not floor plans, layouts, or styles, but an overview of the high-end restaurant kitchen, crediting it for shaping the home kitchens of not only the elite, but also an increasing portion of the population (Wilhide et al. 16). This guide also contends that the kitchen is the "hub of the home" (Wilhide et al. 30). As such, function is emphasized less than style and displaying one's personal taste becomes increasingly important. Compared to Murell's guide, Conran's book features far fewer photographs of food being prepared. More often, ornamental foods—such as, a fruit bowl, a formulaic display of fresh vegetables, or plated meals—are perfectly displayed on a countertop or table. These images present an aesthetic kitchen space rather than a functional one. The role of the kitchen evolves further in Joanne Kellar Bouknight's *New Kitchen Idea Book*, published in 2004. She claims, "The kitchen isn't just for cooking anymore," arguing that it is instead "the true heart of [the] home...

less utilitarian and more creative" (book jacket). This kitchen design book also reframes and elevates the home cook as a "home chef," an informed consumer who goes "beyond the basics to build a kitchen that's worthy of an upscale restaurant" (book jacket).

This small sampling from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s suggests that the role and significance of the kitchen has changed within the home, evolving beyond its traditional definition as a space where the primary function is food preparation. Instead, the kitchen takes on a variety of other meanings, which *Terence Conran's Kitchen Book* contends have taken hold of the desires of more than just the elite. The trophy kitchen reveals itself as not only a room for cooking, but also as a site for homeowners to express style and demonstrate taste. As they acquire and display expensive and rare materials, appliances, and décor, affluent trophy kitchen owners exemplify Thorstein Veblen's concept of conspicuous consumption. Their lavish spending habits perform and confirm their social position, as well as fuel the aspirational desires of the middle class for a trophy kitchen that symbolizes a homeowner's status and identity.

**THE TROPHY KITCHEN: STATUS AND DISTINCTION** Pierre Bourdieu's theories of status, distinction, and consumption are in conversation with Veblen's theories of conspicuous consumption (Trigg 100) and can be used as a lens for discussing the trophy kitchen as a status symbol and site of personal expression. According to Bourdieu, consumption is the principal means through which class-based social distinctions are reproduced. In *New Kitchen Idea Book*, Bouknight demonstrates the current trend of kitchen consumption as a method of expressing distinction when she urges readers to consider crafting a kitchen "worthy" of not only the domestic space but of a restaurant. Bourdieu's work also contends that members of the higher social classes desire products that are original, authentic, and personalized, which Dale Southerton argues makes the kitchen a space for self-expression (Southerton 189).



In his study of kitchen consumption, Southerton conducted interviews with thirty-five English households of varying socioeconomic status. His findings revealed that while working-class homeowners judged the quality of their kitchens by their durability and function, wealthier owners judged quality by the exclusivity, rarity, and price of kitchen objects (Southerton 192). Importantly, Southerton concluded that kitchen consumption and identity formation not only depended upon the symbolic capacities of the objects themselves, but also how they were used (201). For example, the symbolic power of the kitchen changes when it is used primarily as a domestic space for food preparation, compared to when it is used for socializing and entertaining. When dining and cooking are viewed as leisure activities of the more affluent, the kitchen becomes an increasingly conspicuous site of consumption.

Bourdieu's work also argues that members of the *petite bourgeoisie* are marked by the desire to follow the taste of the bourgeoisie. The cycle of kitchen remodeling demonstrates this trend, as kitchen renewal is popular among the middle class as well as the more privileged. Notably, however, participation in trophy kitchen consumption and access to the status it provides are largely limited to those with the capital to purchase their own home as opposed to those who rent.

According to those in the kitchen design and appliance industry, many homeowners do consider the trophy kitchen as a status symbol, emphasizing the kitchen's meaning beyond the function of cooking. In an article published in *Gourmet Retailer*, Simone Mayer, owner of a kitchen and bath store in Miami Beach, suggests, "The idea of having a 'trophy kitchen' is very much the new status symbol. To some consumers, having a certain brand of cookware is just like having a Mercedes in the driveway" (Brookins). Leslie Clark-Van Impelen, director of bridal services for Macy's West in Northern California, goes further, revealing that brides desire high-end cookware that can be put on display in their homes, even if they do not cook (Brookins). In this way, the kitchen demonstrates a combination of fantasy and status. As brides and

grooms plan their "dream weddings," they plan for their future life together. In the current ideal home, the focal point of this life is the kitchen, thus making it and the equipment within it among the first status symbols that an aspirational couple own.

Some kitchen design experts credit the television show *MTV Cribs* with elevating public perception of the kitchen to a status symbol and enhancing desire for the kitchen appliances owned by the rich and famous. Jill Notini, spokesperson for the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers, claims *MTV Cribs* contributed to increasing sales of high-end refrigerators: "When they showed the kitchens, it was all about the fridge" (Konicus). A special edition episode of the show featured rapper 50 Cent's home and his gleaming kitchen ("50 Cent Special"). As he begins the tour, he opens his Sub-Zero refrigerator revealing nothing but rows of beverages. He then opens the double wall oven showing that it is full of cardboard boxes and laughs, saying, "No one's touched it." 50 Cent explains this by boasting that his home has six kitchens. The one being shown has never been used. As he moves from room to room, it becomes clear that the kitchen with its granite countertops, custom cabinetry, and large, shiny appliances is on display in an unused state just like the literal trophies, rare works of art, and expensive furniture throughout the home. Showing the kitchen and its state of near complete disuse is an ultimate display of status.

An ornamental trophy kitchen—an expensive, luxurious, state-of-the-art kitchen that is rarely used for cooking—is not unique to this episode of *MTV Cribs*, but a common cliché that appears in each episode. Nearly all stars profiled admit that they rarely use their kitchens ("MTV Cribs' Gives Peek..."). Notably, *MTV Cribs* only features celebrities, individuals who fulfill the role of the trend-setting bourgeoisie and *nouveau riche*, to which Bourdieu refers. They possess the economic and cultural capital to create the kitchen consumer culture that the *petite bourgeoisie* will desire. The ornamental trophy kitchen of the celebrity set may be setting a precedent for larger domestic cooking trends. Some sources indicate that cooking at home is declining, revealing that less than 50 percent of at-home

dinners were cooked on a stove in 2004, down from 67 percent in 1985 ("Cooking Up a Status Symbol"). Ovens were used 28 percent of the time, down from 31 percent over the same period.

These paltry statistics are reflected in kitchen designs that are largely disassociated from cooking. For example, a Darren Morgan kitchen design features both an "in use" mode when it is being used for cooking and a "stand-by" mode for when used exclusively for entertaining (Morgan). When in stand-by mode, the kitchen appliances are completely hidden from view and the opal glass kitchen island, backlit by color-changing LED lights, immediately conjures the look and feel of a nightclub rather than a kitchen. In an article from Florida's *Sun Sentinel*, the authors discuss the similar trend of "the disappearing kitchen," an ultra-sophisticated kitchen "that reads more like a bar than a place to roast a chicken, designed for those who regard the telephone as the only piece of kitchen equipment of practical use" (Green and Baldwin). Calvin Tsao, an architect of luxury condos in Manhattan, confirms this view of the kitchen, saying, "The kitchen has morphed into a place to arrange the food, not actually make it... Is it a kitchen, or is it a credenza?" (Green and Baldwin). These luxury spaces provide examples of Bourdieu's trend-setting bourgeoisie who possess the financial resources to create lavish kitchens, which capture the imagination of the middle class in an aspirational fashion. Although these are not the kitchens of the average American family, they project a spreading ideal of the status symbol kitchen as a space that is not for cooking.

Home and Garden Television provides myriad examples of middle class homebuyers purchasing and recreating the fantastical kitchens that they see on television, in magazines, and on the Internet. Shows such as *House Hunters* contain nearly unending examples of mostly middle class homebuyers who consider a trophy kitchen not only an aspirational item within their dream home, but also a new minimum standard for what a kitchen ought to be. Even among first-time homebuyers, granite countertops and stainless steel appliances are considered "must-haves" rather than "wish list"

items. For example, in one episode of the show, newlyweds Cara and Adam vehemently dislike one house because it does not have a second story, but they change their mind when they see the remodeled kitchen, calling it "a total game changer" (House Hunters – Cara and Adam). They view a second house with a large, light-filled kitchen that has white appliances and non-granite countertops. When Adam asks Cara if she could "live with this kitchen for a year or two," she responds without hesitation, "No. I would need it updated immediately" (House Hunters – Cara and Adam). While it may seem that Cara is a particularly petulant guest of the show, this sentiment is often repeated. In another episode, a husband and wife expecting their third child are looking for a larger home to suit their growing family. When discussing their wish list, the wife says, "I love my kitchen. To move somewhere with outdated appliances would really hurt" (House Hunters – Madison). She gestures to the side-by-side refrigerator with icemaker on which sonograms of her unborn child are held up with magnets. She hugs the refrigerator, saying, "It's our pride and joy" (House Hunters – Madison). Viewers cannot be sure if she is referring to her baby or her beloved appliance. These episodes provide evidence of growing expectations among some homebuyers, who consider many elements of the trophy kitchen to be standard requirements rather than aspirational goods.

This television programming shapes the desire for trophy kitchens among viewers as well, making crafting a trophy kitchen one of the most popular home improvement projects (Parrott et al.). As demonstrated on *House Hunters*, homebuyers featured on the show tend to consider anything less than granite and stainless steel a deficit in need of upgrading, no matter the cost. Homeowners undertake considerable financial burdens to create dream kitchens with the average midrange major kitchen remodel costing over \$57,000 (Diclerico and Saltzman). A newly remodeled kitchen is also considered a key feature when selling a home. DiClerico and Saltzman suggest that kitchen remodels yield the highest return on investment of all home renovation projects, making it a venture that

yields both cultural and economic capital. As such, fashion and status are often the leading drivers of renovations. In their survey of 72 individuals who participated in an “Explore Your Dream Kitchen” workshop at Virginia Tech, Parrott et al. found that the majority of respondents considered appearance a top criterion when selecting kitchen products, more so than durability or cost (118). An online *Consumer Reports* poll of 518 voluntary responders also found that updating style was the most popular reason for remodeling a kitchen, trumping functionality, energy efficiency, and return on investment (“Why Are You Remodeling...”). This reinforces the role of the kitchen as far more than a functional space, but rather one that communicates status and style.

**THE TROPHY KITCHEN: ADDITIONAL MEANINGS** Beyond status, the trophy kitchen also takes on several other meanings, which are also divorced from cooking. Evident in architecture and design, the trophy kitchen is increasingly a social space that reflects the evolving relationship between public and private within the home. In the past, the kitchen was an isolated room. The current ideal kitchen is the focal point, the hub, the command center, and the heart of the home (Carlisle and Nasardinov; Harrison). This central nature of the kitchen means that it is always within view, making it a room for self-expression, status making, and conspicuous consumption. In her ethnographic research of home decoration in London, Alison Clarke concludes, “The house objectifies the vision the occupants have of themselves in the eyes of others and as such it becomes an entity and process to live up to, give time to, show off to” (qtd. in Shove and Hand). In this way, status and sociability are linked. As the kitchen becomes a more public space meant for socializing rather than a private space for cooking, status plays a larger role.

Applying Clarke’s findings, trophy kitchen owners are more likely to invite friends and acquaintances into their kitchens in order to show off their status and taste. In an article that appeared in *The Boston Globe*, new trophy kitchen owner Jay Garner is profiled after having spent \$33,000 to update

his kitchen with high-end appliances and marble countertops. He suggests that the kitchen boosts his and his wife’s social standing, saying, “My wife loves it. She likes it when people come over and say, ‘Wow!’” (“Cooking Up a Status Symbol”). Southerton’s research also confirms the tendency to show off a kitchen in order to gain status. In his study of English homes, working class families did not socialize in the home and viewed their kitchens within a functional frame only. More affluent families, however, considered their kitchens to be social spaces whose use and decoration were linked to identity. Southerton concludes, “Consumption is most readily understood as symbolic when others have the opportunity to read the message; the lack of visitors...reduced [the kitchen’s] symbolic potential” (196).

From these examples, it becomes clear that socializing makes the kitchen a space for status making. This is also evident as Leslie Mann begins her *Chicago Tribune* article, “What’s Your Kitchen Style? Ideas and Tips to Help You Create Your Dream Kitchen,” by warning readers, “Your kitchen style not only says a lot about you, but sets the tone as family and friends gather around the hub of the home.” Mann interviewed several kitchen style experts to identify the latest trends. Among them, she found that, “Islands have replaced peninsulas and are more often at bar height. Their stools welcome visitors as though they are part of the neighborhood pub or martini bar.” As with Darren Morgan’s LED-lit kitchen island, these images of trophy kitchens emphasize the public over the private. Even as a space for family and friends to gather, the trophy kitchen emphasizes status, socializing, and public entertaining, rather than private domesticity and cooking. In this space, the brand of one’s appliances and whether or not one has a kitchen island are reflections of one’s distinction and social worthiness.

Within the trophy kitchen, high-end commercial appliances previously reserved for the professional kitchen, such as stainless steel refrigerators and ranges, outwardly communicate status as they demonstrate the merging of public and private. While popular designs of past decades attempted



to conceal or camouflage appliances, current trends put them proudly on display. Outfitting one's kitchen with high-end appliances is not just a demonstration of status and distinction. It is an act that blurs the line between public and private, as the trophy kitchen becomes a location where dreams and aspirations are played out in a sort of culinary theater.

An idealized space, the trophy kitchen emerges as a site for future hopes, dreams, and fantasies. Shove and Hand's research on kitchen consumption found that people made kitchen design decisions for a desired future state "in order to foster habits to which they aspire" (10), revealing an orientation toward a future self rather than the present. In her analysis of kitchen renewal trends in New Zealand, Christina MacKay makes a similar argument, stating, "The twenty-first-century kitchen appears to have become bound up with the pursuit of happiness. The ideal of a 'dream' kitchen is a common aspiration" (5). The concept of the dream kitchen is a powerful one that resonates deeply with homebuyers and homeowners who seek to purchase a space in which they can imagine a brighter future and better version of themselves.

As a site where future aspirations, dreams, and ideals come to life, the kitchen is also a space for culinary romance and fantasy. For example, Jack Schwefel, the CEO of Sur La Table, attributes part of the company's success in selling high-end kitchen gadgets throughout the most recent economic recession to "the romance" that the gadgets provide (McArdle). Simply by purchasing the object, consumers can imagine themselves using it. Imaginative use of these culinary tools can symbolize a variety of fantasies, representing anything from nostalgia for simpler times to nuclear families eating round the kitchen table to the ideal of the housewife and homemaker. These fantasies reinforce the kitchen as a center for domestic ideals. While achieving these ideals can be challenging or impossible, culinary consumerism fulfills these fantasies at least on a surface level.

A romanticized site for dream making, the kitchen also serves as public theater within the private domain. For example, MacKay argues, "The practice of viewing kitchens as a 'stage-set' is

common in [the] USA" (5). Kitchen design, décor, and use act out a culinary theater. By virtue of its central location, the kitchen's literal positioning within the home casts it in the leading role of the homeowners' domestic and social life. Increasingly, kitchen décor has put kitchen equipment and ingredients on display rather than hiding them away in cupboards. For example, gleaming pots and pans often dangle in trophy kitchens from racks on the wall or from the ceiling like pieces of modern art. Open-air cupboards or translucent cupboard faces put dishes within view and on display. Lighting under or within cabinets creates an effect not unlike a museum exhibit. Considered a key feature in today's ideal kitchen, the kitchen island is also a performative prop that puts cooking front and center and in easy view of all guests. With such props, the kitchen takes on theatrical qualities, especially when men are doing the cooking.

The expanding role and rate of men cooking in the home—referred to as the "dudification of cooking" by Helen Rosner, the online editor for *Saveur*—not only reshapes domestic gender roles, but also changes the role and meaning of the kitchen (McArdle). The kitchen enacts the separate spheres division of labor in which women are primarily responsible for cooking in the home to feed the family, while men more often cook professionally as chefs in restaurants. Trends reveal that more men are taking on the role of home cook, however. A 2007 Los Angeles based study reported that men prepared one of every five meals in the home (Sullivan). A 2006 Pew Research Center study found that 32 percent of men say that they very much enjoy cooking, an increase from 25 percent in 1989 (Jenkins). While these numbers may suggest increasing domestic gender equality, men's and women's home cooking appear to be perceived differently. Even when working outside of the home, a woman who cooks for her family is viewed as unexceptional, while a man who cooks is viewed as a celebrity within his own home (Swenson 20). Some have attributed this to the number of male chefs featured on the Food Network, which has transformed cooking from a feminine duty into a masculine performance. For example, Rebecca

Swenson argues, "Food television adopts a 'masculine domesticity' that helps redefine the private kitchen in ways that give men a place at the stove" (47). Furthermore, she states, "The vocational roots of professional chefs allow male hosts to embrace the private kitchen as an important site of work" (47). Increasing male interest in cooking is exemplified in cooking show viewership. The Food Network estimates that men make up 35 to 40 percent of their viewing audience and characterize the network's prime time programming as "gender neutral" (Levine).

Whether on television or within the home, a man cooking transforms the domestic kitchen space. Hugh J. Rushing, the executive vice president of the Cookware Manufacturers Association, states, "Growing male interest in cooking is one of the bright spots in the kitchen retail market. Men tend to have no problem buying a special pan for paella, if the recipe calls for it, whereas women will make do with a regular skillet or pan" (Guzman). He provides support for this male consumer behavior, stating, "Specialty cookware sales are up 17 percent since 2000." Dr. Ross Koppel, an adjunct professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, traces the rise of male family cooks back to the 1980s and contends, "It's only since men have been cooking that you can justify the \$275 knife" (Guzman). Guzman extrapolates, saying that male interest in cooking is part of what has contributed to the growing trend of trophy kitchens. As evidence, he notes "the replacement of trophy heads on the walls of the den with glistening granite trophy kitchens packed tight with All-Clad pans and stainless-steel professional-style appliances." In this way, gender roles not only influence who performs home cooking and how it is perceived, but also shape the role and meaning of the trophy kitchen.

**CONCLUSION** The emergence of the trophy kitchen demonstrates that the kitchen has evolved significantly and its intended purpose is now more complex. With the rise of "foodie" culture, the multitude of trophy kitchen images in the media, and the ideal of the kitchen as the focal point of the home, possessing the latest in kitchen technology

and design stands out as potent status symbol. As such, the kitchen is not only a symbol for who one is, but for who one desires to be. The kitchen is no longer simply a room for cooking but a space within the home that symbolizes class status and dreams for the future. The kitchen is an apt nexus for aspiration as the kitchen has been historically viewed as the production site of dutiful housewives, unified families, and daily sustenance. By possessing a trophy kitchen, individuals consume symbols of an ideal life, even they do not cook in it.

The ironic phenomenon of the ornamental trophy kitchen expertly communicates "the restlessness of society" which is "manifested in the details of kitchen design and décor" (Shove and Hand 2). Since the 1950s, the convenience food industry has developed a plethora of products in order to make cooking optional, if not obsolete. In doing so, it would follow that having a kitchen would also become optional. Yet the opposite has occurred.

Those who have imagined the kitchen of the future predicted its gradual disappearance. Turn-of-the-century feminists argued for kitchen-less homes that would free women from the burden of daily cooking (Hayden). Frigidaire's Dream Kitchen of Tomorrow, featured at the 1957 Paris Exhibition of the Future, included "an IBM punch card recipe file, automatic dispensing, and online TV ordering" (Alter). In her history of the kitchen, Molly Harrison predicted that the kitchen of the future would take the form of a cylindrical station, including all appliances and equipment in a compact unit well suited for a spaceship (187). Instead of realizing these visions, the kitchen has become the focal point of the home. Rather than shrinking away, it has become more prominent by assuming the social functions of other rooms. The kitchen emerges victorious as a social space that communicates self-expression, style, taste, status, entertainment, and hopes for a better future. Although this paper reveals a trend in which it is no longer used primarily as a space for cooking, the kitchen is still the heart of the home, as it has been for hundreds of years. ■

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**COCONUT SELLER** | 2013  
by *Cynthia Bertelsen*

Cynthia Bertelsen is non-degree graduate student at Virginia Tech, focusing on art and photography.





**FISH HEAD** | 2008  
by Noel Bielaczyc

Noel Bielaczyc is a fishmonger, scientific illustrator, and MLA candidate in the BU Gastronomy Program.



# “Sustenance Out of Refuse”: Detroit, Invisible Capital, and the Search for Food Justice

**abstract** | *In recent years, Detroit has been largely portrayed by mass media as a site of desolation and desertion. The city’s citizens, however, have another story to tell. This paper examines the Detroit Food Justice Task Force (DFJTF), an organization designed to improve food security within the city. DFJTF seeks to empower native Detroiters by helping them to discover their own “invisible capital,” or existing resources hidden from view. Using qualitative discourse analysis to examine DFJTF’s website and social media content, this paper analyzes the overlapping categories of race, space, and capital as they intersect with food justice work in Detroit. This paper argues that DFJTF uses these categories to challenge mainstream, racialized depictions of Detroit as a barren landscape, instead describing the city as rich in invisible human and spatial capital.*

Detroit is widely portrayed by the mainstream media as a hotbed of crime and urban decay. In 2012, *Forbes* listed Detroit as America’s Most Dangerous City with the highest national rate of violent crime for the fourth straight year (Fisher), while articles in the *New York Times* and *Reuters* describe a financial crisis so appallingly bad that the city cannot pay for enough streetlights, ambulances, police or fire fighters to meet its needs (Davey and Walsh; Neaving and Woodall). According to the U.S. Census, Detroit’s population decreased 25% since 2000 for a total population of 713,777 in 2010. Of those remaining residents, one in three lives below the poverty threshold (Southeast Michigan Council of Governments 1).

The appearance of “ruin porn,” or pictures of decaying and abandoned buildings, is perhaps most suggestive of what Detroit has come to embody in the popular imagination. In 2009, *Time Magazine* published a series of pictures by French photographers Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre, titled “Detroit’s Beautiful, Horrible Decline.” The collection portrays shattered windows in Michigan Central Station, the decrepit remains of a grand piano in the Lee Plaza Hotel, discarded textbooks and overturned desks in unused schoolrooms. In one recent article in the *New York Times* Maga-

zine, the author demonstrates how Detroit’s ruins have come to define the city – a lesson he comprehended after encountering European tourists in the long-abandoned Packard plant who had come “to see the end of the world” (Binelli).

The picture of Detroit’s foodscapes is similarly bleak. According to a food systems report by the Detroit Food Policy Council, the city has long experienced a dearth of national grocery store chains, with the last one closing its doors in 2007 (Simon and Gabriel 3). While the opening of a Whole Foods broke this trend in June 2013, critics argue that the store is too expensive, claiming it remains out of the price range for Detroit’s poorer residents (Abbey-Lambertz; Sachteleben). What’s more, one lone store is not much use to the two thirds of Detroit households that do not own personal vehicles, particularly in a city where, due to slashed budgets, public transportation is already “abysmal and getting worse” (Simon and Gabriel 3). A food desert analysis of Detroit by the Mari Gallagher Group contends that, given the lack of accessible, full-service grocery stores and few remaining independent groceries, more than half of the USDA Food Stamp retailers in Detroit are so-called “fringe” retailers such as liquor, party and convenience stores (8). Thus, for Detroit’s poor, access to healthy food

choices such as produce, whole grains and lean meats is a significant challenge.

Detroit residents, however, are pushing back against what they see as a one-sided portrayal of their home as a blighted, post-industrial city. A number of Detroit-based blogs, photography projects, and articles have begun to publically question the assumption that Detroit is empty and abandoned. Among these efforts are a multitude from food justice organizations that have sprung up in the Motor City, among them the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network, the Detroit Food Policy Council, Grown In Detroit, Corktown Community Kitchen, Brother Nature Produce, D-Town Farm, and many more.

Some of the above-mentioned organizations have either conducted their own studies regarding food justice in Detroit, such as reports published through the Detroit Food Policy Council, or have been the subject of academic analyses. Kami Pothukuchi, a member of the Detroit Food Policy Council and Professor of Urban Studies at Wayne State University, has published multiple studies examining food justice initiatives. In one Detroit-specific example, Pothukuchi describes the SEED-Wayne Campus-Community Collaborative, a program “developed to build sustainable food systems on Wayne State University’s campus and in Detroit communities” (193). Another Wayne State University faculty member, Monica M. White, has developed case studies on Detroit-based organizations such as D-Town Farm and the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network. Looking at D-Town Farm specifically, White argues that the organization uses urban agriculture as a method of agency in a landscape characterized by what African American community members perceive as the abandonment of political and industrial leaders. The farm workers “assume control of their food-security movement” by “challeng[ing] the government’s capacity to provide a safe and clean food supply” (189). By focusing specifically on the Detroit Food Justice Task Force as a prominent voice of the city’s alternative food movement, this paper contributes to an existing body of academic work being conducted at the intersection of community

development and food access work within Detroit.

The Detroit Food Justice Task Force, or DFJTF, was launched in 2010 through the East Michigan Environmental Action Council as part of a grant awarded by the Kresge Foundation to begin “implementing recommendations to improve food security in Detroit” (The Kresge Foundation). According to its website, DFJTF began as a collaboration between eleven founding member organizations, which include “local growers, social, environmental and media justice organizations, schools, churches, food educators, restaurants, caterers and restaurant suppliers, the City of Detroit, representatives from the Michigan Environmental Council, community activists, residents and stakeholders.” Its founding members have ties to a variety of Detroit food justice institutions. In one example of the embeddedness of DFJTF within the broader Detroit food justice network, one founder is a co-creator of the organization as well as a founding member of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network and the Detroit Food Policy Council, where she helped draft Detroit’s 2008 Food Security Policy.

Although DFJTF does not provide an explicit definition of food justice on its website, the group’s mission statement is a close approximation:

The Detroit Food Justice Task Force is a consortium of People of Color led organizations and allies that share a commitment to creating a food security plan for Detroit that is: sustainable, that provides healthy, affordable foods for all of the city’s people; that is based on best-practices and programs that work; and that is just and equitable in the distribution of food and jobs.

Additionally, DFJTF relies upon the Principles of Food Sovereignty, defined broadly as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” and included on the website’s home page, to inform its food justice work through community and youth outreach (La Via Campesina).



In its outreach to Detroit communities, DFJTF holds regular gatherings such as “Cook Eat Talk” and “Food Justice Fridays” community dinners and discussions, as well as monthly film showings. DFJTF has also published three “cookzines” which share local resources such as “recipes and food justice resources,” has produced a 45 minute documentary highlighting the “Cook Eat Talk” gatherings, and has organized the Detroit Youth Food Justice Task Force. Such activities are highlighted in DFJTF’s communication strategy, for which the organization utilizes a website and social media platforms as methods of outreach. By examining the language DFJTF uses on its website and through social media, this paper argues that the organization is challenging the mass media portrayal of Detroit as a city abandoned by businesses and residents alike. Instead, DFJTF describes Detroit as a city rich in hidden and under-utilized resources, or “invisible capital,” just waiting to be tapped.

**THEORY/ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK** This paper analyzes DFJTF’s communications within the context of a post-Marxist critique of capitalism, building in particular upon Nathan McClintock’s food desert analysis of Oakland, California. In his paper “From Industrial Garden to Food Desert,” McClintock examines the devaluation properties of urban capital in Oakland. McClintock argues that certain types of capital, when “visibly inscribed on the landscape in the form of buildings and infrastructure,” play a role in the devaluation of spaces in an urban landscape (94). This process contributes to the development of devalued spaces such as food deserts:

During historical moments of capital over accumulation following economic booms, surplus capital is invested in this kind of fixed or immobile capital, transforming the urban environment. During economic downturns, as capital retreats from urban industrial zones, the postindustrial city nevertheless retains its industrial character, albeit devalued, dilapidated, and scarred by pollution, often to such a great degree that it precludes future investment. (McClintock 94)

The physical alterations on the urban landscape of these “boom and bust” cycles is an example of what Julie Guthman describes as the “spatial fix” of capitalism in her 2011 critique of neoliberalism, *Weighing In*. By “spatial fix,” Guthman refers to how capitalism traditionally responds to problems of overaccumulation. Says Guthman, “When there is too much capital in circulation and not enough profitable investment opportunities, capitalism stagnates, sometimes profoundly” (165). Capitalism seeks to solve this issue with “the displacement of the problem of overaccumulation elsewhere in space” – or the “spatial fix” (165). In Detroit’s case, the “spatial fix” manifested itself as expanded infrastructure development around the city.

Although Guthman is referring to the human body as the site of a spatial fix in which capitalism solves the problem of food overproduction through obesity, the concept meshes nicely with McClintock’s scrutiny of urban space devaluation. Buildings and infrastructure provide the spatial fix of capitalism’s excess accumulation, as urban planners expand beyond Detroit’s limits when space becomes less available within the city. While this strategy may work in the short-term, capitalism must expand outwards with every successive overaccumulation crisis. As a result, urban centers such as Detroit, once mid-century bustling hubs of commerce, gradually ceded their primacy to the suburbs as manufacturers sought virgin spaces upon which they could satisfy their next spatial fix. This practice leaves the urban interior covered in outdated infrastructure, which, as it decays, becomes even further devalued in a cycle “of capital accumulation and devaluation, a palimpsest of building, decay and renewal” (McClintock 94).

At the same time, these processes contribute to a racialized delineation within such urban spaces. Numerous scholars have examined the history of racist hiring and housing practices in the U.S. food system, many of which still exist and continue to impact present-day communities. For example, Green, Green and Kleiner examine structural barriers and institutional racism facing black farmers in the American south, saying, “From their beginning days in the United States, black farmers were de-

financed institutionally as being less worthy than white farmers...Even today, black farmers are viewed with indifference at best and contempt at worse by the mainstream agricultural establishment" (50). Another examination of agriculture and racism by Adams and Gorton argues that New Deal resettlement projects through the Farm Security Administration displaced sharecroppers in an effort to "modernize rural America," permanently altering many communities as a result (326). Such barriers have not been confined to African-American populations – the course of agricultural industry in California has witnessed the exploitation, abuse, and exclusion of immigrant communities up to the present day (Minkoff-Zern et al.; Brown and Getz).

In the case of Oakland, California, McClintock illustrates that as jobs left the cities, so too did white populations. McClintock argues that this trend was the product of practices such as "zoning, redlining, and neighborhood covenants" that were used to "demarcate and quarantine devaluation to prevent its impacts from bleeding over" into majority white areas (95). The end result was a "suburban workforce [that] was largely white," in what appears to have been a common trend in post-industrial American cities (McClintock 103). As a result, devalued urban spaces such as food deserts "disproportionately impact people of color," a trend that holds true in Detroit (McClintock 89). According to the Detroit African-American History Project from Wayne State University, African Americans made up just 16.1% of the city's population in 1950. This percentage increased to 44.5% by 1970 and 76% by 1990. Today, Detroit's population is 82.7% African American, compared to 14.2% in the rest of the state (U.S. Bureau of the Census).

It is fair to say that in Detroit, as in many American urban areas, people of color are unevenly affected by the negative effects of capitalism and the decay of the urban environment. Within the alternative food movement, a number of solutions have been offered to combat such outcomes. The organization Just Food, based in New York City, is representative of this approach within alternative food movements. The Just Food website defines food justice as "communities exercising their right

to grow, sell, and eat healthy food. Healthy food is fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally-appropriate and grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers and animals." Just Food advocates Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), farmers markets, and urban gardens as methods to combat food insecurity, and provides community outreach programming to educate communities about the benefits of local, organic food.

Numerous critiques have been made of the alternative food movement and organizations such as Just Food. While the scope of these commentaries is far too broad to summarize here, a few points should be emphasized, particularly around race. As Guthman describes in her article "'If They Only Knew': The Unbearable Whiteness of Alternative Food," the alternative food movement is largely a "white" space, in which whiteness is seen as "'normal' or unmarked." The spaces and practices of alternative food are coded as "white cultural spaces" in which whiteness is normalized through "colorblindness," or "refusing to see (or refusing to admit) race difference," and "universalism: the assumption that values held primarily by whites are normal and widely shared" (267). Such assumptions and practices erase community differences, including dissimilar histories, experiences, preferences, and ideals.

Nicole Dawkins finds similar practices at play in her critique of the Detroit "Do-It-Yourself" or "craft" movement. Dawkins begins by examining the abandonment discourse surrounding Detroit. Such discourse ignores and therefore alienates the communities of color currently living and working in Detroit through descriptions of the city "as a dystopic wasteland but also as a kind of utopic 'blank canvas': an empty space waiting to be inscribed and transformed by artists and the arrival of a new creative class" (266). Needless to say, this "new creative class" happens to be mostly white. According to Dawkins, such interlopers are attempting to "recolonize" the "empty" Detroit, despite "the fact that the city is still home to at least a million people and a wide spectrum of hopes and desires for a more 'liveable' city" (267). These tensions – between communities of color and

"colonizing" white residents, between the popular imagery of an abandoned "urban prairie" and the lived realities of an existing and vibrant population – define the space in which organizations such as DFJTF must operate.

Furthermore, both Guthman and Dawkins place their respective critiques within the context of neoliberalism, arguing that many food and DIY activists are perpetuating neoliberalist barriers. Dawkins demonstrates that "craftwork" discourses engage in "reproducing neoliberalist rationalities and limiting the political potential" of its participants, by promoting "pleasure and fulfillment" as compensation for creating and selling handmade goods, which "might be otherwise felt to be unstable, precarious, and even unstable work" (261-62). Although DIY participants may promote "anticorporate" viewpoints, Dawkins notes that solutions championed by "Makers" to create a "handmade Detroit" are in actuality placed "within the mechanism of the creative market," beholden to the logic of capital (279). Meanwhile, Guthman laments over-used phrases such as, "If people only knew where their food came from..." as "idioms" that are "insensitive or ignorant (or both) of the ways in which they reflect whitened cultural histories and practices" (275). What's more, such sayings also place the onus of responsibility upon the very groups food activists are attempting to assist, by implying that any rational being with enough sense and a little education would surely make the "right" choice to eat locally and organically grown produce. The acceptance of these assumptions parallels the central premise of neoliberal logic, in which individuals are held responsible for their own successes and downfalls, and structural explanations are downplayed or ignored.

As this paper will demonstrate, the Detroit Food Justice Task Force employs similar tactics to other food justice organizations through their community outreach programs, including promoting local agriculture and community gardening as sources of fresh food, publishing educational materials, hosting film screenings, and planning neighborhood events such as their regular "Cook Eat Talk" discussions. A less noticeable role that the organization

has assumed, however, is countering the largely negative mainstream media portrayal of Detroit and its communities as blighted and abandoned. Additionally, DFJTF embraces racial narratives and weaves them into its website and social media content, rather than suppressing or ignoring them. A discursive analysis of DFJTF's website and social media sheds light on how this organization views Detroit and its own role within the city's food system, as well as how DFJTF is working to shift portrayals and perceptions of the Detroit's community.

**METHODOLOGY** This paper investigates how the Detroit Food Justice Task Force views Detroit and food justice through its website copy, Facebook account, and Twitter feed. Given that DFJTF objects to the mass media portrayal of their community, discourse analysis of the organization's own communication strategies is used to shed light on its position and attitudes regarding the city. Discourse analysis, or the "study of language in context," is a methodological approach that qualitatively studies spoken and written discourse as methods of producing "versions of the social world" (Bloor and Wood, 53). Loosely, discourse can be defined as "a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)" (Phillips and Jørgenson 1). Past studies using discourse analyses have examined a wide range of media, such as newspapers, radio shows, and television interviews (Potter; Torck; Wood and Kroger). The use of social media, however, is a recent entrant to the field.

By utilizing DFJTF's website copy and social media accounts such as Facebook and Twitter, this paper contributes to a small but expanding field of academic work that treats social media as an analytical medium that is rapidly growing in relevance. According to one article, "Social media... [has] profoundly changed the way that information can be shared online. Now, almost anyone with a broadband internet connection or a smart phone can share ideas, data, and opinions with just about anyone else on the planet" (O'Connor 470). O'Connor's article, published in 2013, mirrors a mounting awareness of social media, which he defines as "digital technologies and platforms

such as blogs, wikis, forums, content aggregators, sharing sites, and social networks like Facebook and Twitter" (470). Clearly, content derived from social media platforms is starting to be viewed as rich matter for exploration.

O'Connor's article adds to a plethora of recently published work relating to social media as a space for content analysis. The increased social media presence in political arenas prompted one study to examine "1.42 million social media units on Facebook and Twitter to provide broad insights into dominant topics and themes that were prevalent in the 2012 U.S. election campaign online" (Groshok and Al-Rawi 563). The role of social media within the broader context of political engagement is a relatively common theme within this form of discourse analysis, indicating rising rates of social media and internet outreach as a political strategy (Holt et al.; Skoric and Poor; Valenzuela). Social media content analysis is not limited to exploring political engagement, however. Other academic fields investigating social media include public health, epidemiology and journalism studies (Lehmann; Madianou; Rueter and Kok).

Because websites and social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter are publically available on the internet intended to represent DFJTF's activities and viewpoint to the public, they provide a valuable source of discursive data for exploring the organization's representations of community food justice issues. Although DFJTF's website and social media accounts are not always updated on a regular basis (with the exception of the DFJTF Facebook account, which is updated daily), they are nevertheless useful tools for examining how DFJTF depicts both itself and the city of Detroit.

The text analyzed in this paper covers a wide range of dates representing the different sources. The website does not provide publication dates for its text, but it is probable that the majority of the copy was written when the website went live in 2011. Tweets were analyzed dating back to February 2011, a little over a year from when the data was originally collected in March 2013. Due to the significantly larger amount of material available on DFJTF's Facebook account, data collection was lim-

ited to February and March 2013, which provided a comparable amount of material to the Twitter feed.

Analysis revealed three primary categories within DFJTF's discussion: race, space, and capital. These categories are used to identify how DFJTF views mainstream portrayals of Detroit and how the organization chooses to combat these depictions. However, these categories are not mutually exclusive. As DFJTF's discourse illustrates, they are inextricable within both the mainstream media rendering of Detroit and DFJTF's own representation of the city and its residents.

**ANALYSIS** In March 2013, Detroit was embroiled in a controversial resolution by Michigan governor Rick Snyder to appoint an Emergency Financial Manager for the city. Despite the fact that Detroit was over \$14 billion in debt with a history of financial mismanagement and political corruption, organizations such as DFJTF were far from pleased with the decision (Davey and Walsh; Neavling and Woodall). The articles posted on DFJTF's Facebook and Twitter accounts, as well as the language surrounding this topic, illustrate the racialized undertones of the decision to hire an Emergency Financial Manager as well as mainstream media portrayals of the controversy specifically and Detroit as a whole.

In one example, an article posted on March 27 titled "Majority white communities avoid Emergency Financial managers with help from Republicans Denby and Rogers" began with the following quote: "[M]ajority African American communities in Michigan are forced to live under the rule of unelected dictators...called Emergency Financial Managers." A comment on the post says, "The whole EM thing [is] suspiciously confined to black & brown communities... as Cindy Denby [Republican Michigan State House Representative] put it, Emergency Managers aren't for places like Livingston County [majority white, wealthy county west of Detroit]." A quote from another article posted on March 21 exclaims, "With the appointment of an EFM, Governor Snyder is transforming Detroit into an occupied colony within the State." The article itself is titled, "Detroit Citizens Prepare to Fight



Their Corporate Master," calling to mind echoes of America's history of slavery.

The underlying message of these posts and comments is that the appointment of an EFM would subvert the democratic process, putting communities of People of Color under the power of white political figures such as Governor Snyder and Representative Denby. A comment dated March 27 reads, "it [sic] feels like somebody has plans that we've not been allowed to see or be a part of creating." This comment expresses the desire to be part of a transparent, Democratic process, and reiterates earlier posts to "support Democracy" by signing and sharing online petitions requesting federal intervention. It also echoes the organization's website, in which DFJTF chides the mayor for "say[ing] he wants to hear from communities, [but] his actions thus far leave community organizations in the dark."

Although race and space are linked together through histories of race-based urban planning practices in such cities as Detroit (McClintock; Zenk et al.), the two categories also overlap in discussions of environmental and food justice. Just as spaces designated as food deserts are unevenly populated by people of color, so too are areas with higher than average ecological contamination. According to Alkon and Agyeman, "Low-income people and people of color bear a disproportionate share of the burden of environmental degradation [and] are more likely to live in neighborhoods dominated by toxic industries and diesel emissions" (7).

On its website, DFJTF acknowledges these links, which include the Principles of Environmental Justice drafted and adopted by the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991. A number of parallels exist between environmental justice and food justice movements, with the focus on "protection from environmental pollution" in the former mirrored by "ensur[ing] equal access to the environmental benefit of healthy food" for the latter (Alkon and Agyeman 8). Furthermore, both movements "rely on an institutional concept of racism" in which "institutions such as government agencies, the military, or the prison system adopt policies that exclude or target

people of color either overtly or in their effects" as opposed to the popular belief that racism arises from individuals making conscious decisions (Alkon and Agyeman 8). This focus on racial equality and justice is reflected in the Principles of Environmental Justice included on the DFJTF website:

We, the People of Color, gathered together at this multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities;...to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves;...and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples...

Thus, the "spatial fix" of Detroit's industry is not only inscribed on the landscape via infrastructure, but also through the dispersal of toxic and harmful pollutants. In this way, DFJTF connects the spatially located pollution of Detroit's communities and urban areas to a racialized history of disempowerment.

The term "food desert," a common phrase in food justice discourse, carries with it similar racial associations. The 2008 Farm Bill defined food deserts as "an area in the United States with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly such an area composed of predominately low-income neighborhoods and communities" (Agricultural Marketing Service). Detroit, with 36.2% of its residents below poverty level and a median household income of \$27,862, would seem to fit the bill as a community rife with food deserts (U.S. Bureau of the Census). In fact, several areas of Detroit have been identified as food deserts in past analyses and studies (Zenk et al.; Gallagher).

Despite such studies and the ubiquity of the phrase within popular media, "food desert" is conspicuously absent from DFJTF's language. The term does not appear once on the website, or in

the material collected from DFJTF's Facebook or Twitter feeds. DFJTF does, however, use language reminiscent of "food desert" discourse. The website describes Detroit as "abandoned by major supermarket chains," saying, "We don't have major grocery stores, but we do have plenty of junk food, fast food and processed food in the city." DFJTF recognizes that food access and food security, phrases which appear multiple times, are hurdles for many residents. The website reads, "We are certain that if the majority of people in this city could count on healthy regular food, the impact would be a healthier, more vibrant, creative city... Imagine the solutions and energy this city could have if everyone who lived here had access to good healthy food regularly."

Since DFJTF uses language suggestive of food deserts, the complete absence of the term likely suggests a deliberate avoidance. The key to its conspicuous absence lies in what the phrase "food desert" implies, particularly when described in mainstream media outlets. As McClintock notes in his history of Oakland, California, "Some...reject the image of a bleak and parched urban landscape... Others hope to throw out such sensationalist taxonomy altogether, with its potentially racialized subtext linking people of color to exotic and/or depraved environments" (113). The phrase "food desert" evokes a barren space, void of anything life-giving or useful. It also calls to mind "desert" as a verb, as in a space that has been deserted or abandoned.

Such language of desolation runs directly counter to how DFJTF hopes to portray Detroit. The organization speaks of "approaching Detroit as a vibrant city with tons of resources and skills and proposals, rather than a blank canvas to paint our dreams on." This attitude recognizes the presence and history of established Detroit communities, with their own ideas and solutions to offer. To DFJTF, Detroit is no desert, but a community buttressed with rich networks and untapped resources, or what DFJTF calls "invisible capital."

On its website, DFJTF cites author Chris Rabb in its description of invisible capital. In his book *Invisible Capital: How Unseen Forces Shape Entrepreneurial*

*Opportunity*, Rabb defines "invisible capital" as "the toolkit of our skills, knowledge, language, networks, and experiences...unseen forces that dramatically impact business viability." As evidenced by material from their website and social media, DFJTF has appropriated the term and made it their own. DFJTF defines invisible capital on their website as "the unseen skills, networks and relationships that can exist and make the difference between success and failure in the business world, and in life." Rather than using invisible capital as a tool for business opportunities or entrepreneurship, however, DFJTF employs it as a strategy for achieving food and social justice within Detroit communities. In this manner, DFJTF distances itself from the criticisms of other food activism movements and "DIY" organizations, which locate

the solution to the city's social problems entirely within the mechanism of the creative market. Just as in food activism, this entrepreneurship has the (unintended) effect of depoliticizing the structural socioeconomic problems in the city by rendering them as individual responsibility. (Dawkins 279)

DFJTF wrests the concept of invisible capital from its original context, which is embedded within the logic of capitalism, and makes it a tool for asset mapping and community renewal. Using such community events as the "Cook Eat Talk" gatherings as a starting point, DFJTF employs the premise of invisible capital "to map the unseen food justice skills, networks and relationships in Detroit."

From this point of view, areas such as vacant lots cease to be unsightly eyesores or spaces devalued by the capitalist cycle of growth and decay. Rather, they become part of the hidden system of available resources present throughout Detroit, a precious source of underutilized spatial capital. A tweet from a "Cook Eat Talk" gathering summarizes this shift in thinking: "in my neighborhood we don't have vacant lots. i used to think that was good – now i see those lots as a luxury, a food source [sic]." The vacant lot, once a symbol of urban blight and abandonment by capitalist interests, from this

perspective comes instead to represent rebirth and renewal, empowerment and vitality.

The vacant lot also encapsulates DFJTF's overall relationship to the local in a further expression of spatial awareness. DFJTF's attitude towards localism is summarized in the following quote from its website: "We wanted to do two things – connect Detroit to healthy local food resources, and help develop an economy of small local businesses providing this healthy local food to the city, so that Detroit's dollars flow back into the city." For DFJTF, localism becomes a strategy for sparking economic growth and job opportunities in Detroit. DFJTF envisions a food system run and owned by its own communities, a "cooperative economics for food systems." The website links the lack of access to healthy foods with residents' financial woes:

We do have plenty of junk food, fast food and processed food in the city to waste our money on...In a city that doesn't have nearly enough jobs for all the people here, why do we keep spending our money on food shipped in from elsewhere, pouring our money out of the city? We want to re-direct those funds into our local economy, while making ourselves healthier.

In DFJTF's approach to localism, "local" is associated with health. Food justice organizations have been criticized for conflating "local" with "organic" or "sustainable" (Born and Purcell). DFJTF does approach local food as a healthier alternative to the highly processed junk foods available for much of the city. It is worth noting, however, that the word "organic" does not appear in any of the written material analyzed for this paper. Rather than simply assuming "local" is preferable, as Born and Purcell censure other alternative food organizations for doing, DFJTF seeks to use localism as a scalar and spatial strategy to achieve health and justice goals by reclaiming devalued spaces, providing economic opportunities, and increasing access to healthier food options through such tactics as community gardening programs.

However, DFJTF's use of localism as a strategy is not so much a deliberate choice as it is a defensive

approach dictated by Detroit's preexisting political and economic structures. DFJTF's language on their website and social media illuminates a lack of trust between Detroit residents and those with political and economic power who are not embracing local resources. DFJTF accuses politicians and decision makers of deciding to "prioritize outside proposals... over those that come from lifelong Detroiters" and "leav[ing] community organizations in the dark." The "Cook Eat Talk" gatherings, on the other hand, celebrate and discuss the "thousands of people in Detroit who are taking matters into their own hands." These citizens approach localism as a survival strategy, using it as a tool to tackle "feeding their neighbors, organizing rides to grocery stores, joining emergency food kitchens [and] community gardens, [and] holding liquor stores accountable for the food they sell." DFJTF describes these tactics as the beginnings of an "economic rebirth that really feeds Detroit," in comparison to the current strategy of "economic growth that displaces and disempowers the city residents." In short, where city officials and funds have been found wanting, the residents themselves have been forced to find within their own communities the hidden resources, or invisible capital, that they need to survive.

DFJTF makes a distinction here between the neoliberal definition of economic growth, which requires an ever-expanding "spatial fix" to survive, and their vision of "economic rebirth" that makes use of Detroit's invisible capital. This is also a noteworthy difference compared to the "creative class" described by Dawkins, for whom "pleasure, autonomy, (consumer) choice" are drivers of the DIY movement participation (263). Dawkins notes, "In this context... doing-it-yourself may in fact serve the interests of post-Fordist capitalism and reinforce the city's deep-rooted structural inequalities" (263). In other words, DIY groups and food activists, by focusing too heavily on the importance of individual agency as opposed to structural solutions, may end up circling back around to the conditions that prompted their actions in the first place. As noted earlier, however, DFJTF does not approach concepts such as localism or invisible

capital by choice, but rather by necessity. The failures of both industry and government to alleviate structural flaws have prompted DFJTF to seek solutions from other quarters.

In a city that has been devalued and abandoned by corporate, capitalist interests, the premise of invisible capital helps DFJTF uncover the value within hidden and marginalized communities in Detroit. One section of the website illustrates perfectly the contrast between mainstream, corporate “solutions” and this homegrown, marginalized resistance:

The mayor continues to prioritize outside proposals and plans for how to address the real disparity and resource gaps in the city over those that come from lifelong Detroiters, and while he says he wants to hear from communities, his actions thus far leave community organizations in the dark. But movements are like mushrooms – we grow well in the shadows, underground, making sustenance out of refuse.

The symbol of the mushroom is especially apt, considering that mushrooms grow in dense networks underground, only developing fruits above the soil in order to spread their seed. Like the underground networks of mushrooms, DFJTF notes on their website that “Detroit, like many inner city communities, has rich social and environmental capital that has been largely untapped or underutilized in addressing food security.” As described earlier, DFJTF blames politicians that keep “looking beyond our city borders for solutions to our *apparent scarcity*, instead of looking into the soil and people of Detroit to see the *true abundance*” (emphasis added). The choice of such phrases illustrates DFJTF’s viewpoint that the portrayal of Detroit as abandoned and decaying is an illusion – the potential of Detroit’s people and communities, their hidden capital, is hidden just beneath the surface.

When discussing the city’s invisible capital, DFJTF directly contrasts the language of blight and abandonment used by mainstream media with a language of birth and renewal. While describing invisible capital and its importance for the “Cook

Eat Talk” gatherings, DFJTF describes their own role as that of “midwife,” saying, “We wanted to come in as midwives for food justice networks....We just wanted to lift that network up into the light so more and more Detroiters could access and celebrate it.” This theme appears earlier in the same website section, when the founding members of DFJTF “started working together to birth something that was 100% Detroit in people and practice.” Even the previously mentioned image of the social movement as mushroom calls to mind the constant cycle of reuse, rebirth, and renewal that fungi facilitate. This language of birth, fertility and vitality reinforces not only the story of the city’s food justice movement, but also the narrative DFJTF tells of Detroit’s regeneration – that food justice can usher in a new, socially and economically responsible dawn for Detroit and its residents.

**CONCLUSION** Although Detroit is represented in the popular media as a deserted urban landscape with few (if any) redeeming qualities, the residents of Detroit have another story to tell. Detroit is a city with a history, with thriving communities and rich, hidden caches of resources waiting to be tapped. Rather than relying on far-away politicians to fix the city’s problems, the Detroit Food Justice Task Force seeks to find and celebrate those individuals and communities that are establishing creative solutions on their own, using the networks and capital already present in Detroit’s neighborhoods. The efforts of mainstream politicians to look for solutions outside of Detroit not only devalues the existing urban spaces and disregards the city’s invisible capital, but also carries distinct racial undertones, leaving Detroit’s residents feeling disenfranchised, disempowered, and displaced. DFJTF seeks to inspire Detroit residents to take back this power and invest in themselves and their communities, using invisible capital they may not even realize they have.

This is the story that DFJTF tells through its website and social media platforms. As sites intended for outreach and communication with a broader audience, DFJTF’s website, Facebook and Twitter accounts provided rich material for study. By ana-



lyzing these communications, it becomes clear that race, space, and capital are three intersecting and overlapping categories used by DFJTF to navigate the alternative food movement, establishing their own meanings and context within it and challenging what they see as a one-sided and inaccurate depiction of their community.

While mainstream media dismisses Detroit as a decrepit and abandoned cityscape, such negative and racialized depictions only obscure the community-based work being performed by organizations such as DFJTF. Such reporting misses the efforts of community groups to increase healthy food access for city residents, dismantle racism within the food system, and build upon Detroit's "invisible capital." By ignoring these stories, mainstream media outlets are only perpetuating the problems DFJTF and other alternative food organizations are trying to solve.

The ways in which DFJTF approaches portrayals and perceptions of the Detroit community, and how it has chosen to counteract them, provide broader implications for the food justice movement as a whole. DFJTF emphasizes the importance of transparency, and of working with communities rather than ignoring or painting over them like a "blank canvas." DFJTF also emphasizes the search for resources within the city, instead of inviting themselves to "come into communities with cookie cutter trainings on food justice, which many of our members could offer in their sleep." Clearly fed up with outsiders who treat its communities as one-size-fits-all without regard for the individual histories and experiences of the members who live there, the solutions presented by DFJTF offer important lessons for any food activist seeking to work in a community not her own.

DFJTF's use of language also creates chances for alternative food movement practitioners to learn through its example. Discourse can be a powerful tool for food activists, who find themselves struggling within a pre-determined discursive environment created and perpetuated by groups such as mainstream media, government bodies, and industry representatives. For example, by appropriating the term "invisible capital" from its original

capitalism-oriented context and adapting it to a community development tool, DFJTF provides an example of how food activists can extricate themselves from the logic of neoliberal rationality and challenge preconceived ideas, perpetuated through mainstream media portrayals, of the nature of their communities.

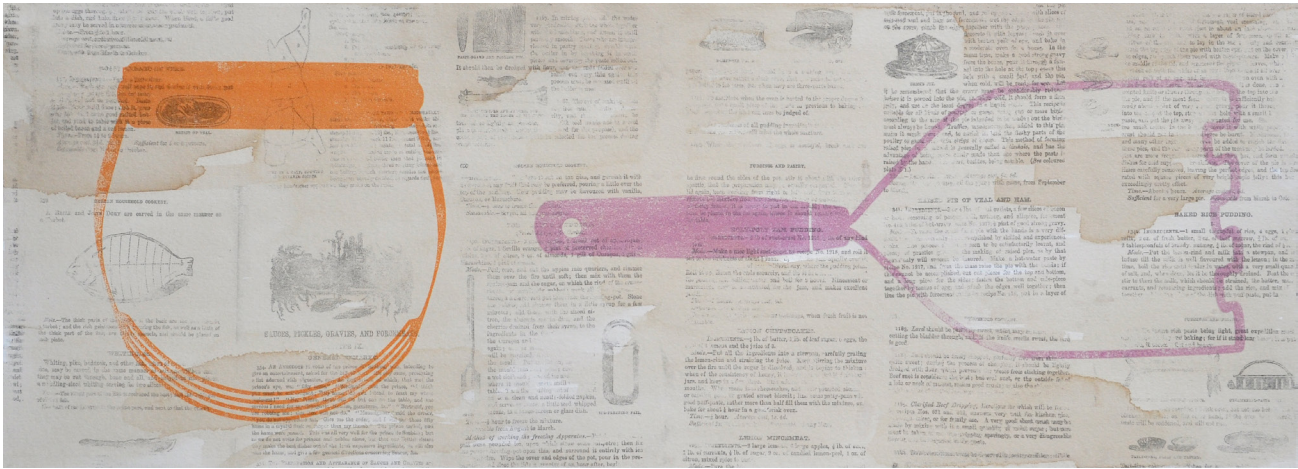
Despite these barriers, food justice groups are laboring to counter corporate industry's Goliath with their own small yet carefully aimed stones. In DFJTF's case, the food justice movement is focusing on Detroit's abandoned spaces and infrastructure and working to reinvigorate them for the city's inhabitants. Such social movements often begin from the fringes of society. This is a narrative DFJTF knows well and embraces. "Detroit is hungry for food justice," they tell us. Detroit's residents may be marginalized and abandoned by mainstream, corporate America, but as DFJTF notes, movements like theirs "grow well in the shadows, underground, making sustenance out of refuse" – adding value back into that which was once forsaken, and renewing their community in the process. ■

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**KITCHEN HELP** | 2013  
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# No Motherland Without You: The Feminine Pastoral in North Korean Food and Agricultural Propaganda

**abstract** | *The North Korean ruling regime has historically taken an official stance on women's equality that falls in line with socialist progressivism while also incorporating more conservative elements from Confucian thought and the Kims' own brand of 'juche' nationalism. This essay looks at examples of food and agriculture related propaganda issued by the North Korean government within the context of its statements on gender and the circumstances arising from the food shortages of the past two decades. I argue that the regime's manipulation of signs reveals deeply patriarchal attitudes that have legitimized the domination of women and land in addition to facilitating a denial of internal conflict and disorder.*

As a subject of documentary and journalistic coverage, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is often portrayed as a country beyond rationalization, of energies squandered on spectacle while the majority of its citizens lead lives of hidden hardship.<sup>1</sup> Images disseminated by the North Korean regime of Pyongyang's towering monuments or highly choreographed mass games are interpreted in the West with the implicit understanding that they are merely a cover for the consequences that decades of reckless totalitarian governance and extreme cultural, political, and economic isolation have wrought on the country. As amusing as these representations may seem to us for their inability to comprehend their own irony, it is also necessary to remember that propaganda is not merely a defense mechanism or a means of deflecting scrutiny. It also gives legible form to abstract political ideology and sets utopian imperatives for a targeted citizenry. Propaganda in the DPRK may not reflect the living conditions of most North Koreans, but it does create a space in which to conceive of the nation beyond the actualities of everyday life, giving ideological justification to unacknowledged problems such as hunger and impoverishment.

It has been argued that the North Korean regime, founded by Kim Il-sung and continued by his

hereditary successors Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un, has managed to hold on to its leadership precisely because of its success in implementing mechanisms of control over both its own citizens and in the nation's representation abroad: "restrictive social policies; manipulation of ideas and information; use of force; co-optation; manipulation of foreign governments; and institutional coup-proofing" (Byman and Lind 45). These strategies have helped to sustain the Kims' continued rule despite the humanitarian crises that have afflicted the nation and raised the threat of collapse or revolt. The DPRK's ongoing food shortages and problems of chronic malnutrition have presented an internal challenge to national security, with the devastating famine of the mid-1990s representing the apex of this turmoil. The North Korean government has generally responded to and discussed the food problem by downplaying its severity through euphemism, referring to the famine as *konan-ui haenggun* ("arduous march").<sup>2</sup> Rather than addressing the situation directly, it has focused instead on official campaigns promoting productivity and self-sufficiency. The regime has displaced any possible unrest by insisting on the attainability of affluence through hard work, holding up the ideals of national pride, self-reliance, and self-determination encompassed by *juche*, Kim Il-sung's foundational thesis on the



figure 1



central role of individual responsibility in promoting of Korean interests.<sup>3</sup>

Without explicitly addressing the depth and extent of shortages, food and agriculture related media in the DPRK displaces issues of food insecurity by superimposing an alternate reality in which being fed is not necessarily a right, but a moral privilege. North Korean propaganda images rely on a system of representation that not only shows how things could be, but also how things are for those who have faithfully obeyed the *juche* tenets. In a sense, these images are a realization of Hannah Arendt's dictum that "In the eyes of the masses, [the official authorities] acquire the reputation of superior 'realism' because they touch upon real conditions whose existence is being hidden" (318). State television and newspapers frequently relay images of government officials and elite Pyongyang residents touring well-stocked supermarkets, broadcasting the good life as it supposedly exists in North Korea. Aired on state television or printed in the *Rodong Sinmun*, the official newspaper of the Workers' Party of Korea, these displays form a part of the visual culture in the DPRK which, alongside posters, films, and other media, give narrative enactment to facets of state ideology. What is remarkable about the food related propaganda is the completeness with which it exemplifies the modes of repression described by Byman and Lind, constructing models not only in regards to labor and production, but also for the very essence of citizenship itself.

Of particular note within the scope of food propaganda is the frequency with which anonymous female figures appear, connecting the practices of food production and consumption with women's gender expectations. Women rarely appear in propaganda depicting industry, the military, or other more masculinized themes and are relegated to tropes enforcing their status as nurturers and carers. In some posters, the female figure seemingly serves as a Demeter-like embodiment of agriculture itself, bearing a sheaf of wheat or other symbol of the harvest.

The symbolic connections between women and food in these images suggest North Korean mod-

els of femininity that are circumscribed by limited possibilities for women's labor and revolutionary involvement. In theory, *juche* practice adheres to Marxist-Leninist values regarding female emancipation, which oppose the exclusion of women from public life and seek to grant them equal social and political rights.<sup>4</sup> But the associations made within state propaganda imply a feminizing of land, labor, and bodies, pitting the female as a malleable and yielding medium onto which ideological thinking can be inscribed. The North Korean socialist woman is depicted as someone who has been liberated from the patriarchal family structures of neo-Confucianism. Within these representations, however, the dominant power formerly granted to her male relations has been symbolically appropriated by the state. Matriarchal subservience is deployed as a means of enforcing a paternalistic relationship between the regime and the masses, allowing the authority of the "fatherly leader" Kim Il-sung and his successors to go unquestioned and unchecked.

To explore the relationship between food, gender roles, and ideology in North Korean propaganda, I have examined examples of poster art reproduced in the *Rodong Sinmun* and in the online publications of the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), as well as a handful of examples collected by foreign visitors to the country. The scarcity of reliable information and representative artifacts coming directly from the DPRK, not to mention the difficulties of viewing the relevant media in its intended context, has thus far prevented me from carrying out extensive first hand analysis of the original images. I fully acknowledge that my analysis has been performed at a remove from the circumstances surrounding the placement of these images within North Korean visual culture and cannot describe the interpretations or reactions of North Korean civilians to them.

Nevertheless, I do believe that it is possible to productively read the examples that I have chosen within the framework provided by the study of totalitarian and hegemonic systems, which extends far beyond the case of the DPRK.<sup>5</sup> The rise of totalitarianism in the twentieth century coincided with and was aided by the development of new

possibilities in mass dissemination, granting an ever-expanding pervasiveness to political dogma. This created a new ideological space in which representations of traditionally subjugated groups such as women could be custom tailored to further the cause of regimes and conflated with other subjects of conquest, such as land and nature. In order to understand of how various symbolologies of domination and repressive power can run parallel to one another, I have found ecofeminist scholarship to be useful for the network of meanings it draws between women and the environment, facilitating a power-based analysis of the construction of alternate realities within mass media as well as their production and reproduction. In the case of the DPRK, ecofeminism provides a lens for interpreting the dichotomies drawn in state rhetoric between a passive feminine nature and a dominant masculine industrial-military complex.

The DPRK holds a unique position within the study of national cultures in that, because of political circumstances, it is largely unknowable. At its most direct, research on the DPRK has used refugee interviews to extend its ethnographic reach as far as possible into the country (Demick; Fahy; Haggard and Noland). At its worst, coverage of the DPRK is guided by Orientalist and reductionist perspectives that confuse the author's subjectivity with depictions of the truth. In my analysis of visual samples, I do not aim to construct a holistic vision of the DPRK, but rather a fragment of an interpretative Korea as it exists between the actualities of life inside the country and the outsider's limited gaze.

**REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN AND THE HOMELAND MYTH** In the earlier days of the Kim regime, the slogan "Let us not leave even an inch of land uncultivated!" represented the motivating ethos of North Korean agricultural policy (I. Kim 275). Intent on creating a utopia in which each citizen could "live in tile-roofed houses, wear silk clothes, eat rice and meat soup, and work together with adequate knowledge and techniques for the good of society", Kim Il-sung championed agricultural self-sufficiency so as to "make no compromise with

hunger" (257). Disregarding the lack of arable land in the DPRK – less than twenty percent is suited for farming – the regime's reckless environmental exploitation in the name of agriculture would eventually contribute to the natural disasters that decimated the countryside in the 1990s (Zellweger). Even in recent years, Party editorials have called for farmers to "strictly observe the requirements of the *juche* farming method" ("Joint New Year"). Talk of the "Party's grand nature-remaking plan" suggests that Kim Il-sung's theses on land development and productivity remain a central theme in the regime's efforts to maintain its legitimacy under Kim Jong-un's leadership ("New Year Address").

While the idea of land as a site for intervention and exploitation has figured prominently in *juche* ideology, there is also a concurrent rhetoric that encourages respect for the natural world, mythicizing it as an eternal life source. Land is often referred to in reverent tones that mirror the parent-child relationship in neo-Confucian thought. In the words of Kim Jong-il, "The homeland is everyone's mother... [from whose] bosom all true life and happiness springs" (qtd. In Myers 73). As Bruce Cumings explains, "Loyalty and filial piety form the deepest wellsprings of Korean virtue" (107). A filial model provides an analogy from which to base the relationship of the people to the land. In the context of North Korean ideology, the frequent invocation of the regime leaders as parental figures extends this relationship, setting up the land and its worship as a metaphor for reverence toward the state.

Although in theory the North Korean socialist state disposed of the remnants of traditionalist attitudes, including neo-Confucian patriarchy, such conservatism proved hard to erase from both state and societal structures and continued to inform the persistent discrimination against women in the country (Park, "Women and Revolution" 541). Much of the language used by the Kims that draws parallels between families, land, and the state has its origins in classic Confucian texts such as the *I-Ching*, which applies gendered associations and metaphors to the natural world. In that particular text, women are described as being of the earth, representing a principle of multitudes and natural





figure 2

diversity. Men, on the other hand, symbolize the heavens, which are unitary and destined for leadership. The superior, divine influence of men, with their high status, thus validates their control over lowly and unruly women (Cho 192). Prior to the socialist revolution, state-sponsored neo-Confucian ideology prohibited women from owning property or working outside the home – women and land unequivocally belonged to men. Although the early reforms of Kim Il-sung sought to dismantle some of these feudal structures and brought *de jure* equality to women through land redistribution programs and the passage of labor laws, many gendered social attitudes remained in place. Over time, the state's official stance also became increasingly ambivalent to women's concerns and to their place in public life (Park, "Women and Revolution" 533).

The identification of land as maternal within the Kims' repurposing of neo-Confucianism sets up some of the feminine significations it provides. First, it establishes the natural world as a site of production and reproduction, a mother figure who "gives birth to children and brings them up... She teaches them everything necessary" (I. Kim 216). The mother-child relationship serves as a metaphor for engagement with the land as an intrinsic part of societal development. Second, the nourishment provided by the land is understood as distinctly maternal. This could either be interpreted as a complement to the "fatherly" care of the regime leaders, or, it could make the land one and the same with their rule, turning it into a symbol of the state. B.R. Myers has argued that the Kims are genderless in iconography, assuming the position of both the maternal and the paternal, giving support to the latter interpretation (93). At the same time, nature cannot equal or eclipse the power of the state, and thus must remain secondary or complementary. The need for it to be subservient leads to the last major signification, which is that the natural becomes identified with traditional feminine virtues, such as purity, chastity, and obedience, selectively drawn from neo-Confucian thinking and incorporated into Party politics.

The feminized landscape is a topic addressed in ecofeminist thought, which has argued that the

historical subjugation and domination of women runs parallel to that of the land and environment. References to the "motherland" or "mother nature" anthropomorphize the natural world, transforming it into a site of gendered social interaction and accompanying dynamics of power. As Catherine Roach puts it, "in patriarchal culture nature is overpersonified and women are underpersonified. Women are perceived to merge with nature, to be part of the nonhuman surround and only semihuman. Similarly, nature is perceived as female, as virgin resource to be exploited or raped, as sharing in woman's semihuman quality" (51). A tendency to reduce concepts such as male and female, nature and culture down to dualisms encourages dialectical antagonism within the divisions it creates and translates human features onto parallel categories. Ecofeminism suggests that the wanton use of natural resources is borne of the same mindset as a lack of appreciation for women's work, with Roach going so far as to say that the frameworks of outright exploitation are similar for both. Furthermore, the feminized, personified landscape enables its characterization as irrational and incorrigible: when nature acts in inhuman and incomprehensible ways (such as through natural disasters), it is wondered how "she" can act with such malevolence.

The perspectives provided by ecofeminist thought are pertinent here less for the framework they provide in critiquing North Korean agricultural and environmental policy than for the questions they provoke in regards to their interpretation. That is, do these policies, as exemplified by propaganda, link the feminine and the natural in ways that suggest the domination and exploitation of both? Does the portrayal of food and farming as a female occupation go hand in hand with gendered attitudes toward the land? Have the regime's official responses to the catastrophes affecting the DPRK's food supplies reflected a tendency to characterize nature as an anthropomorphized Other that can be dominated through the advent of industry or other means?

In fig. 1, a propaganda poster depicting a girlish figure cradling a baby goat, situated amongst a verdant landscape, provides a suggestive response to these questions. This poster was issued in con-

junction with a program launched by Kim Jong-il in 1996, at the height of the famine, to encourage the raising and breeding of goats. The program aimed to provide much needed supplementary milk and meat to citizens and reduce the strain on the country's grain supplies, which had been largely decimated by floods. In the long run, the goats stripped the countryside of much vegetation, worsening the cycles of flood and drought that were already afflicting the land. Having denuded the mountains, they were a symbol of the environmentally unsound practices advocated by the regime as a solution to food issues (Lee 199-200).

The poster's slogan ("Let's expand goat rearing and more grassland in accordance with the party!"), as well as its bucolic imagery, makes no reference to the environmental or provisional realities behind the goat program. Rather the image is a glimpse of a future, represented by the figure's forward-looking stare, in which grasses and trees have magically sprung up, providing ample fodder for the animals. Also of note are the electrical towers to the right of the composition, reminding viewers of the guiding presence of state-sponsored industry. These structures suggest that natural splendor cannot exist without some degree of intervention, a point made in a quote attributed to Kim Jong-il: "the nature of this land is very beautiful because the great leadership of the Party and leader has come into full bloom in all parts of our country, which are replete with their noble virtues" (qtd. in David-West 107). Although the natural does possess a certain power and hold over the people, this power is granted by and never supersedes that of the Party. This hierarchy is echoed elsewhere in state rhetoric, enforcing a sense that all things depend on the good grace of the Kims. The popular military anthem, "No Motherland Without You", goes so far as to suggest that the very existence of the country is contingent on the regime's benevolent leadership.

The ability of the land to invoke overwhelming, emotional gratitude, as evidenced by the girl's expression in fig. 1, emphasizes its enveloping and all-encompassing majesty. The mountains cradle the figure just as she cradles the goat. While the roles

of the land and the figure echo each other, the figure possesses a certain innocence that makes her incapable of fully assuming a motherly role. Rather she is in the process of becoming maternal, following the example set by the motherland as well as by past generations. In a speech on the cultivation of mountainous areas, Kim Il-sung remarked, "Our forefathers also put much stress on turning the mountains to good account in our country which is mountainous" (I. Kim 27). Mountainsides embody the legacy of the past, with their continued development being "not simply work for the welfare of the present generation; it is an honorable task for the welfare of the future generations" (31). There is a correlation here between the reproductive capacities of the land and the reproduction of families. In the poster, the goats are a substitute for the figure's unborn children, who will one day thrive off of the products of the land she has strived to produce.

Within the scope of North Korean propaganda, young rural women fill a particular niche among the various models of revolutionary action. They are old enough to be active agents of the state, but still possess an immaturity that renders them impressionable. Dukalskis and Hooker note the appearance of similar characters in North Korean cinema, where they are prominent in melodramas depicting acts of self-sacrifice and selflessness. In the general absence of a strong parental figure, these female protagonists are first and foremost children of the Great Leader, whose revolutionary spirit looms over the narrative and act as a surrogate for both maternal and paternal care. "Necessarily sexless in their youthful naïveté," these women become swept up in an all-encompassing mass politics that "obliterates any possible position of a singular 'individual'" (59). The agrarian backdrop against which these stories play out is enough to remind the characters of their connections and obligations to the land and to the state as they become possessed by the virtues of the pastoral. The authors suggest that the rural acts as a source of "both material well-being and spiritual happiness, which only need be harnessed through a devotion to work on it. Behind this mandate that improving the land is improving one's devotion to the national cause, as outlined by





figure 3

*juche* philosophy, is also a historical reason for this focus on rural life” (60). Beyond the land itself, there is again a reminder of a genealogical past, which acts as a “repository of pure ethnic values” (60).

Fig. 1 encapsulates the symbiotic relationship between the masses and the land described by Dukalskis and Hooker in suggesting that the implementation of state directives will in return bring about unconditional love from the land and from the regime that it represents. Just as a child’s good behavior will be rewarded by its parents, the nation will also be rewarded if it adheres to *juche* principles. The possibility of the land responding to its children’s labor in any other way can only be the outcome of either an irrational response from a maternal nature, or from the inadequacies of the masses themselves in fulfilling their obligations. Indeed, Kim Jong-il was content to blame the famine on the North Korean people’s inability to follow his father’s teachings (Myers 119). By denying that it could logically act outside of the laws ascribed to

it in Kim Il-sung’s wisdom, nature becomes circumscribed by certain rules and expectations that govern its proper behavior.

The doctrinal use of *juche* principles in many ways acts as a basis for the construction of false realities propagated by the North Korean state, positioning them as the only acceptable system of belief. A poster depicting wheat-farming underscores the totalizing presence *juche* has in the practice of revolutionary agriculture (fig. 2). We see a round-faced, backlit female figure standing amidst a field of wheat, inspecting a strand with a magnifying glass while holding the collected writings of Kim Il-sung in the other. The poster’s slogan (“In agricultural production, let’s move forward in compliance with the seed of revolution!”) uses horticultural seeds (*jongja*) as a metaphor for symbolic germination, growth, and progeny. Sunlight shines down on the figure, reminding the viewer of Kim Il-sung’s radiating warmth – his name itself means “become the sun”. Kim Il-sung has a godlike

presence in the image that can be felt even with only the book as a referent: the Great Leader makes things grow, including crops, revolutionaries, and even entire revolutions. The pseudo-religious connotations here – we can almost imagine a religious text in place of the book – are suggestive of how the state has supplanted more traditional forms of worship with its own mythologies.

There is something of a moral lesson contained in the image, which is represented by the observational powers of the magnifying glass. The glass is suggestive of Kim Il-sung's thesis that revolutionary agriculture must be practiced through strict objectivity and full immersion in the field. In a speech delivered to agricultural workers, Kim Il-sung proposes "approaching reality in the true sense of the word means seeing personally, with your own eyes, all the means of production, such as land, farm machines, draught animals, fertilizer and seeds, making concrete calculations, laying down a correct policy to suit actual conditions

and untying knotty problems on the spot" (I. Kim 267). To simply theorize an approach to farm labor is not enough, as "one who works in a subjective and bureaucratic way is liable to commit errors" (266). In the context of North Korean agricultural practice, however, objectivity does not simply refer to scientific rationalism. Objectivity, instead, is Kim Il-sungism, or reality viewed through a *juche* lens. In state media, the Kims are frequently shown in going on field trips to farms, factories, and other state owned factories, offering on-the-spot "guidance" based on their all-knowing, observational wisdom, which is then propagated as truth. The strong sunlight in the poster, which shines through the magnifying glass, emphasizes the illuminating, truth-revealing powers of Kim Il-sung's "guidance", which acts as the light and the reality through which revolutionaries are able to see.

The bestowal of wisdom on the female figure in the image, as symbolized by the light, also raises implications about the revolutionary capacities



figure 3



of rural women laborers within the *juche* scheme. "Like other socialist states," Haggard and Noland write, "North Korea has maintained a *de jure* commitment to women's rights, though actual practices have fallen far short of the rhetoric" (61). Within the Party's official messages, women are capable of becoming revolutionary fighters, but only within certain contexts that in actuality exclude the majority of them. By necessity, a woman revolutionary cannot be tempted by distractions such as modernity, urbanity, and perhaps even motherhood. Rather, she must possess the purity and whole-hearted diligence represented by the peasant spirit. The figure in the wheat poster embodies this with her slightly androgynous uniform and appearance as well as her youthful features, creating a heightened sense of anonymity and sexlessness that prevent her from achieving any distinct identity and make her an appropriate subject of the state's mass politics.

In an article on women's fashion in the DPRK, Suk-Young Kim questions the ability of North Korean women to emulate these idealized feminine models: "No matter how intensively visual media created simulacra of female warriors, their impersonation presented a tough challenge for North Korean women, because the gap between themselves and such theatrical characters was a wide one. When everyday life is so distanced from its representations, the ability of visual media to present a credible model is diminished" (S. Kim 172). In a sense, the false worlds in North Korean propaganda create an imagined space where women exercise their revolutionary agency, unburdened by the tolls of domestic life and labor. Ordinary women are intended to identify or empathize with these idealized characters, whose gender roles fit neatly into the well-oiled schematics of Kim Il-sungism. In the absence of a meaningful system for coping with the difficulties of agricultural life, these archetypes push aspirational models further into the realm of the abstract.

Within the scope of North Korean propaganda, the young female revolutionary is almost by default agrarian and the agrarian is young and female.<sup>7</sup> Haggard and Noland note that following the shifts triggered by the events of the 1990s, however, the

myth of the devoted woman farmer holds less and less currency. The breakdown of state-owned enterprises such as cooperative farms disproportionately forced women into unemployment and all but obliterated the state-run food distribution system. Many women turned to market-oriented employ in the aftermath. Although, according to Haggard and Noland, the informal markets have eclipsed state distribution as citizens' primary source of food, the government maintains an inhospitable attitude towards these spaces and has sought to limit and control their growth. By insisting that women's involvement in the food system must be primarily agrarian, the politically transgressive nature of alternative paths is reinforced. Even in a poster released this year, on the sixtieth anniversary of the DPRK's self-proclaimed "victory" in the Korean War, the same Demeter-esque icons are employed and invocations are made of past successes rather than current conditions. This not to say that party ideology and rhetoric are entirely static – in fact, they appear to be undergoing slight transitional changes, as Haggard and Noland's research demonstrates. Nevertheless, the party depends on strict archetypes and repetition in order to give the appearance of consistency and stability that contrast the reality of chaos on the ground.

**MODELS OF CONSUMPTION AND THE URBAN FEMALE** In stark contrast to the iconography of agricultural production, propaganda posters depicting food consumption tend to feature women who are less youthful than their rural counterparts and unambiguously inscribed in their maternal roles. Showcasing an array of colorful packaged foodstuffs, these posters also include backdrops with markers of urban settings: tall buildings, supermarket shelves, and industrial smoke stacks. Although upon first glance the images appear to depict a model of consumption defined by cosmopolitanism, closer analysis reveals an emphasis on the collective creation of goods, turning the focus back on the means of production. Promoting objectives of material affluence and abundance, the posters appear to be directed less at the urban consumers of food than at agricultural or rural industrial



workers producing goods for an urban audience.

The related campaigns for these posters championed efforts to provision all members of society by increasing domestic production. But beneath their inspirational messages are veiled justifications for the state's practices in redistributing domestic products and food aid, which allegedly favored those closest to the regime while shutting out the rural poor. By depicting the urban elite as part of the masses, these images normalize Party officials' lives within the revolutionary struggle.<sup>8</sup> Humanitarian workers deployed in the region around the time of the famine came to suspect that the government disproportionately allocated resources toward Party members in Pyongyang, with the trickle of food going to the provinces barely making an impact in most households (Lee 195; Haggard and Noland 55). The rural / urban divide in the DPRK exposed an ever increasing conflict of class and geographic inequalities in a theoretically classless nation, reinforcing the second-rate position of the countryside. This reality contrasts with Party logic that suggests, "conflict is not 'typical' of North Korean life and therefore unworthy of depiction. There are few of the harsh clashes between rural and urban values, older and younger generations, chauvinist husbands and progressive wives" (Myers 92). Discord cannot exist within the national, social, and racial unity brought about by *juche*, which emphasizes Korean ethnic identity as a driving force behind individual revolutionary initiative.

The portrait of maternity in fig. 3 demonstrates such negation of gender and social divides through an iconography that establishes women's roles amongst a modern, urban context. The abstract maternal care of the land in figs. 1 and 2 is given embodiment here by the mother guiding her child against a snowy backdrop, creating an analogous, recontextualized depiction of the instructive parent-child relationship. The accompanying slogan implores "improving the livelihood of the people!", emphasizing abundance as a collective cause. In Kim Il-sung's visions of a materially productive society, not only is "no one is allowed to live in affluence for himself", but mothers must also serve as exemplars of this selflessness (I. Kim

258). Addressing a women's union, he explained, "You cannot simply ask your children to become good people, while you yourselves avoid work and study, and behave selfishly" (218). Selflessness is also not only a precondition for the proper education of a mother's own children, but also the nation's: "When communist society is achieved, the whole society will turn into a family and people will love and care for all children equally whether they are their own or others'" (214-215). Any possibility that the urban mother in fig. 3 could represent selfish materialism is dismantled by the understanding that her welfare and concerns are intrinsically bound up with those of the nation.

Another notable feature in fig. 3, also present in fig. 4, is the incongruity between the frontal and the background scenes, which do not have the same compositional unity of the rural images. In contrast to the strong, opaque colors that fill in the figures and products, the backgrounds are faintly rendered and somewhat abstract. We can barely make out the impression of tall buildings in fig. 3, while in fig. 4, factories are merely suggested by a silhouette and a gridded plane resembles a broad field nearly as much as it does a street grid. By deemphasizing the severity of the urban landscape, focus is brought to the scenes of nurturing at the forefront (the woman in fig. 4 appears to be wearing a nurse's uniform). This technique creates a sense of displacement for the women, as if their feminine, caring natures are somehow difficult to reconcile with austere urbanity. Although they are not quite as spirited as the female peasant archetypes, they resist complete identification with cosmopolitanism or the loss of innocence it represents. Neither fully rural nor urban, these women bring consumption into a space that exists away from the farm (the locus of production) and away from the alienating connotations of the city (the locus of industry). This space, as suggested by the slogans' emphasis on the creation of goods, is still inherently tied to rural production, however, in that it is a site for the appreciation and enjoyment of domestic products.

By attempting to blur the boundaries between the rural and the urban and between production

and consumption, these images obliterate the possibility of internal struggle and promote a veneer of uniformity. Maternal figures in propaganda images create an image of stability, projecting the order and guidance provided by the state onto recognizable and humanized archetypes. But the inseparability of care from the maternal, particularly in the dynamics of provisioning, suggests an essentializing view of the roles and capabilities of women in the eyes of the regime that ultimately throws the existence of gender equality into doubt. As keepers of domestic peace, both in the sense of the household and the homeland, women are precluded from the more outward looking projects of the regime, such as militarism and Anti-Americanism. With such a limited and distinct feminine iconography in its propaganda, the possibility then arises of a gendered approach to repression in the DPRK, creating separate models and approaches to normative masculinity and femininity.

**CONCLUSION** As Hazel Smith has argued, the DPRK is frequently discussed within a securitizing framework that reduces all information about the country down to concerns regarding military policy and security issues, ultimately conceiving of the regime and its leaders as irrational and diabolical. Through the analysis of propaganda, however, a DPRK beyond the nuclear programs and military displays comes into view, revealing a carefully organized and highly regulated system in which all official messages are didactic. The North Korean government has focused inward in its efforts to control possible dissent arising from the food problem and related environmental issues, invoking narratives of gender and responsibility to encourage mass cooperation. Although these narratives obscure injustices within North Korean society, they nonetheless provide an ideological space in which problems from within can be dealt with only on the most euphemistic and non-pragmatic terms.

My account cannot describe the effect or reception of these propaganda examples within the DPRK, nor can it claim their messages as being representative of individuals' beliefs or thoughts.

Sandra Fahy has shown that a unique and distinct method of discourse has emerged among North Koreans, indicating some level of resistance to indoctrination. Such forms of sub-governmental communication are critical to survival in the DPRK as it undergoes economic transition while keeping more or less uniform social policies in place. Although the simulacra constructed by state propaganda have stifled the development of alternative thought, the traumatic repercussions of this very system also raise the possibility of questioning its righteousness from within.

It is hardly surprising that the food problem has become inextricably bound with women's issues and dealt with in patriarchal terms. My analysis has proposed that the attitudes governing women's status and engagement in food related activities have deep-seated and multifaceted roots that at times can be contradictory or questionable. The evidence discussed here represents a very small fraction of a complex and largely difficult situation to know. Nevertheless, I would suggest that it is possible to recognize a trace of familiarity in the gender issues evoked by North Korean propaganda and I argue that it should not be evaluated at a distance set by lingering narratives of Cold War threat. Rather, issues concerning the propagation and regulation of ideas and knowledge in the DPRK should be understood as an instance of the use of myth to maintain power structures. Women give personified form as mothers or daughters to the narratives of filial obedience and bonding that have propped up the Kim regime, signifying indefatigable devotion, even against a silent backdrop of strife. By representing the production and consumption of food as distinctly feminine activities and mining the notion that women are simultaneously dependent on masculine authority yet also responsible for their own undoing, North Korean state media has succeeded in overshadowing a language of hunger with one of unwavering loyalty. ■

## NOTES

1. See Andray Abrahamian's North Korea and Documentary Film for a description and critical analysis of recent documentary coverage of the DPRK.
2. Sandra Fahy notes that this term carries connotations of Kim Il-sung's fight against Japanese colonial rule, effectively reframing the problems of the present within "culturally conditioned ways of engaging with tried and tested means of surviving struggles" (541).
3. This summary of *juche* hardly gives any clarification as to its meaning and place within state ideology. I am disinclined to attempt any further explanation of the concept, as scholars such as Cumings and Myers have pointed out its incomprehensibility and indefinability, both within and outside state rhetoric. When referred to in this essay, I simply intend invoke its prominence as a uniting catchphrase.
4. Kyung Ae Park has shown that Kim Il-sung's political theory and the policies concerning women's rights enacted during his rule follow a fairly close reading of Engels, Marx, and Lenin's statements against capitalist patriarchy, even if in practice they run up against remnant elements of neo-Confucian conservatism.
5. Dukalskis and Hooker provide a thorough argument for understanding how the regime has enforced its legitimacy via totalitarian means and injected totalizing ideological control into state-sanctioned media (54-56).
6. For a discussion of the problems regarding coverage of North Korea, see Abrahamian.
7. Male farmers do appear in some propaganda posters, a few examples of which appear in Heather and De Ceuster. But as Katharina Zellweger confirms, the majority of agriculturally themed images focus on women.
8. The North Korean government strictly controls where citizens are allowed to live based on class position. Only elites with connections to the regime are permitted to live in Pyongyang, while anyone considered potentially hostile to the government is banished to the countryside (Byman and Lind 61).

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**THE LONE ARTICHOKE** | 2012  
by Ashley Pardo

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# Best Practices and Challenges for Farmers Market Incentive Programs: A Guide for Policymakers and Practitioners

**abstract** | *This report outlines best practices and challenges for Farmers Market Incentive Programs (FMIPs) and seeks to provide policymakers and practitioners with tools and information that will enable them to either launch new or scale up existing programming in their communities. FMIPs are programs which provide federal nutrition assistance beneficiaries a discount when they use their benefit dollars to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at local farmers markets. The authors of this report conducted a survey of 10 established FMIPs across the United States – in Austin, Boston, Chicago, East Palo Alto, Los Angeles, Michigan, New York, Portland, Seattle, and Washington D. C. – analyzed indicators of program efficacy, and identified best practices and challenges in the following program areas: logistics, funding, technology, participation, outreach, and evaluation. The authors conclude that FMIPs can be effective tools for increasing the frequency with which low-income consumers access healthy, locally produced fruits and vegetables, and for helping to funnel consumer dollars into the hands of local agricultural producers. Moreover, the authors conclude that continuity in funding, strategic evaluation practices, tailored outreach efforts, and administrative and technical support through a central umbrella organization are critical components of programmatic success.*

Food, nutrition, and agricultural policy have risen to the forefront of local, regional, and national discourse in recent years. Such discourse has been prompted by the rapid growth of the “food movement,” a diverse social movement encompassing a variety of perspectives on the way that food is produced, processed, distributed, and consumed in society (Pollan). Actors within the movement adopt differing views on the relationship between the food system and public health, the economy, the environment, and social equity, for example, as well as on ways in which the system can be reformed to better meet society’s evolving needs. Contemporary food policy initiatives must rise to the challenges posed by an increasingly diverse group of food system stakeholders and, where possible, integrate divergent perspectives to form more comprehensively beneficial policy solutions. This paper explores Farmers Market Incentive Programs (FMIPs) as one policy and programmatic innovation that lies at the nexus of two powerful

sub-currents in the broader food movement: food security and local food.

**Contemporary Food Policy:** Food policy can be defined as the “laws, regulations, decisions, and actions by governments and other institutions that influence food production, distribution and consumption” (Wilde 1). Historically, United States food policy has played an influential role in shaping both the global and domestic food system through mechanisms as wide-ranging as agricultural subsidies and trade tariffs, food safety and labeling standards, and nutrition assistance programs. Today, domestic food policy initiatives and advocates seek to address an increasingly complex array of concerns such as the effects of agriculture on the environment and natural resource base, the recent rise of obesity and chronic disease, and persistent food insecurity for communities across the United States. Amongst stakeholders in the contemporary food movement, food security and local food advocates regularly participate in and shape the food

policy discourse from the local to the federal level.

Anti-hunger and food security advocates are part of a long-standing movement whose main priorities have been to ensure that all individuals and households meet their basic caloric and nutritional needs and to promote social equity within the food system. Historically, its main policy levers for achieving these goals have been the maintenance of a robust social safety net in the form of federal nutrition assistance programs (such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), support for federal commodity subsidies which have lowered the price of staple foods, and continued support for private charitable actors – such as food banks – which redistribute food resources throughout communities in order to provide emergency hunger relief and stabilize food access for populations in need.<sup>1</sup>

The anti-hunger movement, however, has traditionally been less concerned with the sourcing and production of food products, which constitute the main concerns of the “locavore” or “local food” movement. The local food movement perceives the expansion of local agricultural production to be the linchpin of a more economically and ecologically sustainable food system. Its main priorities are to reduce negative environmental externalities associated with centralized, industrial agricultural production and to invigorate local economies by funneling investment into community-based agricultural production and consumption.<sup>2</sup> Some policy levers used to achieve these goals include the provision of federal grant funds for marketing and promotion of local and regional non-commodity producers (such as the Specialty Crop Block Grant program), as well as funding for Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE), and funding assistance for young farmers and ranchers (Congressional Research Service 24).

Tension between the food security and local food movements can surface when the local food movement is viewed as overlooking social equity – local food and its distribution channels being perceived as cost-prohibitive and inaccessible to food insecure populations<sup>3</sup> – or when food security advocates are seen as neglecting to recognize the benefits that localized food production models can

confer both to ecological systems and to human communities in the form of increased food quality and freshness. Diverse actors within the food system may find themselves competing for scarce funding as well as limited political capital available for food policy initiatives.

Opportunities exist, however, to bridge the gap and advance the priorities of each constituency. FMIPs present one such opportunity. Through such programs, federal nutrition assistance beneficiaries can significantly increase their consumer purchasing power when shopping at a local farmers market, thus enabling low-income consumers to buy a greater quantity of fresh, healthy food with their federal benefit dollars. Moreover, such programs channel additional consumer dollars into the local food economy and create value for local agricultural producers, thus addressing the dual objective of increasing food security while supporting local food production.

This paper explores FMIPs as one potential venue for policymakers and community leaders to meet diverse constituent goals by leveraging existing federal food security resources to expand access and advance more comprehensively just and sustainable community food systems. FMIPs are a young and growing program area (the oldest program surveyed for this paper was launched in 2004 in New York City), and only a handful of programs across the country receive public funding. Knowledge and research about program efficacy and potential as a policy tool is thus limited. Interest is growing, however, and this paper contributes to a preliminary body of inquiry and research into the value of such programming as a public policy tool, including a recent policy brief in support of “SNAP pricing incentives” from Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, a positive status report on “healthy food incentives” at farmers markets from Wholesome Wave (a funder of infant FMIPs across the country), and a recent USDA “Healthy Incentive Program” pilot project which examined the use of SNAP incentives for the purchase of healthy food items in SNAP-authorized retail locations. (Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future; Wholesome Wave; Bartlett et al.). This paper not only explores



the utility of FMIPs as a public policy intervention, but also examines, in detail, operating practices and procedures from current programs across the country in order to outline best practices and challenges for policymakers looking to implement similar interventions in their communities.

**PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH: THE BEST PRACTICES APPROACH** Best practices research is a method for developing solutions to a problem based upon an evaluation of operational practices and policies commonly implemented by organizations, agencies, programs or other institutional entities responding to a similar challenge. The goal of such an evaluation is to delineate a set of generalizable theories and standards that are transferable from the surveyed actors to other cases and contexts (Overman and Boyd 69). Social science researcher Arnošt Veselý explains that, as a method of policy analysis and program evaluation, best practices research is “based on the idea that instead of formulating an abstract ideal state we want to reach, we should develop what has been or is being implemented and is proven to work somewhere else” (Veselý 99).

Though commonly employed within the field of public policy, best practices research methods are less crystallized and less clearly defined than more traditional social science research methods. Veselý documents significant variation in the definition of best practices research proposed by scholars within the fields of management and public policy, and some public policy scholars propose different methodological principles for carrying out best practices research (some employ a quantitative approach, while others use more qualitative methods, for example) (Veselý 108-110). The term “best practice” can also be used interchangeably with the terms “smart practice” or “good practice.” Political scientist and public policy analyst Eugene Bardach dissects what he calls “smart practice research” in his *Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving* and points out that learning about the tangible problem-solving behaviors of other actors can be a sensible and valuable exercise (Bardach Part III).

He also notes, however, that this approach should be “supplemented by smart theorizing” and that steps should be taken to at least acknowledge, and ideally to avoid, common methodological pitfalls associated with best practices research, such as a reliance on limited anecdotal evidence (Bardach Part III).

This paper takes a best practices approach to the evaluation of FMIPs with the goal of delineating a set of common practices that are considered effective and beneficial by a diverse body of actors in this program area. This approach was selected for its ability to provide practical and concrete recommendations to practitioners for effective policy and program implementation. Moreover, in the context of a young and growing program area, for which very little data or prior research exist, creating a compendium of practices and knowledge from current actors in the field is one first step towards formulating additional research questions and conducting more rigorous analyses. The methodology employed by the research team is subject to the same weaknesses as is much best practices work, such as a reliance on a limited number of empirical observations and anecdotes from a small survey population. Moreover, a “best practice” in this context does not denote a definitively superior practice as compared to the scope of infinite tried and untried alternatives (since no such exhaustive comparison has been undertaken), but merely a practice which reflects some of the most beneficial operational and problem-solving behaviors identified, and currently employed, by a limited number of surveyed actors in the field today. This report outlines these best practices and challenges for FMIPs and seeks to provide policymakers and practitioners with tools and information that will enable them to either launch new or scale up existing programming in their own communities.

**BACKGROUND AND TERMINOLOGY** FMIPs provide federal nutrition assistance beneficiaries a discount when they use their benefit dollars to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at local farmers markets. The discount is typically provided in the form of matching funds supplied to benefi-

ciaries who choose to spend a certain number of benefit dollars at the market. The disproportionate incidence of preventable, diet-related disease in low-income and food insecure populations is often attributed to inadequate access to healthy food (Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future). FMIPs that lower affordability barriers and increase access can thus act as both a powerful public health intervention and a viable strategy for community and economic development.<sup>4</sup>

**Food Security And Affordability** The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food security as “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life” (USDA Economic Research Service). In 2011, an estimated 14.9% of U. S. households (17.9 million) experienced food insecurity at some point during the year (Coleman-Jensen et al. v). Food insecure adults and children are more likely to suffer from preventable, diet-related disease than those who are food secure. Food insecure adults consume fewer servings of fruits, vegetables, dairy, and complex micronutrients, and are more likely to experience risk factors for cardiovascular disease, such as hypertension, as well as higher rates of diabetes (Seligman 304–307). Moreover, food insecurity has been linked to higher rates of obesity in children and women, with especially heightened risk for non-white populations (Seligman 305; Adams et al. 1070).

Affordability is one key barrier to healthy food access. The real price of fruits and vegetables rose 17% between 1997 and 2003, while the real price of a two-liter bottle of Coca-Cola fell almost 35% percent, suggesting that barriers to affordable healthy food are increasing (Cawley 364). Moreover, in 2012, a farmers market survey conducted in Austin, Texas and surrounding cities revealed that over half of market customers considered farmers market produce to be more expensive than produce purchased at their local grocery store (Morse et al. 12). The perceived and actual affordability of fresh fruits and vegetables, especially locally produced items from farmers markets, presents itself as a real barrier to access for many households (Parker-Pope). FMIPs address the affordability component of access by enabling low-income consumers to

stretch the value of their food dollar when purchasing fresh, local food items.

**Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs** The federal government administers several programs designed to alleviate food insecurity for low-income populations. FMIPs typically accept matching funds from at least one of three federal nutrition assistance programs: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). SNAP is the largest and most well-funded of U. S. nutrition assistance programs. In the 2012 fiscal year, the federal government spent \$81 billion on SNAP to help feed 47 million low-income Americans (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities). Benefits are redeemed through an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card which recipients can use at USDA-authorized SNAP retailers, including some farmers markets. SNAP has proven to be an effective tool for alleviating food insecurity and increasing access for low-income populations (Nord and Golla 15). A 2010 study from the Urban Institute found that receiving SNAP reduced an individual's risk of food insecurity by 30% (Ratcliffe and McKernan 14).

**Local Food** The United States has seen a surge in demand for locally produced food in recent years. The number of farmers markets in the U.S. increased from less than 2,000 in 1994 to over 7,500 in 2012 (USDA Agricultural Marketing Services). While local foods are available at an increasingly wide variety of retail establishments, farmers markets are a key indicator of the growth of the local food market. The appeal of local food is multi-faceted, and the consumption of locally produced agricultural products can confer a variety of environmental, economic, and social benefits to regions, cities, and communities.

A number of reports, for example, indicate that food produced within a smaller geographic radius travels fewer miles from farm to table than food imported from more centralized, remote agricultural operations, and thus consumes less energy and is more ecologically sustainable.<sup>1</sup> More recent food system sustainability analyses, such as the work

of Christopher L. Weber and H. Scott Matthews, have critiqued “food miles” as an oversimplified indicator of sustainability. However, the energy expended to support conventional food distribution remains significant (especially with automobile and air transport) and “food miles” remains one valid indicator of food system sustainability, especially when paired with other more sophisticated food transport indicators (Martinez et al. 48–49; Smith et al. 95).

Economically, purchasing locally produced goods, including food, generates additional income for local employees and businesses, and increases local consumption above and beyond the initial purchase. The rise in income and wave of subsequent spending generated by an initial act of consumption is called the economic “multiplier effect.” A recently released economic impact analysis of the local food sector in Austin, for example, estimated Austin’s local food multiplier effect to be 1.86 – meaning that every dollar spent within the local food sector in the Austin area generates 86 cents of additional economic activity (TXP, Inc.). The analysis, moreover, asserts that local foods have a larger multiplier effect than foods imported from outside the region, since purchasing local foods keeps dollars in the local economy longer. Research has confirmed that expanding local food systems can result in increased employment and income for the community (Martinez et al. 43–45).

The local food movement is also a social movement that seeks to rekindle the relationship between producers and consumers in the marketplace, to create spaces for community development, and to inspire a more healthful lifestyle and diet by enhancing consumers’ emotional connection to their food source.<sup>1</sup> Empirical evidence demonstrates, for example, that young adults with positive attitudes towards local foods tend to have healthier eating habits, and that farmers markets can be gathering places for communities to form cohesive identities around issues ranging from ecological sustainability to social justice (Pelletier et al. 129; Alkon 271).

**Nutrition Assistance and Local Food** The relationship between nutrition assistance programming

and local food has fluctuated over the last several decades, in large part due to major reforms to the SNAP program in the 1990s and the resultant impacts on SNAP spending at farmers markets. Specifically, the transition from paper benefits to EBT in the early 1990s, while resulting in important improvements for the SNAP program and its recipients overall, had a large detrimental effect on SNAP spending at markets (Mercier 3–4). Between 1994 and 2007, SNAP redemption at farmers markets fell by 71% (Briggs et al. iv). This is largely attributable to the difficulty and expense of equipping farmers markets with EBT terminals (Mercier 4).

Moreover, research shows that SNAP recipients are often unaware of opportunities to use their benefits at markets, and may perceive markets to be culturally inaccessible, inconvenient to access, or more expensive than conventional retailers (Briggs et al. 14–15). Despite these barriers, SNAP redemption at markets has increased in recent years with the advent of public and private grant funding to equip markets with EBT terminals (Mercier 4, 25).

There are many potential benefits associated with increasing access to local foods for food insecure populations, including enhanced food security as well as a heightened sense of ownership and engagement in a more community-based food system (sometimes called “community food sovereignty”) (WhyHunger). Moreover, the local food economy may benefit from the influx of federal SNAP dollars. SNAP has a multiplier effect of 1.79, meaning that every SNAP dollar spent generates an additional 79 cents in economic activity (Hanson 16). Increased redemption of SNAP dollars at farmers markets and other local food retailers, incentivized through FMIPs, could therefore have a powerful impact on the local agricultural economy.

**METHODS** In order to identify FMIP best practices and challenges, the authors administered a 51-question survey to 10 FMIPs across the United States (between the months of February and March, 2013). Programs were selected based upon a loose set of criteria, with the hopes of achieving the following qualities amongst the study



group: diversity in city size, geography, length of program operation, and funding model (making sure to include programs that receive significant public financial support). The authors surveyed the following 10 programs: the Austin Double Dollar Incentive Program (DDIP), Boston Bounty Bucks, Chicago LINK Up, DC Columbia Heights Festibucks, East Palo Alto Fresh Checks, Los Angeles Market Match, Michigan Double Up Food Bucks (DUFb), New York City (NYC) Health Bucks, Portland Fresh Exchange, and Seattle Fresh Bucks.

The authors contacted senior program representatives (such as managers and program directors) and collected either full or partial survey responses for all 10 of the selected FMIPs. The majority of survey respondents completed an electronic survey which contained both open- and closed-ended questions regarding the program and its characteristics. The research team contacted many of the program representatives via phone and collected remaining survey responses during one or several follow-up phone interviews. Clarifying comments were solicited from survey respondents and collected during e-mail or phone discussion.

Best practices and challenges were identified through a collaborative review process during which the research team exercised judgment to isolate recurring themes and issues of importance. Many programs (though not all) provided quantitative data on benefit redemption, clients served, and program growth over time. The authors compared and analyzed patterns in these data to arrive at a preliminary evaluation of programmatic success. It should be noted that this evaluation and review process was conducted in a qualitative manner, consistent with the standard applied to much best practices policy and program research. The authors did not perform rigorous statistical or causal evaluations, and present their findings only as a discerning summary of current and best practices, as well as challenges, communicated by a small but diverse sample of FMIPs. Information and data presented here should be viewed as a tool kit and qualitative resource for those who wish to learn more about FMIP models across the United States. More rigorous causal evaluations of program ef-

ficacy are beyond the scope of this report.

**FINDINGS** Given the data and responses provided by the 10 surveyed FMIPs, the authors present the following overarching key findings: 1) FMIPs are helping to increase the frequency with which low-income customers shop at farmers markets; 2) FMIPs are enhancing economic stability and sustainability of the markets and vendors that accept the incentive; and 3) continuity in funding, strategic evaluation practices, tailored outreach efforts, and administrative and technical support through a central umbrella organization are critical components of programmatic success. In addition, the research team has identified specific best practices and challenges for the following key program areas: logistics, funding, technology, participation, outreach, and evaluation.

**Logistics** Survey participants responded to questions regarding program start-up, operating models, growth and expansion, operations, the incentive, vendor reimbursement, and staffing. Table 1 offers a summary of operations details.

#### **Logistics Best Practices**

##### ***1. Growing the FMIP organically – starting small and establishing a funding and client base before expanding to additional market locations***

Each of the 10 surveyed FMIPs started small and grew organically, typically starting at just one or a handful of market locations before gradually expanding to additional markets as demand and resources increased. For example, NYC Health Bucks was originally established at just three select market locations as part of a collaborative effort between the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), neighborhood community organizations, and district public health offices. Due to its popularity and success, the program has since expanded to 135 markets across the city. Similarly, Michigan DUFb, administered by the Fair Food Network (FFN) and Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA), started at five market locations in 2009 and, by 2012, operated at 75 markets across the state, serving nearly 90,000 SNAP customers.

##### ***2. Establishing an umbrella organization to***

***handle fundraising and administration of the FMIP – especially for programs which serve large geographic areas and which can support more than 3 to 5 markets***

Several operating models are available to FMIPs. Many of the programs surveyed, for example, employ an umbrella organization model in which one organization oversees FMIP administration and operations, but does not operate the farmers market itself and may only be minimally involved in day-to-day FMIP administration at the market-level. These umbrella organizations, such as FFN and the Boston Collaborative for Food and Fitness (BCFF), raise and distribute funding, provide technical and administrative support, and collect program data, but do not operate farmers markets.

Smaller programs, on the other hand, are often both administered and operated by farmers market organizations themselves, such as the Portland Farmers Market Fresh Exchange program and the Columbia Heights Farmers Market Festibucks program. These organizations incorporate the administrative costs of the FMIP into their existing operating budget and raise additional funds to cover the dollar value of the incentive provided to clients. In a third hybrid model, an umbrella organization administers the FMIP at various participating markets by providing funding and technical support but also operates the FMIP at its own farmers markets.

As seen in cities like Chicago, Boston, and NYC, FMIPs have successfully scaled up to serve multiple markets when the program is operated by a third-party organization. When such an umbrella organization operates the FMIP, market managers are relieved of the burdens of fundraising, tracking, and reporting and can focus their efforts solely on running the markets. Umbrella organizations are also able to act as an efficient single point of contact for assisting markets in becoming equipped with EBT infrastructure. Moreover, having a centralized program administrator enables greater uniformity, consistency, and scalability across a larger geographic area.

***3. Dedicating FMIP staff to assisting individual markets through site visits and relationship building***

Umbrella organizations, such as FFN and BCFF,

have between one and four full-time program staff to administer and support the FMIP. It is important for umbrella organizations to actively communicate with participating markets. Having a staff person available to perform site-visits and maintain regular contact with individual market managers is an important step towards meeting the unique needs of both markets and clients.

***4. Offering additional services and activities appropriate to customers' needs and interests***

Many of the markets that participate in an FMIP offer complementary services and activities for customers in addition to the incentive program. For example, seven of the surveyed programs offer cooking demonstrations at participating markets. Others offer market tours and master gardener classes. The Boston Bounty Bucks program partners with the Boston Cyclist Union to provide free bike tune-ups at participating markets. The FMIPs in Chicago, East Palo Alto, and Los Angeles partner with local administrative agencies and/or food banks to provide nutrition assistance outreach and enrollment services at the markets. Additional activities and services at the market are viewed as a way to increase customer participation and satisfaction.

***5. Allowing established farmers markets to join the program as FMIP demand and financial support grow***

All surveyed FMIPs administered by a central umbrella organization have seen growth in the number of markets served each year. Program staff members report that new markets often approach them with interest in participating in the FMIP. In order to determine if a market will be a viable partner, the umbrella organization often verifies whether the market has sufficient staff, existing capabilities to accept EBT, established market infrastructure, and outreach capacity to support the FMIP in addition to operating the market.

***Logistics Challenges***

***1. Absorbing the costs and labor associated with operating an FMIP into existing market capacity in the absence of a central umbrella organization***

Smaller FMIPs administered by farmers market organizations bear the administrative burden both

of running farmers markets as well as running a complex incentive program. This may occur in the absence of sufficient funding to cover the costs associated with effectively implementing an FMIP. Smaller programs with low organizational infrastructure, limited funding, or underdeveloped administrative capacity may find it difficult to absorb these costs and effectively run an FMIP in the absence of external administrative and fundraising support.

2. Effectively dividing incentive funds among participating markets so as to ensure continuity of the incentive throughout the entire market season

The umbrella organization that administers the FMIP typically provides a lump sum of funding or incentive coupons to the market operators on an annual or monthly basis. However, it is often difficult to project the number of coupons that will be redeemed in a given year at a given market, and allocating coupons to each market in a way that is

proportional to client need is a difficult task. Many programs use past coupon redemption levels plus predicted growth in client participation to project redemption levels at each market for the upcoming year. However, this method is fallible, and programs must often reallocate coupons mid-year in order to provide program continuity at markets that demonstrate high client need in a given year.

**FUNDING** Survey participants responded to questions regarding funding sources. Table 2 lists a program funding summary.

Funding Best Practices

1. Securing diverse, ongoing funding sources

FMIPs are supported by a variety of public and private funding sources. Nearly all of the programs surveyed receive funding from more than one source. Both public and private funders typically

Table 1: Operational Summary – 10 FMIPs

Program	Matching Funds Accepted	Max. Incentive Offered	Matching Ratio	Eligibility	Incentive Stipulations
Los Angeles Market Match	SNAP, cash	\$10/market day	1:1	SNAP, WIC, SSI recipients	F&V only, must be used that day at that market
NYC Health Bucks	SNAP, referral coupon from community organization	No limit	5:2 SNAP 0:2 Referral coupon	SNAP recipients, referred clients	F&V only
DC Columbia Heights Festibucks	SNAP, WIC, WIC FMNP, SFMNP	\$10/week	1:1	SNAP, WIC, FMNP recipients	WIC and FMNP used for F&V only
Chicago LINK Up	SNAP	\$10/market day	1:1	SNAP recipients	SNAP eligible products, some markets place expiration date
Boston Bounty Bucks	SNAP	\$10/market day	1:1	SNAP recipients	SNAP eligible products only
Michigan Double Up Food Bucks	SNAP	\$20/market day	1:1	SNAP recipients	Michigan grown F&V only
Portland Fresh Exchange	SNAP	\$5/market day	1:1	SNAP recipients	SNAP eligible products only
East Palo Alto Fresh Checks	SNAP, WIC FMNP, SFMNP, cash	\$20/month	1:1	SNAP, WIC, FMNP, SSI recipients, income-eligible referrals	F&V only
Seattle Fresh Bucks	SNAP	\$10/market day	1:1	SNAP recipients	F&V only
Austin DDIP	SNAP, WIC FMNP, Cash	\$20/market day	1:1	SNAP	F&V only



provide grants on an annual basis and require yearly reporting and reapplication for sustained funding. Most FMIPs maintain funding from the same source(s) for several consecutive years, although the level of funding from those sources often varies from year to year.

Funding can come from public sources, nonprofit or foundation sources, as well as from corporate or individual donations. A diverse funding base increases FMIP security and sustainability. Multiple funding streams help ensure that even if one source of funding fluctuates or ceases, organizations will be able to continue the program until alternative funding is secured. Diverse funding sources also increase the level of flexibility that organizations have in administering the FMIP. If one source of funding must be dedicated to a particular activity, alternative sources can be shifted towards general costs or other necessary activities. For example, some funders require that contributions be used specifically for the value of the incentive distributed to clients. Others require that grant monies go towards marketing and outreach only. With multiple sources of funding, markets can ensure that they have adequate funding for general staff costs, administration, as well as the cost of the incentive itself.

### ***2. Securing adequate administrative funding in addition to funding for the value of the incentive***

Funders of existing FMIPs often stipulate that financial support be used specifically for the value of the incentive provided to nutrition assistance clients. This means that markets or umbrella organizations must absorb the extra costs of administering the FMIP into their existing, and often limited, budget. This places strain on the organization's resources for other important activities and programs that contribute to the overall success of the market and FMIP.

The administrative costs of FMIPs are a significant portion of total program costs, especially early in the program operation. Upon start-up, administrative costs can comprise over 50% of the total costs of the FMIP. As the program grows and become established, administrative costs typically decrease as a portion of the total costs of the program. When reviewing and approving grant appli-

cations, it is important that funders be sensitive to the differences in the initial and ongoing needs of an organization operating an FMIP.

### ***3. Securing ongoing public funding from state and local entities***

FMIPs with ongoing funding from municipal governments report the highest level of stability and predictability in funding support. FMIPs with local government funding also report an increased ability to leverage funds from private sources. Moreover, public funding is one venue through which programs might obtain crucial funding for overhead and administrative support.

Four of the surveyed programs receive public funding from local or state government entities. NYC Health Bucks is the only surveyed FMIP that is entirely publicly funded. In 2012, the NYC Health Resources Administration provided \$350,000, DOHMH – in which the program is housed – granted \$50,000, and the NYC Mayor's office supported the program with \$60,000 for program outreach efforts. The Mayor's office also provides funding for one full-time administrative staff person for the program.

Hunger Action Los Angeles (HALA) administers an FMIP at twelve markets and receives a portion of its funding from the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) via a federal USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant award. HALA also receives funding through a contract with the Los Angeles County Department of Social Services.

The city governments in Boston and Seattle are ongoing sources of financial support for the FMIPs operating in those areas. The Boston Bounty Bucks FMIP, operated by BCFF, began in 2008 with strictly private funding. In 2011, the Boston Mayor's office became a partner, providing \$50,000 annually to support the FMIP.

### ***4. Maintaining accurate and updated revenue and customer data for grant requests and reports***

Collecting and maintaining revenue and customer data throughout the length of the program is important for showing long-term impact and program success. Several of the surveyed FMIPs maintain robust and up-to-date data on program participation and incentive redemption rates, and a small

**Table 2: Funding Summary - 10 FMIPs**

<b>FMIP</b>	<b>Total FMIP Funding (2012)</b>	<b>Public Funding</b>	<b>Nonprofit/Foundation Funding</b>	<b>Corporate and Individual Contributions</b>
<i>Los Angeles Market Match</i>	\$60,000 — incentive portion is \$35,000	USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant (to Roots of Change); fee-for-service sub-contract with the LA County Department of Public Social Services.	Roots of Change (sub-grants the USDA grant to HALA)	Fundraising events hosted by HALA or Roots of Change
<i>NYC Health Bucks</i>	\$460,000 — incentive portion is \$310,000	NYC Mayor's Office; NYC Health Resources Administration; NYC Dept. of Health	N/A	N/A
<i>DC Columbia Heights Festibucks</i>	\$18,000 (incentive only)	N/A	Wholesome Wave	N/A
<i>Chicago LINK Up</i>	71,000 (incentive only)	N/A	Wholesome Wave ; The Chicago Comm. Trust; Aetna Foundation; J. R. Albert Foundation; The Chicago Comm. Fdn.; Walter S. Mander Fdn.	N/A
<i>Boston Bounty Bucks</i>	\$155,000 — incentive portion is \$74,000	Boston Mayor's Office	Wholesome Wave ; Kellogg Foundation; Harvard Pilgrim Fdn.; Boston Foundation; Greater Boston Food Bank	N/A
<i>Michigan Double Up Food Bucks</i>	\$888,890 (incentive only)	N/A	Fair Food Network	N/A
<i>Portland Fresh Exchange</i>	\$80,480 — incentive portion is \$34,000	N/A	Herbert A. Templeton Fdn.; Rose E. Tucker Charitable Trust	Local businesses; community fundraisers
<i>East Palo Alto Fresh Checks</i>	\$20,000 (incentive only)	N/A	N/A	Anonymous private donor
<i>Seattle Fresh Bucks</i>	\$58,000 — incentive portion is \$41,000	USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant; Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment	The Seattle Foundation	J. P. Morgan Chase Bank
<i>Austin Sustainable Food Center DDIP</i>	\$87,000 — incentive portion is \$47,000	N/A	Wholesome Wave ; St. David's Foundation; Farm Aid	N/A

handful of programs even perform additional program evaluations to assess impact on client fruit and vegetable consumption or on the economic benefits to market vendors, for example. Programs must find an appropriate balance between collecting data sufficient to showcase program success to funders and the public, while at the same time avoiding intrusive data collection practices directed towards clients who frequent the markets.

### **Funding Challenges**

#### **1. Maintaining sufficient levels of funding to support program maintenance and growth**

The often limited amount and duration of funding can act as a barrier to program expansion. Limited financial resources, granted over short periods of time, prevent programs from consistently increasing the number of markets and/or clients served. Several of the smaller surveyed FMIPs re-

port that program size and reach regularly fluctuate with the availability of funds in a given year.

## **2. Reporting and reapplying for annual funding**

The annual application and grant reporting process imposes significant administrative costs upon an organization, especially if that organization is small and has limited administrative or development capacity. Ongoing, multi-year grants, by comparison, reduce the administrative burden of annual data collection, reporting, and reapplication. Moreover, secure, ongoing funding allows new FMIPs to establish themselves and their customer base before beginning the evaluation process. Data collected after the FMIP has had time to work through initial obstacles and challenges will be more representative of the true impact of the program.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Survey participants responded to questions regarding technological capacity.

### ***Technology Best Practices***

#### ***1. Providing training to all market managers on how to operate and troubleshoot EBT machines***

In order to process SNAP and WIC benefits, farmers markets must acquire and maintain the proper EBT machines. SNAP and WIC require separate EBT machines and markets must contract with a third-party entity to process the electronic benefit redemptions.

Ensuring the smooth operation of EBT technologies is critical to the sustainability of an FMIP. Markets that repeatedly experience delays or disruption in EBT processing run the risk of losing their customers. They also risk alienating the vendors who participate in their markets. Seven of the surveyed FMIPs report that participating market staff and managers receive training on EBT operations. The training, in these cases, is provided by the organization running the market, by a larger farmers market association (such as the Farmers Market Federation of New York, in the case of NYC Health Bucks), or by the FMIP umbrella organization (such as the Boston Collaborative for Food and Fitness, in the case of Boston Bounty Bucks). One additional model for providing supplemental technical support resources is the manual that three nonprofit

organizations in Montana collaborated to produce for markets participating in the state's Farmers Market EBT Pilot Project. It includes a checklist for market managers and information on the SNAP retailer authorization process, EBT machine set-up and operation, accounting procedures, and a variety of useful templates (National Center for Appropriate Technology et al.). Especially in cases where EBT machines are provided by a public entity (such as by the Texas Department of Agriculture, as was the case with some EBT machines previously used by Austin-based farmers markets) umbrella FMIP administrators might consider collaborating with city or state officials to provide the initial training and resources so that market staff can more effectively mitigate technical challenges.

#### ***2. Ensuring that ongoing technical support is provided through the umbrella organization and/or service provider***

Several surveyed FMIPs reported that a lack of adequate ongoing technical support from their contracted EBT service providers has historically posed challenges to effective program operation. To mitigate these problems, market managers and staff should have resources available to effectively address technical issues as they arise. Toward this end, the organization should consider contracting with a service provider that is not only willing but capable of providing technical assistance to farmers markets specifically. Many EBT service providers have never worked with nontraditional retailers before and are ill-equipped to address challenges that are unique to farmers markets (as reported by survey respondents), such as operating an EBT machine outdoors with variable internet connectivity. For example, Experimental Station recommends that Chicago LINK Up markets contract with Merchant Source to receive more effective, market-applicable support. The Boston Collaborative for Food and Fitness is also transitioning to Merchant Source for similar reasons. If a government agency is managing the contract (such as has historically been the case for many Austin markets), senior FMIP staff should consider communicating early with that agency about the importance of having access to dependable technical support.



## **Technology Challenges**

### **1. Covering the up-front costs of an EBT machine and service**

Markets are often faced with paying up-front to acquire the EBT machine and contracting for the monthly processing service. The cost of both the equipment and service vary but, typically, the less the market pays for the EBT machine, the higher the costs of the processing service.

Markets are typically responsible for securing their own EBT machines, but some umbrella organizations have secured public or private grant funding that has covered the costs of EBT capacity. For example, a federal grant obtained by the Farmers Market Federation of New York paid for many of the EBT machines for participating markets in the NYC Health Bucks program. The Boston Bounty Bucks program received a grant from Wholesome Wave to purchase EBT machines in 2008. For markets that joined after 2008, the Kellogg Foundation purchased additional EBT machines. Additionally, BCFF received a USDA grant to cover the costs of monthly processing fees.

### **2. Making technology solutions work for a wide variety of market locations and set-ups**

The surveyed FMIPs report varying levels of technical difficulties in setting up and using the EBT machines and services at farmers markets. Problems included establishing a clear wireless signal for the EBT machine at the market, machines breaking down mid-season, and relying on service providers that are not accustomed to working with farmers markets. Two FMIPs report switching to EBT service providers that are more in tune with the specific needs of farmers markets and better able to help market staff troubleshoot specific technological and customer service issues. These types of technological challenges associated with acquiring and running EBT equipment are mirrored in the results of a recent USDA farmers market operations study that includes data from 1,682 farmers markets nationwide (Dixit-Joshi et al. 93 - 100). Experimental Station, the nonprofit that administers the Chicago FMIP, recommends that farmers contract with Merchant Source, an EBT

processing company that also provides EBT machines and technical support to farmers markets as an all-in-one package.

### **3. Ensuring that markets have access to technical support during market hours**

Farmers markets may have unique hours of operation and it is important that market staff have access to support from the service provider, umbrella organization, or public agency contact during these times. Towards this end, markets might consider designating a market staff member who has additional training in or experience operating EBT machines. This individual would be responsible for resolving EBT issues as much as he or she is capable and triaging more complicated issues that arise. He or she would elevate service requests to the appropriate contact (whether a public staff person, EBT machine/service provider, or other) as necessary.

**PARTICIPATION** Survey participants responded to questions regarding vendors, customers, and client eligibility.

## **Participation Best Practices**

### **1. Allowing customers who are not SNAP recipients, but can prove income-eligibility for SNAP, to participate in the FMIP**

All surveyed FMIPs cite low-income populations as the demographic they hope to reach. Four of the 10 programs surveyed only accept SNAP benefits as matching funds toward the incentive. Two of the markets, however, accept cash from clients who are income-eligible but do not receive SNAP benefits. For example, in California, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients are not eligible to receive SNAP benefits and the vast majority of California farmers markets are not authorized to accept WIC benefits. However, if a customer can provide proof of receiving SSI or WIC, he or she is eligible to receive the incentive. Nevertheless, since the market is unable to process SSI or WIC, the client provides cash to receive the incentive match.

### **2. Tailoring market size and location to the needs of the neighborhood and community**

Farmers markets that offer the FMIP are strategically located in neighborhoods with underserved

populations. The markets are often established in highly visible, easily accessible locations such as in church parking lots, outside of community clinics, and in local parks.

Markets offering an FMIP vary greatly in the number of vendors and customers that participate. Markets and FMIPs operate at the size that is suitable to the number of customers that patronize the market. Therefore markets with lower customer participation have fewer vendors and distribute fewer incentives. This does not indicate a less successful FMIP, but illustrates that markets and FMIPs must be tailored to the specific needs of the community or neighborhood served. Regardless of size, markets and farmers participating in the FMIPs typically realize increased sales and revenues during each successive year of program participation.

Markets with anywhere from 1 to 80 vendors are capable of operating a successful FMIP. However, an umbrella organization that administers the FMIP for a large number of markets is often better able to support the very small and very large markets. Most markets participating in the surveyed FMIPs range from 10 to 20 vendors.

### ***3. Allowing community-based organizations that serve low-income or at-risk populations to refer clients to the FMIP***

NYC Health Bucks provides incentive coupons to clients of local community organizations that partner with DOHMH to distribute coupons. The \$2 coupon is distributed through community organizations and is decoupled from nutrition assistance benefits or other match contributions, meaning that a customer can spend the \$2 coupon at any participating market location without providing a match. The East Palo Alto Fresh Checks program accepts SNAP and cash as matching funds for the \$20 incentive. However, low-income customers who are referred from a community-based organization, or show proof of WIC or SSI receipt, are also eligible to receive the incentive. These customers can provide up to \$20 cash in order to receive an equal amount in incentive tokens.

## ***Participation Challenges***

### ***1. Retaining vendors at smaller markets that have lower revenues and customer patronage***

Smaller markets, such as the East Palo Alto market, report difficulty attracting and retaining culturally appropriate vendors at their markets due to relatively low customer participation and total revenue.

### ***2. Ensuring that limited market hours do not pose a barrier to participation for some consumers***

Some program staff members report that weekly markets, with limited and specific hours of operation, are inconvenient for many clients who may not be able to attend due to work or family obligations.

### ***3. Dispelling perceptions that farmers market products are too expensive or take too long to prepare***

A number of surveyed FMIPs report that many potential program clients perceive the available products to be expensive and time-consuming, deterring program participation.

**OUTREACH** Survey participants responded to questions regarding outreach strategies.

## ***Outreach Best Practices***

### ***1. Tailoring outreach to specific populations and geographic areas***

Strategic outreach efforts are an essential component of any FMIP. Outreach strategies used by the surveyed programs ranged from distributing brochures, to hosting or attending community meetings, to advertising through traditional media sources. Although umbrella organizations provide some outreach support for all of participating markets, most individual markets also do targeted outreach to specific communities that they serve. In conducting outreach, markets are careful to tailor their message to the specific demographic groups they hope to serve with the FMIP. Marketing and outreach materials are produced in various languages and placed in community organizations and spaces that serve a similar demographic.

For example, Michigan farmers markets publish outreach materials in Russian, Mandarin, and Spanish. They strategically place materials in schools,

food pantries, health clinics, and local businesses. Additionally, the Michigan DUFb FMIP umbrella organization, the Fair Food Network, does statewide outreach including billboard and radio advertising.

Some market organizations do mailings to low-income zip codes with the specific language and information relevant to the majority population of that area. In Boston, BCFF handles the outreach efforts for all participating Boston markets. BCFF requires their markets to fill out an order form, indicating what amount of materials they need for outreach, including banners, posters, shopping bags, and laminated documents.

## ***2. Developing partnerships with governmental and non-governmental agencies to assist in outreach efforts***

Some FMIPs partner with state and local agencies that administer nutrition assistance programs to help with outreach for the FMIP. BCFF, for example, partners with the Department of Transitional Assistance, Boston Public Schools, local housing authorities, and other community-based organizations to assist with program outreach and promotion.

## ***Outreach Challenges***

### ***1. Getting word out about both the market and FMIP to a broader audience than the traditional market customers***

Effectively reaching potential program clients who do not traditionally frequent the market can be a challenging task for FMIPs.

### ***2. Ensuring that the market is welcoming and culturally appropriate for all prospective customers***

At market locations, it is important to provide accommodations for a variety of populations including seniors, families with young children, non-English speakers, and individuals with disabilities. Markets can do so by having bilingual volunteers and staff, culturally appropriate activities and services, highly accessible locations, and signage and information in multiple languages.

### ***3. Absorbing the cost of targeted outreach – this can become a limiting factor for many markets and organizations, especially those without an umbrella organization***

If an organization does not have sufficient funding or administrative capacity to launch a robust outreach program, absorbing the costs of this outreach can be very burdensome. Outreach, however, is a critical component of program success and programs that fail to do appropriate outreach may see a more limited program impact.

**EVALUATION** Survey participants responded to questions regarding data tracking and program evaluation strategies.

## ***Evaluation Best Practices***

### ***1. Identifying the most useful metrics for evaluation and collecting thorough data on an annual or semi-annual basis***

All surveyed FMIPs track total incentive redemption annually, and many track customer participation. Most of this data is collected at the market level and aggregated by the umbrella organization. Umbrella organizations often require reports with varying levels of frequency and detail. Very few markets or umbrella organizations are collecting data on behavior change or health outcomes of program participants.

Some umbrella organizations, including funding entities, have successfully conducted more comprehensive evaluations. For example, FFN evaluates its FMIP on an annual basis and collects data from market operators, participating vendors, and incentive recipients. It uses this data to determine the effect that DUFb has on promoting healthier food choices and to measure the impact on the local food economy (Fair Food Network). FFN also uses the data to identify best practices among markets in implementing the FMIP. They use those best practices for improving and replicating the model.

Several FMIP administrators report that they would like to collect more data on customer participation and shopping patterns. Portland Farmers Market Fresh Exchange program staff report the need to develop a simple way to determine if a SNAP customer is a first-time or repeat shopper. The Boston Bounty Bucks program staff report that it would be helpful to know what percentage of total vendor sales was attributable to SNAP custom-



**Table 3: Customer Count - Five Farmers Market Incentive Programs**

<b>Farmers Market Incentive Program</b>	<b>Total Participating Markets</b>	<b>Average Weekly Market Customers (Total – all markets)</b>	<b>Average Weekly Customers Using Incentive (Total – all markets)</b>
<i>Boston Bounty Bucks</i>	22	34,890	385
<i>Columbia Heights Market Festibucks</i>	1		160
<i>Portland Fresh Exchange</i>	3	2,675	204
<i>Los Angeles Market Match</i>	12	2,300	1,069
<i>East Palo Alto Fresh Bucks</i>	1	105	80

ers. Surveying vendors regarding their perception of the FMIP and impact on sales, as well as gathering qualitative data from markets to determine best practices and challenges, are additional areas in which data collection may be useful.

## **2. Making customer surveys and interviews optional for participants, if possible**

Markets report that collecting data through surveys or interviews with FMIP customers is often cumbersome and even a deterrent to participation. For example, the East Palo Alto Fresh Checks program reports that it is required by a funder to collect monthly survey data on purchasing patterns and eating behaviors. Market staff cites the eight-question survey as too lengthy and time-consuming for both the organization and customers. The Chicago LINK Up FMIP reports they have learned not to ask participants too many questions.

### **Evaluation Challenges**

#### **1. Complying with grant requirements for evaluation without overwhelming customers with survey questions and other evaluation**

Offering customers an incentive to participate in the survey may be one way to collect data for program evaluation and grant reporting purposes without overwhelming customers.

**OUTCOMES** Markets that participated in an FMIP for two or more years experienced significant increases in customer participation and incentive redemption. As participation grows, some markets experience difficulty stretching the incentive funds to meet increased demand from customers.

For example, Los Angeles Market Match and NYC Health Bucks are often forced to ration or reduce the amount of incentive funding distributed to markets at the end of the market season or fiscal year. Programs and markets that track EBT spending and incentive redemption across years have documented significant increases in both incentive redemption and SNAP redemption per participating market from year to year (see Tables 4, 5, and 6)

On the whole, vendors report financial benefit from their participation in the FMIP. A study by Wholesome Wave found that the majority of vendors (66%) at markets with an FMIP reported increased sales. Vendors also reported expanding operations, diversifying products, adding acreage, and hiring additional staff as a result of the increased revenues from the FMIP (Wholesome Wave). FFN in Michigan reports data on average SNAP sales per market and per farmer participating in DUFB (see Table 4). Average SNAP EBT redemption per participating farmer increased from \$327 in 2009 to \$1427 in 2012.

The percentage of total customers that participate in the FMIP at a given market ranges from 5% to 80%. Some umbrella organizations administering an FMIP do not collect detailed data on total number of customers (see Table 3 for market and FMIP customer count data.) All surveyed markets saw an increase in SNAP or WIC clients visiting their markets after offering the FMIP. For example, from 2011 to 2012, Chicago farmers markets saw the number of SNAP customers jump from 5,400 to 10,666.

Table 4: Growth in SNAP and Incentive Redemption Rates - Michigan DUFB

<b>Michigan Double Up Food Bucks</b>	<b>Average number of SNAP client visits per Market</b>	<b>Average SNAP Redemption per Market (does not include incentives)</b>	<b>Average SNAP Redemption per Farmer (does not include incentives)</b>
<i>2009</i>	299	\$ 5,235	\$ 327
<i>2010</i>	446	\$ 7,448	\$ 1,117
<i>2011</i>	730	\$ 12,518	\$ 1,377
<i>2012</i>	1,192	\$ 13,700	\$ 1,467

Table 5: Growth in SNAP and Incentive Redemption Rates - NYC Health Bucks

<b>NYC Health Bucks</b>	<b>Number of Markets Accepting Health Bucks</b>	<b>Average Incentive Redemption Per Market</b>
<i>2006</i>	29	\$ 282
<i>2007</i>	33	\$ 634
<i>2008</i>	41	\$ 3882
<i>2009</i>	49	\$ 3444
<i>2010</i>	60	\$ 3856
<i>2011</i>	65	\$ 3566
<i>2012</i>	135	\$ 2766

**Table 6: Growth in SNAP and Incentive Redemption Rates - Boston Bounty Bucks**

Boston Bounty Bucks	Number of Markets Accepting Bounty Bucks	Average SNAP Redemption Per Market	Average Incentive Redemption Per Market
2008	7	\$ 187	\$ 150
2009	14	\$ 746	\$ 690
2010	18	\$ 2,271	\$ 1,994
2011	19	\$ 2,973	\$ 3,348
2012	18	\$ 5,355	\$ 4,105

Established markets that only later added an FMIP saw levels of SNAP and WIC redemption rise significantly after program implementation. Also, if funding has allowed for it, most markets have disbursed an increasing level of incentive benefits each year since launching the program. Some FMIPs have experienced increased demand for incentive benefits at their markets, but have not been able to maintain sufficient funding to support that demand. For example, in the Portland Fresh Exchange program, a dip in funding led to a reduction in incentive spending from \$26,000 in 2009 to just \$9,000 in 2010. The Portland Farmers Market organization proceeded to establish a sister nonprofit to handle fundraising and subsequently was able to increase its incentive redemption to \$34,000 in 2012.

#### **CONCLUSION: MAKING THE CASE FOR FMIPs**

FMIPs are helping to significantly increase the frequency with which low-income customers shop at farmers markets. FMIPs are also increasing the economic stability and sustainability of the markets and vendors that accept the incentive. On a per market and per farmer basis, SNAP redemption, incentive redemption, and SNAP customer visits increased annually for the programs that reported data for those indicators.

Based on the information shared by programs included in the survey, FMIPs have great potential to positively affect the nutritional status and food security of low-income consumers as well as the revenue of local farmers and farmers markets. In-

vesting in FMIPs is one way to leverage federal food security funding (through SNAP, WIC, and FMNP dollars) to help increase financial access to healthy food and channel dollars into the local food economy. FMIPs are one food policy tool that enables policymakers and community leaders to bridge the gap between food security and local food, as well as promote community and economic development more broadly. An analysis of best practices at 10 FMIPs nationwide reveals that continuity in funding, strategic evaluation practices, tailored outreach efforts, and administrative and technical support through a central umbrella organization are all critical components of programmatic success. Moreover, those FMIPs which have received strong and ongoing public funding support, in particular, have identified this support as a key enabler of FMIP sustainability and success. Public entities, through funding as well as ongoing administrative and technical support, have a potentially powerful role to play in increasing the spread and impact of FMIPs across the country. Local policymakers and practitioners should consider the experiences and best practices of the surveyed FMIPs as a guide and tool in launching or scaling up programming in their own communities, with the goal of applying the broader experiences and lessons of other programs to the place-specific challenges and needs each community will face as it seeks to build a more sustainable and accessible local food system.

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## NOTES

1. For a review of the primary tenets of the traditional anti-hunger and food security movement, see Chapter 2 of Patricia Allen's *Together at the Table*, "Perspectives of Alternative Agrifood Movements: Issues and Concepts." Additionally, Feeding America is one of the nation's leading hunger-relief charities, and its mission and programming efforts may serve as an example of some of the types of hunger-relief work being done in the United States. See website for details.
2. The local food movement is closely related to, and often considered synonymous with, terms such as "locavore," "Slow Food," or "farm-to-table." Michael Pollan is one well-known food journalist who advocates for a local diet. See his take on the benefits of local food in the PBS documentary and educational initiative *Nourish*. Additionally, Local Harvest is an online directory of local food producers that outlines several of the perceived benefits of local food on its web page, "Why Buy Local."
3. See White; Alkon, Black, White, and Green: *Farmers Markets, Race, and the Green Economy*; Guthman; and Balasubramanian.
4. For existing data on FMIPs, including their public health and economic impacts, see Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, Dixit-Joshi et al., Fair Food Network, and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.
5. See Jones; Blanke and Burdick; and Pirog.
6. For an elaboration on local food as a social movement see Starr; see Delind for thoughts on the relationship between local food, place, and culture.

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**TROPICAL SEEDS** | 2008  
*by Noel Bielaczyc*



## Eating Right in America: The Cultural Politics of Food and Health, *Charlotte Biltekoff*

*Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2013. 224 pp.*

In *Eating Right in America*, Charlotte Biltekoff explores the history of American dietary reform to reveal how culture, politics, and middle class moral ideologies have shaped our social understandings regarding what it means, and has meant, to “eat right” as an American. Biltekoff, an American studies scholar with expertise in the emergent field of critical nutrition, premises her first book with the view that, “nutrition is not only an empirical set of rules, but also a system of moral measures” (p. 7). From this stance, she argues that “eating right” has as much to do with normative ideas of good citizenship as it does with seemingly more objective concepts of good health.

Biltekoff’s exploration follows a chronological approach. Drawing upon research and analysis of dietary reform discourse she narrates the cultural and political story of food and health through the voices of the reformers themselves—from the mother of the domestic science movement, Ellen Richards, and the father of the wartime national nutrition program, Paul McNutt, to contemporary figures such as Alice Waters, Michael Pollan, and Michelle Obama. Using the reformers as her narrators and the propaganda they inspired as her visual aids, she leads her readers through four of the most prominent dietary reform movements of the past century. She begins her exploration with the upswing of domestic science in the late nineteenth century, transitions to the national nutrition program launched during World War II, and ends by shedding light on two contemporary movements birthed in the later decades of the twentieth century: the alternative food movement and the campaign against obesity. These movements compose the book’s four foundational chapters, each showcasing a different set of emerging dietary ide-

als. Throughout, Biltekoff emphasizes how changing definitions of good diets and good health have worked to draw ever more distinctive lines between America’s abiding middle class and the “unhealthy others” (p. 9).

While the actual dietary recommendations of each of these major reforms differ considerably—from the domestic science movement’s reductive nutritional lens and call for economically efficient diets, to the alternative food movement’s holistic view and call to invest in food that better serves the health of people and planet—Biltekoff’s most striking revelation comes through her unraveling of a unifying thread. Despite the almost complete reversal in the content of dietary advice over the course of a century, the messages endorsed by Ellen Richards and Alice Waters are fundamentally one and the same: to “eat right” is to be a good citizen (p. 2-4). Ultimately, Biltekoff challenges her readers to move beyond an empirical view of dietary health rooted in objective scientific fact toward a more constructionist view that accounts for the social processes and cultural influences that have helped to naturalize the scientific framings of health and diet.

What *Eating Right in America* fails to do, as Biltekoff acknowledges, is to delve into the ways in which U.S. citizens may have perceived or responded to, adopted or contested, the dietary advice they were subjected to. This gap marks an important area for future food scholars to build upon Biltekoff’s work, and to begin to better understand the contemporary ramifications of modern dietary discourse. Especially needed is a deep and nuanced understanding of those who have been posited as the “unhealthy others,” and made to shoulder the blame for their dietary shortcomings in true neo-liberal fashion. How do these individuals view good food, a good diet, and good health? What are their reasons, challenges, and barriers to not following the path of dietary adherence to good health and good citizenship? Understanding the answers to these questions may more effectively allow food and nutrition professionals to help individuals make appropriate choices about their diets while confronting that such messages are inherently fraught with moral and ethical implications. Through her historical analysis Biltekoff reveals the patterns and

persistent links between dietary health and citizenship, while also pinpointing the pieces that have been left out; the pieces that are needed to more fully complete the picture of contemporary dietary reform.

*Eating Right in America* may arouse more questions than it answers, and probably complicates readers' understandings of nutrition and dietary health more than it clarifies. However, that is exactly what Biltekoff intends. This powerful critique of dietary reform "provide[s] a starting point from which to rethink eating right as a social duty, a moral measure, and a form of power worthy of our most critical attention" (p. 12). In summary, this book is for anyone who thinks ordering a side salad instead of fries holds no moral implications, anyone who views the USDA's MyPlate dietary pictorial guide as intrinsic scientific fact, or anyone who has never thought of their morning latte purchase as an exercise of power. This book is for anyone who eats, right or wrong, in America. ■

#### BOOK REVIEW | CHRIS MAGGIOLO

## Wine and Culture: Vineyard to Glass, *Rachel Black and Robert Ulin, eds.*

*New York: Bloomsbury, 2013. 323 pp.*

Wine is an undeniably trendy topic that has entertained prolific attention from popular authors and academics alike. A frequent focal point for discussions of geography, history, and economics, the study of wine has received surprisingly little attention within the field of anthropology. In *Wine and Culture*, Black and Ulin curate a selection of oenocentric essays that aim to showcase how the subject of wine may fluently speak to important contemporary social and cultural discourses.

"Wine has long been and continues to be an important commodity that generates significant interest because of its commercial, symbolic, cultural, and aesthetic value." In order to frame the breadth

of oenological knowledge presented in this work, Black and Ulin divide the volume into four thematic sections. Section I, entitled "Rethinking *Terroir*," explores the often-debated concept of *terroir* both new and old world winemaking and outlines traditional perceptions of *terroir* while offering new tools and angles with which to delve into studies on "the taste of place." Ulin, himself, wraps up the section with an essay entitled "*Terroir* and Locality: An Anthropological Perspective", tying together the themes of "Rethinking *Terroir*" and presenting them in the context of anthropology.

No compilation of anthropological essays would be complete without a discussion of power dynamics and place, which is exactly the subject of Section II, "Relationships of Power and the Construction of Place." Rather than focusing solely on conventional winemaking environments, the editors selected three unique essays on the topic of wine in Eastern Europe. Ranging in focus from memory and identity, to elite consumption, to cultural patrimony, these forays into Eastern European wine culture offer a nice contrast to the section's more conventional essays on "Wine as Performance in Galicia, Spain" and the legality of the Bordeaux classification system.

Black and Ulin's last two sections, "Labor, Commodification, and the Politics of Wine" and "Technology and Nature," acknowledge important Marxist themes frequently found in commodity studies. A distinct look at commodification through the lens of Georgian drinking practices nicely juxtaposes discourses in gender studies and globalization. The book's final section begins with a case study of Lebanon, another marginalized wine-producing country, and ends with two essays tackling the emerging subject of natural wine.

*Wine and Culture: Vineyard to Glass* does what most academic takes on wine production and consumption avoid – it strays from the comfort of the Western viticultural landscape, though not so far as to render the discussion foreign and uninspiring. As stated in this anthology's well-written introduction, wine is a global commodity. As such, any book that attempts to compile a collection of essays on the culture of wine needs to address the topic in terms of its increasingly broad scope. From Australia to South America, Bordeaux to Lebanon,

*Wine and Culture* delivers an exceptional overview of the anthropology of winemaking. As a student of anthropology and alcohol studies, I can only hope that Black and Ulin's work opens a door through which others may follow. By not just reaffirming what wine studies is, but by also showing what it can be, they create a space that beckons for further research and the development of an exciting, unique, and invaluable field. ■

**BOOK REVIEW | BRAD JONES**

## The Life of Cheese, Heather Paxson

Berkeley: University of California Press.  
2013. 303 pp.

Bringing together insights drawn from nearly a decade of ethnographic research, Heather Paxson's *The Life of Cheese* offers much to populate the theoretical landscape of artisanal cheese production in America. Noting a "renaissance" of artisanal cheese and initially inspired by a simple interest in where these peculiar cheeses were coming from, who was making them, and why, Paxson's research shows that cheese and cheesemaking in America in fact implicates political, cultural, social, psychological, economic, health, and other concerns into a complex layered bundle produced and packaged in the form of artisanal wheels and wedges. While contemporary research increasingly identifies the consumption of artisanal food as a powerful lens into interesting socio-cultural questions, Paxson suggests that the production of these artisanal foods is equally as evocative. Employing ethnographic data accrued from participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and sample surveys, Paxson proves that in crafting edible objects food producers are at the same time crafting communities, crafting moral meaning, and crafting selves. What makes an artisanal cheese good to eat, she finds, also makes it good to make (5).

In chapters 3 and 4, Paxson teases out the myriad influences motivating the production of artisanal cheese. A clear split emerges between those

becoming farmer-artisans, who are often times well educated and leaving professional careers, and those who have been long time fluid-milk producing farmers now hoping to capitalize on the possibility of adding value through the act of transubstantiation. The former are embedded in an American ideological trope she calls a "tradition of invention"—a pioneering narrative that recognizes artisans as discursively differentiating themselves not only from their European counterparts, but also from the continuously operating artisanal factories in America (99)—the latter often hoping to save family farms and continue the rural, manually-engaged, family-centered lifestyle they afford. While each brings with them varying amounts of economic and cultural capital, both are participating in "economies of sentiment." Economic activity after all is also social activity, and artisans are motivated by ethical, political, cultural and emotional factors as much as by the rationalized market. When these opposing sides of the same coin come into conflict, producers are forced to reconcile the often dissonant economic and moral pursuits of working towards a good living and working towards a good life.

Having established some of the context in which the socio-cultural economy of artisanal cheese is situated, Paxson proceeds to ask, what's so "artisanal" about artisanal cheese anyway? In an era when craft beer is commonplace and artisanal bread from Subway an obvious abomination, and given the fact that craft and artisanal are terms historically applied to utilitarian objects of domestic intent but rarely, if ever, to food, the question becomes especially salient. Chapter 5 attempts a working definition of artisanal cheese and tests its boundaries against disciplinary definitions derived from craft theory and Paxson's own ethnographic insights. She proceeds to show that art and science come together and sometimes compete to inscribe the concept of craft in practical (relationship with raw materials and technology, embodied skill, synesthetic and tacit knowledge) and also rhetorical ways (health, pleasure, connoisseurship, taste).

The relationship between nature and culture comes front and center in Chapters 2 and 6. Cheese is after all cultured nature, representing the influence of both microbial and human cultures, and it proves metonymically an insightful vehicle



for carrying implicit socio-cultural paradigms. Paxson explores what she calls the “ecologies of production” surrounding artisanal cheese showing that cheese is born from complex interactions between humans, animals, microbes, and the environment. She suggests that within this complex ecology cheese materializes from “an assemblage of organic, social, and symbolic forces put into productive play in the service of a post-pastoral form of life” (31). The “post-pastoral” represents a revised way of conceptualizing our relationship with nature, viewing it not through the romantic imagery associated with the purely pastoral, nor the conquering frame predicated by modernity. She argues that artisanal cheesemakers collaborate with animal and environmental “others” in the pursuit of better cheese and better cheesemaking. Moreover, she shows that a form of “microbiopolitics” is implicated in public health concerns over how to regulate and monitor raw milk cheese. Healthy cheese is shown to be a divisive question depending on which lens frames it’s quality. For producers and many consumers alike, what makes an artisanal cheese good to make also makes it good (healthy) to eat. But “good” cheese is never intrinsically so.

Although Paxson teases out myriad disciplinary themes, her research is nevertheless buttressed by anthropological training and respectively her primary questions focus on “discerning and interpreting the cultural meanings that both motivate and are conveyed by the quotidian aspects of peoples life” (x) and “how social change manifests not only materially but in how people think and feel about what they do” (12). Paxson shows that cheese offers a particularly insightful lens and the depth to which she conducted her research leaves one to wonder if there is indeed anything left to be said on the subject at all. Nevertheless, questions remain. Does the artisanal mode of production have any real chance of persistence in an increasingly globalized, industrialized, modernized world economy? How might we continue to triangulate the definition of culinary craftsmanship within evolving matrices of production and the market? How will the revival of interest in fermented foods more generally clash with regulatory standards designed for an industrial rather than artisanal

scale? What will these debates tell us about the socio-political framing of the microbial “other?” *The Life of Cheese* answers many questions and proposes as many more.■



**TACU TACU** | 2013  
by *Gabriel Mitchell*

Gabriel, a BU Gastronomy student, conducted this fieldwork for part of a master's thesis on Peruvian foodways, which resulted from his interest in food and identity construction.

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# CALL for PAPERS

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*The Graduate Journal of Food Studies* is now seeking submissions for its second edition. Graduate students having written an original food-related essay of first-rate scholarship are encouraged to submit.

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Published bi-yearly in digital form, the journal is a space for promising scholars to showcase their exceptional academic research.

The Graduate Journal of Food Studies hopes to foster dialogue and engender debate among students across the academic community.

It features food-focused articles from diverse disciplines including, but not limited to: anthropology, history, sociology, cultural studies, gender studies, economics, art, politics, pedagogy, nutrition, philosophy, and religion. A section for Book Reviews will also be included.

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