Addressing Economic Inequities between Workers and Owners in the Food System: An Exploration of the Concepts and Practices of Solidarity Economies

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this Capstone Research Synthesis is to address economic inequities between workers and owners in the food system. This research is motivated by experience and witnessing the harms of this pervasive social problem. To address this social problem, this research examines alternative economic concepts and practices that do not reproduce the maldistribution of resources that workers experience relative to owners in the food system. The Overall Research Question asks, how do the concepts and practices of solidarity economy address maldistribution of resources between workers and owners in the U.S. food system? To address this question, I used directed content analysis as the method to collect data from three solidarity economy networks base to examine how solidarity economy concepts and practices address three aspects of maldistribution, which are exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. I found that many solidarity economy concepts and practices can address the three aspects of maldistribution, but several could be further specified to ensure that their application does not reproduce exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. Overall, this Capstone Research Synthesis demonstrates that there are economic concepts and practices that represent alternatives to capitalism and do not reproduce maldistribution of resources between workers and owners in the food system. Developing and applying these principles and practices may bring food systems and society closer to social justice.

Keywords: food system labor, worker-owner relations, economic inequity, maldistribution, exploitation, marginalization, deprivation, solidarity economy

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Abbreviations

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CRQ	Constitutive Research Question
LLSIL	Lower Living Standard Income Level
ORQ	Overall Research Question
SE	Solidarity Economy

One—Introduction

Capitalism does not permit an even flow of economic resources. With this system, a small privileged few are rich beyond conscience, and almost all the others are doomed to be poor at some level. That's the way the system works. And since we know that the system will not change the rules, we are going to have to change the system.

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr

These words were spoken over fifty years ago and they ring just as true today, if not more, as when they were freshly delivered. That is because the distribution of economic resources is becoming more concentrated in the United States (U.S.). The U.S. is seeing unprecedented unequal economic distribution where the top ten percent of society appropriates 50 percent of the nation's income, while the bottom 50 percent of society is distributed only 20 percent of the nation's income (Piketty 2014, 249). That economic distribution is predicted to jump to 60 percent and 15 percent for the top ten and bottom 50 percent, respectively, by 2030 (Piketty 2014, 249). The social problem that I address in this Capstone is focused on inequitable economic resource distribution within the food system.

The food system is one of the largest sectors of the U.S. economy and continues to grow. In 2015 agriculture, food, and related industries generated $992 billion towards the total U.S. gross output (Melton 2017); in 2022 that number rose to $1.420 trillion (Zahniser and Kassel 2024). Additionally, the food system is the largest employer in the U.S and continues to grow. From 2010 to 2016 the food system workforce grew thirteen percent, employing about 21.5 million people in 2016 ("No Piece" 2016, 5). In 2022, it was reported that there were 22.1 million people employed within agriculture, food, and related industries (Kassel 2023). From

these numbers we can conclude that there is a lot of money being made within the food system and that there are a lot of people that work within the food system.

The economic resources generated by the food system are not equitably distributed among those who work within it. The majority of jobs within the food system are frontline workers that are paid low-wages. In 2016, food system frontline workers were paid a median wage of $10 per hour, while $15.12 per hour was considered a livable wage at that time (“No Piece” 2016, 15). This is in comparison to the executives that work within the food system who were paid an annual median wage of $120,000, which equals about six times more than their frontline workers (“No Piece” 2016, 15). It is also worth noting that half of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of food system businesses make millions of dollars annually (“No Piece” 2016, 16). And that CEO pay has increased by one-third since 2018, while median salaries for workers have even declined within some companies, like the Coca-Cola Company (“Inequality, Made” 2024, 10). It was reported in 2022 that food and beverage retail and service industries have some of the lowest median salaries among all industries despite increases in those companies' revenues (“Inequality, Made” 2024, 11). Furthermore, there has been a strong correlation between companies that pay low median salaries for workers to have higher CEO-to-worker pay ratios. For example, The Coca-Cola Company has a CEO-to-worker ratio of 1,594 to 1 (“Inequality, Made” 2024, 10). What this means is that the economic successes created within the food system industry are not reaching their frontline workers in an equitable way.

Inequitable economic resource distribution has consequences for workers. These consequences show up as exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation for workers. Briefly, exploitation happens when labor is appropriated for the benefit of another (Fraser 2008b, 380) or the loss of power or control reproduces domination between workers and owners (Young 1990,

61). Comparatively, marginalization means being confined to do poorly paid and undesirable work (Fraser 2008b, 380) and not being viewed as a productive participant in society (Young 1990, 64). Deprivation means being denied access to materials to support a standard of living (Fraser 2008b, 380). Given these consequences, the inequitable distribution of economic resources between those that work within the food system is a concern for social justice.

The focus of this Capstone research is on addressing economic inequities within the food system and bringing society closer to social justice. There are many ways that society can and does respond to social justice problems. One way that society responds is through social movements. My research considers how society is responding to economic inequities within the food system through the social movement of Solidarity Economy (SE). Specifically, this Capstone explores how SE conceptualizes and practices models of worker-owner relations that reduce and or do not reproduce economic inequity. The research problem of my Capstone focuses on how SE concepts and practices address maldistribution of resources between workers and owners in the food system. The importance of addressing this research problem is to demonstrate that despite the grueling growth of economic inequity, there are different ways of organizing labor and ownership that are more equitable and just. This research addresses the social problem of economic inequities between workers and owners in the food system by asking about the concepts and practices of SE so that I can better understand how SE social movements and models can reduce maldistribution of resources between workers and owners.

Chapter Two establishes the domain of food systems and society, defines the concepts of social problems and social justice, and introduces the Capstone's social problem and research problem. Chapter Three identifies the research paradigm, introduces the research questions and elaborates their corresponding conceptual frameworks, and describes the research design.

Chapter Four discusses the findings of the research and shares what contributions they make to social justice in the food system. Chapter Five concludes by summarizing the work of the Capstone and the relevance it has to social justice, the food system, and our society. Now, I will introduce the background and significance of the research topic.

Two—Background and Significance

The purpose of this chapter is to provide contextual information, definitions, and conceptual frameworks so that the reader can understand the background and significance of my research. First, I define the concepts of food systems and society. This is the research domain of the Capstone. I then discuss two additional key concepts, social problems and social justice. Next, I introduce the Capstone social problem - economic inequity between workers and owners in the food system - and provide evidence for how the social problem violates my criteria for social justice. Lastly, I introduce the research problem, which is the aspect of the social problem that I will focus on in my research.

Domain of Food Systems and Society

The research domain for this Capstone is food systems and society. To understand the domain of food systems and society it is important to define the food system and society as separate concepts that relate to each other. At its core, the food system is about the processes and interactions through which food is produced, distributed, and consumed (Neff and Lawrence 2014, 2). More specifically, it is about the relationships among each functioning component, which include the agricultural, environmental, economic, educational, political, social, nutritional, and cultural aspects of food (2). These components interact and overlap with each other in ways that establish a complex system. How well the whole system operates depends on how each food system component relates to each other. This means that the functioning relationship between two or more food system components impacts all other components of the food system. For example, farm and food production systems are regulated by government policies, those regulations can then impact customer access and purchasing as well as nutritional

information about that product. A specific example is how raw milk is regulated by state policies that determine if and how raw milk can be sold to the public. Depending on the stance of those state regulations, educational and nutritional information may speak favorably or cautionary about the consumption of raw milk. Overall, the food system is a multi-dimensional network through which food is produced, distributed, and consumed.

The operations of the food system are dependent on labor. In 2016, it was recorded that the food system employs more people than any other sector in the U.S. economy, making up over 14 percent of the U.S. workforce, or about 21.5 million food system employees ("No Piece" 2016, 5). According to a report from 2022, there were 22.1 million people employed within agriculture, food, and related industries (Kassel 2023). Food system employee positions include front line workers, office workers, supervisors, professionals, management, and chief executive officers (CEOs) ("Hands That Feed Us" 2012,18). They all work across the food sectors of producing, processing, distributing, retailing, and serving food. These food system sectors are organized socially.

The food system, and the labor that creates it, are embedded in society. Society is a mutable system that shifts depending on ideas, practices, and environments (Dean 2005, 327). It is developed through social relationships and the commonality of, and contention around, people's ideas, practices, and place. The interactions from these social relationships make laws, policies, economies, and social structures more visible and are examples of institutions that make up society (328). Like any institution, society develops rules and order for itself.

Political-economy is one institutional aspect of society. Society develops rules through political and economic structuring, as well as through cultural norms accepted by that society. The way that a society governs, meaning who gets to make decisions and how, constitutes the

political structures of a society. Economic structures of a society are about the management and distribution of resources. These two structures often work in concert with each other and are referred to as political economy. Wood (2000), for example, explains how agrarian societies changed politically and economically to become more capitalistic through the process of industrialization (36-38). In this way, society builds institutions and those same institutions remake society, creating a feedback loop where society and its institutions are interactive and mutually influence each other in ways that shift over time and location. Thus, society and the institutions that it creates, like political economy, are interconnected and recreate one another.

Political economy also influences labor conditions in the food system. This happens through economic and social policies that determine the processes and standards for labor. We can see, for example, how political economy has shaped labor through the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, the National Labor Relations Act, the Family Medical Leave Act, the American with Disabilities Act, and the Fair Labor Standards Act. To further illustrate, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act covers policies about employer-sponsored benefits like pensions and health care ("Jurisdiction" n.d.). Whereas, the National Labor Relations Act houses policies about worker's rights to collectively associate through union representation ("Jurisdiction" n.d.). Equally important is the Family Medical Leave Act, which focuses on protecting jobs through extended leave absences and accommodating family-friendly work schedules ("Jurisdiction" n.d.). Additionally, the American with Disabilities Act provides policies about equal employment opportunities for people that have disabilities ("Jurisdiction" n.d.). And finally, to demonstrate how political-economy influences labor conditions, the Fair Labor Standards Act sets policies around minimum wages, child-labor, hours worked, and overtime pay ("Jurisdiction" n.d.). These policies demonstrate how labor conditions, including

worker-owner arrangements, are formed through social and economic policies within the institution of political economy. What I mean by worker-owner arrangements is "what work is, who does what for whom, how work is compensated, and the social process by which the results of work are appropriated" (Young 1990, 61). This means that workers, owners, and the relationships between them are key elements of the political economic structures of food system labor. Even so, all aspects of the food system are designed by various political economic structures of society.

Worker-owner arrangements are consequential for the conditions of food system labor. In Marxist conflict theory, society is based on the "division of class into two basic groups: the capitalists, or owners of the means of production, and the proletariat, or working class" (Kilty 2015, 44). Conflict theory demonstrates how society, through social beliefs and policies about labor and ownership, creates specific workers-owner arrangements. By workers I mean wage laborers or front-line workers across all five sectors in the food system (i.e., producing, processing, distributing, retailing, and serving food). Workers range from farmworkers, meat packers, warehouse transporters, and grocery clerks, to restaurant bussers ("Hands That Feed Us" 2012, 2). Collectively, workers make up 86% of all food system jobs (18) and have very little influence or control over labor arrangements. By owners I mean those who control the means of production and have power over the condition of wage laborers across all five sectors of the food system. Owners include CEOs and other top executives that may not own corporations but do own decision making power and control the conditions and operations of production that purchase labor power. CEOs make up less than one percent of all food system jobs ("Hands That Feed Us" 2012, 18). Despite how few CEOs there are, they have significant influence on labor arrangements. People with this much status and power often dictate the social

order and organization of society for their own benefit (Alessio 2011, 92). Holt-Giménez (2017) states that those that purchase labor power do so for the purpose of creating surplus value for their personal and corporate gain (76). Given the differences in roles and responsibilities and the distribution of harms and benefits among workers and owners, social problems and social justice issues may arise.

Social Problems and Social Justice in Food Systems and Society

Societies and their political economic systems can produce social problems. A social problem is defined by harm to an individual, group, or society that has a social cause and therefore can be remedied through a social solution (Alessio 2011, 3). Every social problem has social consequences, which include harm to some and benefits to others, social causes, and social cures. What is important about identifying a social problem is that the causes and cures are societal and not individual matters. Human-made problems have human-made solutions. Using this definition, social problems are systemic and a collective concern. This is an important distinction because it reframes the harms that people experience as social problems and not individual problems. This distinction removes blame from individuals who are being harmed and assigns responsibility for harms to society. Some social problems are also social justice problems.

Social problems become social justice problems when their consequences are experienced inequitably. For example, when consequences of a social problem bring harm to an individual or society while also benefiting others, that social problem is being experienced inequitably. Inequity is caused by systems of oppression and privilege that normalize social relations in which an outcome is not earned “but rather results from social advantage relative to others’ disadvantage” (Adams and Zúñiga 2018, 46). Oppression and privilege are experienced

through social group membership or identities of race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, age, and ability. These identities are interrelated and do not function in isolation; this is known as intersectionality (46 - 47). For example, a black woman will experience oppression based on both her race and sex. While a white man will experience privilege based on his race and sex, though he could experience oppression based on other social identities. Because humans are complex, multi-dimensional people, we may experience both oppression and privilege at the same time. In these cases, a social problem is being caused by social injustice through the socially-constructed systems of oppression and privilege and therefore becomes a social justice problem. Inequities reflected in social problems like I have just explained can be addressed through efforts to advance social justice.

Social problems can be solved by social cures. Since social problems are a collective concern and not only an individual one, collective responsibility and action are necessary. The collective action of addressing the social problem's consequences of inequitable harms and benefits is known as a social cure. For social cures to be effective, those with the most ability to access and exercise social change need to leverage their resources. According to Bell (2018), "social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others, their society, the environment, and the broader world in which we live" (6). Young (2004) specifically says that people "who benefit relatively from structural inequalities have special moral responsibilities to contribute to organized efforts to correct them, not because they are to blame for them, but because they have more resources and are able to adapt to changed circumstances without suffering serious deprivation" (387).

Those who are experiencing oppression should not experience more inequities as a result of trying to remedy the social problem. This would not be a social cure. A social cure brings a society closer to social justice.

In order to advance social justice through social cures, social justice needs to be defined. Defining social justice is important because it helps society identify when it exists or is being violated by social problems and how to formulate a social cure. The definition of social justice used in this Capstone is that all people are able to participate in economic, cultural, and political dimensions of society. Fraser frames this as being able "to participate as peers" in economic, cultural, and political arenas of social life (Fraser 2008a, 405). This social justice concept is known as the parity of participation. Parity of participation is a three-dimensional framework for social justice.

The first dimension of and criteria for social justice is economic parity. Economic parity refers to equitable distribution of resources, where equitable distribution includes fair incomes, sensible division of labor, and democratic decision making (Fraser 2008b, 380). If someone is denied equitable distribution of these resources that would make it possible for them to participate as peers in society this is called maldistribution (Fraser 2008a, 405). Maldistribution is further characterized by exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. When there is exploitation in society, it means labor is being appropriated for the benefit of another. When there is marginalization in society, it means some are confined to do poorly paid and undesirable work. And when there is deprivation in society, it means some are denied access to materials to support a standard of living (Fraser 2008b, 380). The concepts of distribution and maldistribution help to understand when there is social justice or injustice. To summarize, the prevention of economic participation is an issue of class inequity, which can occur through worker-owner

arrangements introduced above. All members of society must have access to economic parity for there to be social justice within that society.

The second dimension of and criteria for social justice is cultural parity. Cultural parity refers to equitable recognition of individuals' social standing and value, where equitable recognition includes valuing all identities and cultures, recognizing and respecting diversity, and embracing representation (Fraser 2008b, 380-381). If someone is denied equitable recognition and social standing that would allow them to be valued among peers, this is called misrecognition (Fraser 2008a, 405). Misrecognition is further characterized by cultural domination, invisibilization, and disrespect. When there is cultural domination in society it means that someone is being subjected to another culture while one's own culture is seen as alien or met in hostile treatment. When there is invisibilization in society it is when a person's culture is made non-existent. And when there is disrespect in society it means that someone is being reduced to stereotypical public representations or being disrespected in everyday interactions because of their identity (Fraser 2008b, 380-381). The concepts of recognition and misrecognition help to understand when there is social justice or injustice. To summarize, the prevention of cultural participation is an issue of social hierarchy based on a person's identity and reinforced by systems of privilege and oppression. All members of society must have access to cultural parity for there to be social justice within that society.

The third dimension of and criteria for social justice is political parity. Political parity refers to equitable representation in democratic decision making, where equitable representation includes political voice and inclusion (Fraser 2008a, 407-408). If someone is denied equitable representation that allows participation in democratic decision-making among peers this is called misrepresentation (406). Misrepresentation is further characterized by the ordinary political and

metapolitical misrepresentation. When there is ordinary political misrepresentation in society, it means when a community's boundaries are assumed to be politically set in ways that count them as members in society in principle but not in practice (407). Whereas when there is metapolitical misrepresentation in society, it means the result of when those political boundaries are set and people are denied a chance to dispute over justice issues (408). The concepts of representation and misrepresentation help to understand when there is social justice or injustice. To summarize, the prevention of political parity is an issue of political voicelessness and exclusion. All members in society must have access to political parity for there to be social justice within that society.

Table 1. Criteria for Social Justice as Parity of Participation

Domain of Participation	Criteria for Social Justice	Criteria for Violations of Social Justice
Economic	Equitable Distribution of • Incomes • Division of labor • Democratic decision making	Maldistribution is • Exploitation • Marginalization • Deprivation
Cultural	Equitable Recognition of • All identities and cultures • Diversity • Representation	Misrecognition is • Cultural domination • Invisibilization • Disrespect
Political	Equitable Representation of • Democratic decision making • Political voice and inclusion	Misrepresentation is • Ordinary political • Metapolitical

Source: Fraser 2008a, 2008b

Parity of participation in society can be prevented within each dimension of a person's social life and these dimensions interact. In theory and as explained above, the economic, cultural, and political arenas of life are separated; however, in real life they are interconnected in ways that are not as easily detangled. Alcoff (2007) states that "there are no economic mechanisms operating with complete independence from identity hierarchies" (261). This means that there is no separation between identity (race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation,

socioeconomic status, region, age, and ability) or cultural participation and class or economic participation. This reflects the concept of intersectionality shared when explaining social problems' connections to social justice above. Here, intersectionality means that maldistribution, misrecognition, and misrepresentation can be experienced all at once. When one or more of these are being experienced by an individual or society, criteria for social justice are violated and must be remedied. To reiterate, social justice exists within a society where all people have a social responsibility to ensure that all members of society are able to participate as peers in economic, cultural, and political life. In the next section, I explain my Capstone social problem, which violates the social justice criteria for equitable distribution of resources.

Capstone Social Problem

The social problem that this Capstone focuses on is the economic inequities between workers and owners in the food system. In this section, I provide background on the political economic context in the U.S and worker-owner arrangements within that context. Then I provide evidence that worker-owner arrangements in the food system result in maldistribution in the forms of exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. This is a social justice problem because maldistribution is a violation of social justice. The social problem of maldistribution between workers and owners in the food system, which violates social justice criteria, has roots in the political economic systems in society introduced above.

The political economic system in the U.S. is consequential for structuring worker-owner arrangements and is dominated by neoliberal capitalism. Capitalism is a type of economic structuring and is rooted in ideologies of privatization and profit. These ideologies prioritize the separation of politics and economy, suggesting that the market should not be governed and that this will lead to market growth (Reich 2015, 5). Supporters of free market economy believe that

minimal government interventions will create more independent businesses and keep profits high. However, in practice, the 'free market' of capitalism is less about minimal government oversight and more about specific types of policies that set rules for property ownership, market power and consolidation, market contracts, and corporate safety nets (8). Capitalism's drive for profit, privatization, and deregulation has leveraged and, in many ways, launched the political movement of neoliberalism (Holt- Giménez, 2017, 15). Neoliberalism is rooted in ideologies of "rampant individualism, self-reliance, an antipathy towards collectivism and welfare and, crucially, a divorcing of economic activity from its wider social consequences—that have exerted a corrosive effect on ethical conduct" (Bone 2012, 653). Bone (2012) suggests that these key ideologies of neoliberalism are a threat to "democracy, equality, wellbeing, welfare, and social justice" (653). It is within this political economic context that the food system's worker-owner arrangements are established. Neoliberal capitalism results in particular forms of worker-owner relationships.

Economic inequities between workers and owners are a result of neoliberal capitalism. The priority of market growth and capital gain described above drives the need for cheap and flexible labor and sets up competition between capital and labor. Garrapa (2017) says that the "competition between capital and labor is a key factor in the organization of production" in capitalist systems (233). This competition is driven by the practice to sell products at a higher value than what was needed to create it (Holt-Gimenez 2017, 35). All workers increase a product's worth through their labor power. The new value of that product that exceeds the cost of production, including wages, is known as surplus value (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013, 53). Any surplus value retained by owners is a profit. This results in a never-ending drive to increase surplus value extraction, often at the expense of workers, resulting in inequitable

distribution of resources. Neoliberal economic policies and practices have helped increase the wealth of owners and decrease any chance for social mobility or wealth accumulation for all others (Coffey et al. 2020, 23). This has ultimately led to the highest levels of economic inequities in history (Holt- Giménez, 2017, 15). It is because of neoliberal capitalism that economic inequities such as maldistribution in worker-owner arrangements are created. Maldistribution between workers and owners can occur in different ways.

This Capstone focuses on maldistribution resulting from worker-owner arrangements in the forms of exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. According to the social justice definition that I use for this Capstone, equitable distribution of resources is one of the criteria for social justice, meaning that maldistribution is a violation of social justice. As a reminder, maldistribution prevents economic participation and occurs when someone is denied equitable distribution of resources that allow them to participate as peers (Fraser 2008a, 405). Maldistribution of resources between workers and owners shows up in food systems and society as exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. I explain and provide evidence for each of these forms of maldistribution in what follows. Briefly, exploitation is when labor is appropriated for the benefit of another (Fraser 2008b, 380) and the loss of power or control that reproduces domination between workers and owners (Young 1990, 61). Marginalization is being confined to do poorly paid and undesirable work (Fraser 2008b, 380) and not being viewed as a productive participant in society (Young 1990, 64). Deprivation is being denied access to materials to support a standard of living (Fraser 2008b, 380). I next provide evidence and examples of economic inequities between workers and owners in the food system.

Exploitation, when labor is appropriated for the benefit of another, is prevalent in the food system and can be demonstrated by inequitable incomes. Incomes (across all industries) for

workers have been stagnant while incomes for owners have increased dramatically. In the past 30 years there has been no income growth for the bottom 50 percent of the U.S. population, whereas income for the top one percent has seen 300 percent growth (Hardoon 2017, 2). In the food system, front-line workers are the largest workforce and are also the lowest paid ("Hands That Feed Us" 2012, 19). Front-line food system positions make less money than front-line positions in any other sector of the economy, earning 27.5 percent less (20). For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Inequality Org reported that some of the largest companies in the U.S. adapted their policies and increased the income of their CEOs, which consequently increased the pay gap from their average worker to 830-to-1 (Anderson 2021). Many of these companies are food corporations. For example, the YUM Brand's CEO made 1,286 times as much as median worker pay of $11,377. But not only did wage laborer's income stay the same, no hazard pay was offered to them during this time either, despite them being considered essential workers who did not have the luxury to work from their homes like owners (Anderson 2021). Likewise, the Coca-Cola's CEO made "over 1,600 times as much as the company's typical worker pay" and they reduced their workforce by 17 percent by the end of the year (Anderson 2021). Finally, during this time Walmart's pay gap was 1,078-to-1 and Amazon's (who owns Whole Foods Market) pay gap was 1,596-to-1 (Anderson 2021). Income inequity reflects a form of labor appropriation that benefits owners and exploits workers by extracting and appropriating surplus value. I next demonstrate a second form of exploitation, which represents a loss of power for workers that reproduces owners' domination.

The second criterion for exploitation is loss of power or control that reproduces domination between workers and owners. Union busting is a form of exploitation between workers and owners in the food system that illustrates this criterion. Unions have historically

provided protection, power, and a unified voice on behalf of workers. In the 1950s the U.S. private sector was over 30 percent unionized, this allowed historic bargaining power for the working class (Reich 2015, 89). The rate of private sector union memberships stood at 6.3 percent in 2021 ("Union Members – 2020" 2021). Unions have been a platform for workers to fight for policies like Social Security, worker's compensation, forty-hour workweeks, time-and-a-half for overtime, and employer-provided benefits (Reich 2015, 125). Since the late 1970's union participation and their power to fight owners for better working conditions has been rolling backwards due to neoliberal capitalist policies that eliminated union contracts, intimidated workers from participation, and prioritize shareholder profit returns (Reich 2015, 129). The 2020 Bureau of Labor Statistics report recorded that union membership across all industries decreased a total of 2.2 percent, nearing the loss of 321,000 wage and salary workers from 2019 union membership rates. Food system workers in some sectors, like production and service industries, have even lower rates of union representation than other food system laborers. Farmworker unionization rates are as low as 2.6 percent and food preparation and service worker unionization rates are as low as 3.4 percent ("Union Members – 2020" 2021). The decrease of union membership due to union busting has led to a loss of power and control that reproduces domination of workers by owners and therefore is a demonstration of exploitation. Next, I demonstrate how the third aspect of maldistribution, marginalization between workers and owners, shows up in the food system.

Marginalization, being confined to do poorly paid and undesirable work, is prevalent in the food system and can be demonstrated by the lack of access to job opportunities. In a survey by the Food Chain Workers Alliance, nearly 75 percent of workers reported that they were never offered career advancement or given the possibility to apply for a better job with their current

employer (“Hands That Feed Us” 2012, 25). Additionally, 81 percent surveyed said that they have never received a promotion (25). Given that less than ten percent of food system positions are office workers, supervisors, professionals, management, and CEOs (19), competition for these jobs are high. This means that the opportunity for better work cannot exclusively rely on workers obtaining education and career advancements to these types of positions and instead there needs to be opportunities for people to have access to better paying and desirable work at the frontline-worker level. This, however is not typically the case because lateral job opportunities often do not provide better pay or working conditions. So even when food system workers take new jobs, they are most likely still experiencing poorly paid and undesirable working conditions. Therefore, the lack of access to job opportunities is a form of marginalization as workers are confined to do poorly paid and undesirable work. A second form of marginalization, not being perceived as a productive member of society, compounds this problem.

Not being viewed as a productive participant in society is the second criterion for marginalization. Victim blaming is a form of marginalization between workers and owners in the food system that fits this criterion. The public perception of people with low incomes or those living in poverty that rely on social programs is that they are undeserving because of their poor behavior that puts them in that circumstance (Mantsios 2013b, 636 - 638). The societal discourse, through the media, is shaped to resent welfare as a drain on society and to fear and blame those that utilize it instead of questioning the systems of power and resources that exist (642). This discourse is persistent despite the fact that welfare programs only account for two percent of the federal budget (642) and about 70 percent of people enrolled in SNAP are working full-time but, due to low wages, still need public assistance to afford food (Dean 2020). The fear,

blame, and resentment that society has towards people on welfare creates a separation of workers from their humanity and creates societal apathy (Kilty 2015, 44).

In the food system, there is a lot of societal resentment and apathy toward workers, especially those in production (e.g., farmworkers), retail (e.g., Walmart employees), and service (e.g., restaurant waiters). Despite often having full-time work, food system workers are twice as likely than other frontline workers to be on public assistance programs like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) formerly known as food stamps, Medicaid, or energy subsidy programs ("No Piece" 2016, 17). However, just because food system workers are utilizing welfare programs at higher rates than workers in other industries, does not mean that they are a burden to society; they are essential to our food system. This was demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic when many food system workers were categorized as essential workers in keeping our food supply chain secure ("Essential Food System" n.d.). Being dependent on society is often necessary and should not exclude people from participation in society or further marginalize them. Another problem of being viewed as unproductive dependents of society is that it can also lead to powerlessness. For example, when people rely on social welfare programs, they experience an added injustice when participation in these programs removes their "basic rights to privacy, respect, and individual choice" (Young 1990, 64). In summary, workers blamed for being a drain on society is an instance of not being viewed as productive participants in society and therefore a marginalization experienced by workers. Next, I demonstrate how deprivation between workers and owners is present in the food system.

Deprivation, the third and last aspect of maldistribution I discuss, means being denied access to materials to support a standard of living. Deprivation is prevalent in the food system and can be demonstrated by the lack of access to livable wages. A livable wage is defined as 150

percent of the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL) (“Hands That Feed Us” 2012, 24). The LLSIL is a metric used to determine the cost of living based upon a specific area and helps to determine eligibility for various social programs (“Lower Living Standard Income” n.d.). For example, according to the U.S. Department of Labor the LLSIL in the metro South region of the U.S. is $15,588 for an individual and is $43,280 for a family of four (“Lower Living Standard Income” n.d.). One hundred fifty percent of the LLSIL would mean that a livable wage in the metro South region for an individual would be $23,383 and for a family of four would be $64,920. So, how accessible are livable wages for workers broken down by the food system sector? About 16 percent of workers within the food service and food processing sectors reported having livable wages (“Hands That Feed Us” 2012, 37). Fifteen percent of grocery workers and nearly 14 percent of warehouse workers reported having livable wages (37). And no livable wages were reported by farm workers (37). Given these numbers, food system workers across all sectors have little access to livable wages. It is also worth noting that across these sectors, there is an “occupational segregation and discrimination” that further marginalizes people of color, specifically Black and Hispanic workers. People of color are the highest concentration of workers within the lowest paid jobs in the food system (“Hands That Feed Us” 2012, 37-39). The lack of access to livable wages is a form of being confined to do poorly paid work and therefore marginalizes workers. Being denied access to materials to support a standard of living can also be demonstrated by inequitable benefits.

Inequitable distribution of employee benefits among workers and owners also contributes to deprivation. There are many types of employer-provided benefits, including personal paid time off, sick leave, health insurance, and retirement packages. These types of benefits are not offered to workers and owners in the same way. In part, this is due to the nonstandard work

arrangements such as seasonal, part-time, or temporary positions that are offered to food system workers. Between 1990 and 2008 these types of work arrangements grew from 1.1 million jobs to 2.3 million jobs ("Hands That Feed Us" 2012, 32). Nonstandard work arrangements benefit owners by reducing labor costs and more specifically by reducing employer provided health care benefits, personal leave, sick time, and retirement plans (32). A report from the Food Chain Workers Alliance found that only 17 percent of those surveyed reported having employer provided health insurance (24). Additionally, 79 percent of food system workers surveyed did not have paid sick leave or were unsure of their leave benefits (24). The same report indicated that over fifty percent of food system workers shared that they went to work sick due to the lack of benefits provided to them (24).

In contrast, owners are offered generous employer provided benefits. For example, top executives often receive special health care benefits that are unavailable to other employees. These special health care benefits include having tax free health care coverage where the company pays all or a higher percentage of premiums (Blitman and King, 2021). Additionally, owners receive large retirement benefits. According to CNN, the executive chairman and former CEO of Yum Brands, David Novak had a retirement account of $233 million. This was due to a combination of uncapped IRA accounts, bonuses reserved for executives based on stock increases, tax-deferred compensation plans, and supplemental executive pension plans. Meanwhile, YUM Brands stopped offering standard pension plans to their new employees in 2001 (Lobosco 2015). Inequitable benefits have led to workers being denied access to materials to support their standard of living and therefore is a form of deprivation. Lack of access to livable wages and benefits result in both immediate and longer-term deprivation.

Long-term deprivation is the inequitable access to wealth building, which also contributes to deprivation of workers in the food system. Approximately 10 percent of the U.S. population owns 90 percent of all societal wealth. This concentration has increased in the past 30 years creating a greater divide between the wealthy and those impoverished. Wealth building comes from a combination of high incomes, abundant assets, and investments (Kilty 2015, 38). Owners are able to spend a lower percentage of their income on their basic needs and thus have the ability to save or invest their money that also contributes to their ability to build their wealth. Workers, however, spend a high percentage of their income on basic needs like housing and groceries (Kilty 2015, 29; Mantsios 2013a 155). The inequivalent percentage of workers' income being spent on their basic needs is a barrier for wealth building (Berland, 2005, 218) and further pushes them into poverty. To live in poverty means to experience economic scarcity and lack quality or quantity of basic needs for living a healthy life (Kilty 2015, 29; Dean 2005a, 272). More than eighty-six percent of food system workers surveyed said that they earned low wages or poverty wages (“Hands That Feed Us” 2012, 5). In the same report created by the Food Chain Workers Alliance, their data indicated that only “forty percent of jobs in the food industry provide a wage above their regional poverty level” (23). Thus, this data indicates that the majority of food system workers are living near or in poverty and unable to build wealth. Inequitable access to wealth building has led to workers being denied access to materials to support a standard of living and therefore their deprivation. Together, exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation constitute maldistribution, which is present between workers and owners in the food system.

In summary, the social problem of economic inequity between workers and owners in the food system is a direct violation of social justice. Recall that social justice requires the three

dimensions of parity of participation: distribution, recognition, and representation (Fraser 2008a, 405). When someone is denied equitable distribution of resources that would allow them to participate as peers, this is a violation of social justice called maldistribution (405). There are three categories of maldistribution: exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. These categories of maldistribution are the ways in which economic inequities between workers and owners in the food system show up. First, I demonstrated exploitation of food system workers through the example of inequitable incomes and union busting. Then I demonstrated marginalization of food system workers through the example of their lack of access to job opportunities and victim blaming. Finally, I demonstrated deprivation among food system workers through the examples of lack of access to livable wages, inequitable benefits, and lack of access to wealth building. The examples that I provided of economic inequities are violations of social justice because incomes, unions, job opportunities, being perceived as a contributor to society, livable wages, work benefits, and wealth building were not accessible or distributed between workers and owners in a way that allowed workers to have equitable economic participation. The examples of exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation demonstrate economic inequities between workers and owners in the food system and therefore establish that this social justice problem exists. I did not discuss any cures or solutions to this social problem because my Capstone research problem will focus on what can be done about economic inequities between workers and owners in the food system.

Capstone Research Problem

My Capstone research problem considers the ways in which society might respond to address the social problem of economic inequity between workers and owners. When society responds to social problems this is known as a social cure that brings a society closer to social

justice. When a group of people in society respond to a social problem by raising social consciousness and making demands for change around a collectively-defined cause, and they are able to commit to the duration it takes to bring about social change, they are developing a social movement. Social movements provide a collective identity for people in society that share a common purpose and solidarity on particular issues and build capacity to sustain their demands and activism until a social cure is realized (Gupta 2017, 7-8). Throughout history, society has responded to social injustices through activism and social movements.

My interest is in social movements that respond to the social problem of economic injustice among workers and owners in the food system. According to Fraser (2008b) "the remedy for economic injustice is political-economic restructuring of some sort . . . redistributing income, reorganizing the division of labor, subjecting investment to democratic decision making, or transforming other basic economic structures." (380). In addition, Myers and Sbicca (2015) say that the work towards economic justice must include challenging and disrupting neoliberalism (24). Thus, social movements that address economic inequity should seek to support fair resource allocation and transformation of the current political-economic system. There are many social movements that address issues of political-economy in these ways.

While many social movements address aspects of the Capstone's social problem, I am particularly interested in better understanding how the solidarity economy (SE) movement addresses this social problem. Among all possible social movements, I have chosen to focus on the SE because it explicitly addresses the cause of my social problem, neoliberal capitalism. SE was theorized by Chilean economist Luis Razeto who observed a variety of microeconomic systems in the 1990s that were growing as a response to the hardening neoliberal policies in the country (Allard and Matthaei 2008, 4; Miller 2010, 2). The SE movement continues to be

attractive to many people interested in addressing "the structural, economic roots of injustice" (Allard and Matthaei 2008, 11). SE is not a model to impose certain ways of economic life, but is instead a framework that makes "visible the plethora of actually existing economic alternatives that are growing up all around us, in the midst of neoliberal capitalism" (7). Put another way, "it is a process of economic organizing" (Miller 2010, 3) and a way to "participate together in ongoing work to strengthen, connect and build upon the many economic practices of cooperation and solidarity that already exist" (1).

> Loh and Jimenez (2017) say that SE is a social justice movement that is meant to be viewed holistically:
>
> > It is shifting our consciousness not only to uncover root causes and what is wrong, but also expand our vision of what is possible, and to inspire dreams of the world as it should be. It is building power, not just to resist and reform the injustices and unsustainabilities produced by current systems, but ultimately to democratically control and govern political and economic resources to sustain people and the planet. And it is creating economic alternatives and prototypes for producing, exchanging, and consuming, and investing in ways that are more just, sustainable, and democratic. (7)

This explanation illustrates that the SE movement provides concepts and practices to shift consciousness, build power, and create economic alternatives. This explains why this Capstone's research problem is about how SE concepts and practices address maldistribution of resources between workers and owners in the food system.

While there is a general definition of the SE movement, SE represents an adaptable framework that can employ different concepts and practices. In terms of concepts, I mean what SE movements are theorizing and saying about themselves that explains and informs their principles and values. SE has been intentionally undefined so that it can be adaptable and useful to those that choose it. As a framework it is built on ethos and shared values (Allard and Matthaei 2008, 6). And yet, not even those shared values are completely defined. However,

many common themes have been named, including cooperation, mutuality, interdependence, economic and social justice, ecological health, democracy, and pluralism (Miller 2010, 6). I further examine key concepts and principles identified by SE movements to better understand how SE can address economic inequities among workers and owners in the food system. I focus in particular on principles, ethos, and values in relation to worker-owner arrangements that do not reproduce maldistribution. Given the variations of SE concepts, the social movement of SE may respond to the social problem through different practices.

The SE movement addresses different aspects of political economic systems with different practices. In terms of practices, I focus on the SE models and actions taken to address economic inequity in worker-owner arrangements. According to Loh and Jimenez (2017), SE creates economic alternatives and prototypes for producing, exchanging, consuming, and investing (7). Production, exchange, consumption, investment, and allocation of resources are the economic categories for which SE builds practices and models. It is through these categories that alternative models of worker-owner arrangements (counter to those that result in inequity) could exist. Thus, I explore SE practices to better understand how SE can address economic inequities as a social movement and the models they use in relation to worker-owner arrangements that do not reproduce maldistribution. Together, looking at the concepts and practices of SE, I will best be able to determine how SE can address maldistribution of resources between workers and owners in the food system.

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In summary, this chapter demonstrated the relationships among food, political-economic, and social systems. I then defined social problems and social justice and introduced the specific social problem that this Capstone focuses on, which is economic inequity between workers and

owners in the food system. After that, I provided examples of how economic inequity between workers and owners shows up as maldistribution in the forms of exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. Lastly, I introduced the research problem, which focuses on how SE addresses maldistribution of resources between workers and owners in the food system. The next chapter explains the research paradigm, introduces the research questions and elaborates their corresponding conceptual frameworks, and details the research design.

Three—Methodology and Methods

This chapter explains the research paradigm, establishes the research questions, and articulates the research design for this Capstone research. First, I provide an overview of research paradigms and then I describe the paradigm of critical inquiry, which I use in my research. Next, I introduce the Overall Research Question (ORQ) along with the Constitutive Research Questions (CRQ) that follow and the concepts that have framed them. Finally, I provide details of the research design for each CRQ, including the methodology, the ways in which the research is approached, and the method, the techniques that are applied to collect and analyze data.

Capstone Research Paradigm

This section provides an overview of research paradigms and explains the research paradigm of critical inquiry applied in this Capstone research. It also explains my positionality relative to this research.

Overview of Research Paradigms

Research helps build understanding by asking questions and looking for answers in different ways. A research paradigm is the lens or world view that shapes our inquiry and logic in research. There are many types of research paradigms guided by various ontological and epistemological understandings that inform our questions and the answers we find (Spencer, Pryce, and Walsh 2014, 82). Ontology shapes a research paradigm through the assumptions of what is real and the nature of reality (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba 2018, 114). To study something is to take the position that it exists. Epistemology shapes a research paradigm through the creation and prioritization of knowledge. It is our "process of thinking" according to the experiences and rationale we already believe about the world (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba 2018, 115), the "ways of discovering" knowledge, (Grix 2002, 177) and how we prioritize those ideas.

Both ontology and epistemology are important to recognize in research because they inform what and how things can be studied.

Research paradigms vary, depending on ontological and epistemological positions. There are a variety of ontological and epistemological positions that create a range of research paradigms such as positivism, post-positivism, and critical inquiry. Positivist paradigms position their research around the assumption that there are singular realities that can be studied (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba 2018, 114). This paradigm also believes that researcher objectivity can be achieved to describe unbiased truths (115) and that how researchers seek out new knowledge is informed by scientific methods, where a finding is true until disproven (117). A modified version of positivism is post-positivism. Post-positivism paradigms position their research towards the assumption that there are no absolutes in nature; however, realities can be approximated (114). This paradigm also believes that researcher objectivity can be achieved by distancing researchers, and that how researchers seek out new knowledge is informed by scientific discovery (117). I do not apply positivist or post-positivist paradigms to my research. Using a positivist or a post-positivist paradigm would have produced a completely different Capstone, emphasizing prediction and control instead of critique and transformation. This capstone research utilizes a research paradigm based in critical inquiry.

Critical Inquiry and Positionality

Critical inquiry is a research paradigm aiming to investigate social inequities to realize social transformation. A critical inquiry paradigm uncovers truths about social problems, prioritizes the search for remedies that bring empowerment to the oppressed, and fuels social revolution (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba 2018, 117). A critical inquiry paradigm goes beyond the obvious answer by looking below the surface for underlying ideologies because those ideologies

can explain the root causes of social inequities. Critical inquiry is equally interested in discovering social solutions and positive change. These research positions make it a particularly useful paradigm for addressing social justice problems like this Capstone does. By applying the critical inquiry paradigm to this Capstone, my research is informed by the ontological belief that reality is shaped by time, society, politics, economics, race, and gender (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba 2018, 110) and that "human nature operates in a world that is based on a struggle for power" (114). Critical inquiry addresses these by acknowledging the pervasiveness of social inequities of power dynamics and working towards identifying social solutions. This approach is appropriate for my research problem about how the solidarity economy's (SE) concepts and practices can address the maldistribution between workers and owners because it is a research paradigm for addressing social justice problems. Additionally, critical inquiry treats research as subjective to a researcher's positionality. By applying the critical inquiry paradigm to my research, my research was informed by the epistemological position that the process of knowing information cannot be separated from our experiences (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba 2018, 110). This epistemological approach means that research is subjective because there are biases that shape the ontological and epistemological approaches to research (Harding 2004, 461). Since I used a critical inquiry research paradigm, I acknowledge research subjectivity and my positionality.

My positionality has shaped the ways that I approach research. As a person with a background in social work, I have a particular worldview and these elements about me have formed the way I look at justice and social change. One of the six codes of ethics for social work is social justice. So, while I have been formally educated about theories and practices of social justice, I have also had to unlearn and relearn concepts about social justice. This is because social

work is situated in the political economy of addressing the symptoms of social problems. Part of my process of unlearning and relearning has been to challenge and go beyond an aid or emergency response approach to social problems and move towards a critical inquiry and systems approach. That work led me to question the political and economic structures of our society. Instead of asking how to bring basic resources to a person living in poverty, I began to ask what structures and policies held people in poverty. As an example, when I was an employment specialist it was part of my job to help families that were making $8.50 an hour (above minimum wage for North Carolina) to achieve economic self-sufficiency. My clients met the federal guidelines for living below the poverty line, so we worked hard to have their needs met through emergency responses like writing referrals for clients to visit food pantries because they were unable to afford groceries. After routinely working with families and not seeing any change in their economic self-sufficiency, I began to ask why full-time entry level jobs were unable to support basic needs like affordable, dignified housing and groceries. That inquiry prompted me to question the basics of our political economic system. In these ways, my positionality has led me to be interested in this social problem, to see the research problem in a particular way, and to ask the research question from a critical inquiry perspective. In summary, I am writing this Capstone within a critical inquiry paradigm, which prioritizes social justice, seeks to find underlying ideologies of social problems, and acknowledges positionality.

Capstone Research Questions and Conceptual Frameworks

This section introduces my ORQ, the CRQs, and the conceptual frameworks that inform them. As a reminder, the social problem of focus is economic inequities among workers and owners in the food system. Economic inequities are present due to maldistributed resources between workers and owners and show up in the food system as exploitation, marginalization,

and deprivation. Next, I introduce my research questions that explore each of these aspects of maldistribution.

Research Problem and Research Questions

The research problem of this Capstone is to better understand how the concepts and practices of SE address maldistribution of resources between workers and owners in the food system. This research problem focuses on how society, through the social movement of SE, can respond to the social problem of economic inequities between workers and owners in the food system. The research problem responds to this social problem by seeking social cures in the concepts and practices of SE that will bring society closer to social justice. The research problem was addressed by asking an ORQ and three CRQs.

The ORQ is, how do the concepts and practices of SE address maldistribution of resources between workers and owners in the U.S. food system? The purpose of asking this question is to learn more about the ways that the SE concepts and practices address economic inequity between food system workers and owners so that I can better understand how its theories and models can reduce maldistribution of resources between workers and owners. Asking about both SE concepts and practices is important because it provides a holistic picture of the values of SE and what is being actualized. This is an important question because economic inequity is a violation of social justice and SE could have a role in developing solutions that address resource maldistributions and therefore economic inequity. My ORQ can help determine the role that SE as a framework and movement has in addressing the social problem and moving our food system towards social justice.

The concept of maldistribution provides a conceptual framework to examine whether and how SE concepts and practices address economic inequities between workers and owners. As

described in the previous chapter, maldistribution is a form of economic inequity that prevents some people in society from economic participation. People are economically unable to participate in society when there is an inequitable distribution of material resources, which can result from exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation (Fraser 2008b, 380). As a reminder, exploitation is when labor is appropriated for the benefit of another (Fraser 2008b, 380) and the loss of power or control that reproduces domination between workers and owners (Young 1990, 61). Marginalization is confining people to do poorly paid and undesirable work (Fraser 2008b, 380) and not being viewed as productive participants in society (Young 1990, 64). Deprivation occurs when people are denied access to materials to support a standard of living (Fraser 2008b, 380). To better answer the ORQ, I applied these concepts in asking three CRQs.

Constitutive Research Questions

I used exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation as conceptual frameworks to focus each CRQ so that I can identify whether and how SE concepts and practices are addressing each of these aspects of maldistribution in worker-owner arrangements.

The first CRQ asks, *how do the concepts and practices of solidarity economy address exploitation?* This CRQ focuses on how the SE movement addresses maldistribution of resources in the form of exploitation, which helps to answer the ORQ. The concept of exploitation is broken down into two additional key concepts, the first is labor appropriation; the second is powerlessness. Labor appropriation is when surplus value is extracted from workers, incomes are inequitably distributed or wages are stolen. A person's labor power creates new value known as surplus value or profit through their exerted energy to turn raw materials into something more valuable to be sold on the market at a higher price than the raw material alone. Surplus value itself is not bad or exploitative; however, the extraction of surplus value exploits laborers

because there is a gap between the profit generated by and equitable wages distributed to workers. In a capitalist economy, surplus value is always increasing and does so at the cost of workers to have longer hours, higher efficiency, and increased labor intensity that then only benefits the one who purchases their labor power (Braverman 1974, 56). Surplus extraction benefits owners because they pocket the profit which leads to inequitable incomes (as described in Chapter Two).

In addition to surplus value extraction and inequitable incomes, wage theft is a type of labor appropriation. Wage theft is when employers fail to pay workers for the work they have done ("No Piece" 2016, 26). A common way that employers practice wage theft is by hiring people for one role but then change their roles without proper pay raises, or by having people work across different departments and not paying workers for the additional skills and tasks they are completing (43). More than 33% of food system workers experience wage theft on a weekly basis; the most vulnerable are those in low-wage positions ("No Piece" 2016, 11). Thus, the criteria for labor appropriation includes surplus value extraction, inequitable incomes, and wage theft. SE concepts and practices address exploitation if they are relevant to the criteria of the key concepts of labor appropriation, which are surplus value extraction, inequitable incomes, and wage theft. Some examples of potential concepts and practices that could address labor appropriation include profit sharing, policies to close the income gap between workers and owners, caps on executive earnings, or anti-wage theft policies. The key concept of labor appropriation along with the second key concept will explain and provide criteria for how to identify exploitation.

The second key concept of exploitation is powerlessness. Powerlessness is when worker-owner arrangements are based upon hierarchical or power-over ideologies and structures,

undemocratic work environments, and the loss of control, autonomy, or decision making by workers. This is an important category of exploitation because when workers lack the status and autonomy that owners have over their work environment it reproduces worker oppression and owner privilege. Hierarchical and power-over ideologies and structures are when owners create and impose rules for workers (Young 1990, 65). These ideologies and structures are undemocratic because workers do not have decision making power within the development of workplace rules. Instead, workers experience a loss of control and autonomy over their circumstances while owners have all decision-making power. The criteria for powerlessness, as a form of exploitation, include hierarchical or power-over ideologies and structures, undemocratic work environments, loss of control, lack of autonomy and lack of decision making. Examples of potential concepts and practices that could address powerlessness include: non-hierarchical or power-among ideologies and structures, supporting unions, cooperatives, or other worker ownership and control models. By identifying how SE's principles and practices respond and relate to these criteria, I can better understand what alternative worker-owner arrangements can exist that do not replicate exploitation. The next CRQ addresses a second aspect of maldistribution, which is marginalization.

The second CRQ asks, *how do the concepts and practices of solidarity economy address marginalization?* This CRQ addressed how the SE movement responds to the maldistribution of resources in the form of marginalization, which helped to answer one aspect of the ORQ on maldistribution in the food system. The concept of marginalization is broken down into two additional key aspects, the first is being confined to do poor work, the second is being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society. Being confined to do poor work happens when people are denied access to paid work, safe work, desirable work, or job opportunities. When someone

is excluded from participating in the labor force, they are denied access to paid work. People that are most likely to be expelled from the labor force are aging people, pregnant or single mothers, young people looking for first-time employment (especially for Black or Latino people), people with disabilities, and Native Americans (Young 1990, 63).

Being denied access to desirable work also occurs when people are unable to obtain work that is respected, has fair and safe working conditions, and opportunities for advancement. Food system workers are at high risk of work-related injuries; over 57 percent of workers in a survey reported that they experienced a work-related injury or long-term health problem ("Hands That" 2012, 30). In addition to being denied access to paid work and being denied desirable work, being denied job opportunities (as described in Chapter Two) is a type of marginalization. This is when employers do not offer training, education, or advancement within one's work. Thus, to understand and identify the first aspect of marginalization, I used the criteria including being denied access to paid work, safe and desirable work, and opportunities for advancement. SE concepts and practices address the first aspect of marginalization if they are relevant to the criteria of being confined to do poor work, which are being denied access to paid work, lack of access to desirable work, lack of access to job opportunities. Some ways that concepts and practices could address being confined to poor work include job training, access to education, and fair and safe working conditions. The key concept of being confined to do poor work, along with a second key concept, explains and provides criteria for how to identify marginalization.

The second key aspect of marginalization is being viewed as an unproductive dependent of society. Being viewed as an unproductive dependent of society occurs when society resents recipients of welfare programs, victim blames, or demonstrates social apathy. This is an important aspect of marginalization because people that are confined to poor work are also seen

as being unproductive and dependent, which further marginalizes them by ignoring their value to society and instead blames them for being a burden to society. People that are marginalized in this way are viewed as an underclass where their status sharply determines and divides what resources are available to them (Kilty 2015, 28). As I described in Chapter Two, there is a social conditioning to resent welfare programs (Mantsios 2013b, 642) and to believe in the self-made myth, where anyone has access to wealth and success if they put in the work (Kilty 2015, 35). These collective ideologies blame those that utilize social benefits as responsible for their lack of wealth or success and ultimately leads to social apathy - the lack of ability to empathize with those in different circumstances, specifically those living in or near poverty. General social apathy can be demonstrated by the reduced public support and funding for social programs (Alessio 2011, 15). Thus, to understand and identify marginalization, I use the second key concept of being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society. The criteria for being viewed as unproductive dependents of society includes societal resentment of welfare programs, self-made myth, victim blaming, and social apathy. Some ways that concepts and practices could address being viewed as unproductive dependents on society include: support for social programs such as public education, universal income or social wage, social empathy, and social inclusion and responsibility. By identifying how SE's principles and models respond and relate to these criteria, I better understand what alternative worker-owner arrangements can exist that do not replicate marginalization. The next CRQ addresses a third aspect of maldistribution, which is deprivation.

The third CRQ asks*, how do the concepts and practices of solidarity economy address deprivation?* This CRQ answered how the SE movement addresses the maldistribution of resources in the form of deprivation, which helped to answer the ORQ. The concept of

deprivation is being denied materials that support a standard of living. Being denied materials that support a standard of living occurs when workers have low wages, poverty wages, are unable to build wealth, do not have access to capital or land, and do not have access to work benefits.

In Chapter Two, I described how food system workers lacked access to livable wages. As a reminder, a livable wage is defined as 150 percent of the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL) ("Hands That Feed Us" 2012, 24). Comparatively, poverty wages are considered to be anything less than 70 percent of the LLSIL of a given area (24). Being paid any amount between a livable wage and poverty wage is considered low wage (24). When workers are receiving low or poverty wages, they do not have the ability to build their wealth (as was also described in Chapter Two). The lack of ability to build wealth is also compounded by the lack of access to land and capital (Hardoon 2017, 10). Lack of access to capital also includes lack of accessibility to loans and assistance programs. Furthermore, the lack of access to work benefits (described in Chapter Two) is a type of material deprivation.

To understand and identify deprivation, I use the key concept of being denied materials that support a standard of living. The criteria for being denied basic materials include low wages, poverty wages, inability to build wealth, lack of access to capital or land, and lack of access to work benefits. SE concepts and practices address deprivation if they are relevant to the criteria of the key concept being denied materials to support a standard of living, which are low wages, poverty wages, inability to build wealth, lack of access to capital or land, and lack of access to work benefits. Examples of potential SE concepts and practices that could address being denied basic materials include livable wages, fighting poverty, public ownership, public land, targeted finances programs, universal health care, and fair employer-provided benefits. Thus, the key

concept of being denied materials will explain and provide criteria for how to identify deprivation. By identifying how SE's principles and practices respond and relate to these criteria, I better understand what alternative worker-owner arrangements can exist that do not replicate deprivation. Next, I explain the capstone research design.

Capstone Research Design

This section describes the design of the research according to each CRQ. Research design includes the methodology, methods, organizational strategies, and the analytical process used to answer each CRQ. Before explaining the elements of inquiry for each CRQ, I describe the research framework used to address the CRQs and their units of analysis.

Research Frameworks

Research frameworks are the methodologies and methods applied to research. They organize and bring logic to how research is conducted. I used directed content analysis as the research framework for this Capstone. Content analysis is a research framework that focuses on understanding the contextual meaning of language in text-based data (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, 1278). This research framework pays particular attention to and examines the surrounding content of text data so that the researcher can code data for deeper meanings (1278). Content analysis is flexible in that it allows the researcher to choose their specific methodologies and methods based on their research problems and research questions (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, 1277). This is a useful research framework when trying to understand whether and how specific texts are addressing something.

In this Capstone, I used a specific form of content analysis called directed content analysis. As a methodology, directed content analysis uses key concepts and theories to code and analyze data (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, 1281). The strength of using this particular methodology

is that it identifies and categorizes key concepts or theories, which builds upon theories asked about in my research questions. I applied key concepts that were related to the categories of exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation to SE texts in order to code and analyze the data. This process will be further explained as I address each CRQ. Directed content analysis is a useful methodology for my research problem because it helped me identify if those key concepts of maldistribution are being addressed by SE.

Directed content analysis also specifies the methods, or the ways to collect, organize, analyze, and interpret data, used for this Capstone research. As a method, directed content analysis starts by deductively identifying analytical criteria that will be used for collecting and coding data. Coding is derived from specific analytical criteria and applied to the key concepts. Again, in this research, the analytical criteria correspond to the key concepts of exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. The next step is to record and code all instances of data that are relevant to the analytical criteria found within the data sample. I describe the analytical criteria applied to each key concept in the next section. Overall, using directed content analysis as the research method allowed me to develop codes deductively and continue to build upon them during my analysis. Now that I have explained the research framework in general terms, I will describe how I applied directed content analysis in my research design.

Elements of Inquiry

This section identifies and explains how the methodologies and methods were applied to the research. That includes describing each unit of analysis, research framework, unit of observation, data scope, source, sample, and analytical criteria for the CRQs. The unit of analysis for each CRQ is the thing that I want to understand and analyze in asking and answering the question. Comparatively, the unit of observation is what I am looking at to understand the unit of

analysis. Data scope is the range of data collected to address the unit of analysis and research questions, whereas the data source describes the place where I found what I was observing. Data samples are the selection of sources used based upon the scope and sources. Lastly, the analytical criteria are developed from conceptual frameworks and applied to analyze the units of observation so that I can explain the unit of analysis.

CRQ 1: Exploitation

CRQ 1 asks, *how do the concepts and practices of solidarity economy address exploitation?* The unit of analysis used for this question was SE concepts and practices that address exploitation. Thus, SE concepts and practices were what I wanted to understand and was what CRQ 1 addressed. I used specific concepts and practices of SE that addressed exploitation as the unit of observation to understand the unit of analysis. As noted, I used directed content analysis as the research framework for CRQ 1. To do so, I first identified and defined the key aspects of exploitation, which were labor appropriation and powerlessness. Then I developed analytical criteria for labor appropriation and powerlessness that would be used as the coding categories to determine instances of SE concepts and practices that addressed exploitation. The next step was to collect data. The data scope that I looked at was limited to include only U.S. based SE networks since this is a worldwide social movement and I wanted to better understand the concepts and practices in this specific location. There was no time-based element to the data scope since the SE movement within the U.S. started in 2007 at the U.S. Social Forum and much of the SE concepts and practices were identified at this time. Within this scope, data sources included gray literature from two U.S.-based SE networks, the *U.S. Solidarity Economy Network* and the *New Economy Coalition*. These two networks were specifically named by Loh and Jimenez (2017) as spaces where collections of economic alternatives are being made visible and

sharing out the variety of alternatives that are possible (9). During my research, I found another U.S.-based SE network, the *SE Principles,* which I included as a third data source. I selected data samples based upon specific concepts and practices that address worker-owner arrangements because not every SE concept or practice addresses worker-owner relationships. The final step was to record and code all instances of SE concepts and practices that addressed the analytical criteria into the categories of labor appropriation and powerlessness. The analytical criteria for labor appropriation included surplus value extraction, inequitable incomes, and wage theft. Potential concepts and practices that address labor appropriation included profit sharing, policies to close the income gap between workers and owners, caps on executive earnings, and anti-wage theft policies. The criteria for powerlessness were non-hierarchical or power-among ideologies and structures, supporting unions, cooperatives, or worker ownership and control models. The potential concepts and practices that address powerlessness included non-hierarchical or power-among ideologies and structures, supporting unions, cooperatives, or worker ownership and control models. This summarizes the research design of CRQ 1; next I review the research design of CRQ 2.

CRQ 2: Marginalization

CRQ 2 asks, *how do the concepts and practices of solidarity economy address marginalization?* The unit of analysis for CRQ 2 was the SE concepts and practices that address marginalization. This was the thing I wanted to understand and clearly identifies what CRQ 2 answered. The unit of observation I used to identify the unit of analysis was specific concepts and practices of SE that addressed marginalization. Nearly replicated from CRQ 1, I used directed content analysis as the research framework for CRQ 2. I first identified and defined the key aspects of marginalization, which were being confined to poor work and being viewed as

unproductive dependents of society. Then I developed analytical criteria for being confined to poor work and being viewed as unproductive dependents of society that would be used as the coding categories to determine instances of SE concepts and practices that addressed marginalization. The next step was to use the data collected for CRQ 1 and re-code all instances of SE concepts and practices that addressed the analytical criteria for the categories of being confined to poor work and being viewed as unproductive dependents of society. The criteria for being confined to poor work included being denied access to paid work, safe and desirable work, and opportunities for advancement; and potential concepts and practices that address being confined to poor work may include job training; access to education, pay raise opportunities; fair and safe working conditions. The criteria for being viewed as unproductive dependents of society were societal resentment of welfare programs, self-made myth, victim blaming, and social apathy. Potential concepts and practices that address being viewed as unproductive dependents on society may include support for social programs such as public education, universal income or social wage, social empathy, and social inclusion and responsibility. Now that I have summarized the research design for CRQ 2, I will describe the research design for the third and final CRQ.

CRQ 3: Deprivation

CRQ 3 asks, *how do the concepts and practices of solidarity economy address deprivation?* The unit of analysis for CRQ 3 was the SE concepts and practices that address deprivation. This was the thing I wanted to understand and served to clearly identify what CRQ 3 answered. The unit of observation I used was the specific concepts and practices of SE that address deprivation. Once again, I used directed content analysis as the research framework for CRQ 3. I followed the same process from CRQ 1 and CRQ 2, where I first identified and defined

the key aspect of deprivation, which was being denied materials that support a standard of living. Then I developed analytical criteria for being denied materials that support a standard of living. The criteria were used as the coding categories to determine instances of SE concepts and practices that addressed deprivation. The next step was to use the data that was collected from CRQ 1 and re-code all instances of SE concepts and practices that addressed the analytical criteria. The criteria for being denied materials included low wages, poverty wages, inability to build wealth, lack of access to capital or land, and lack of access to work benefits. Potential concepts and practices that address being denied materials may include livable wages, fighting poverty, public ownership, public land, targeted finances programs, universal health care, or fair employer-provided benefits. This summarizes the research design for CRQ 3 and next I conclude this chapter.

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This chapter has described research paradigms and explained this Capstone's research paradigm of critical inquiry and reflective of my ontology, epistemology, and positionality. It then introduced the ORQ and three CRQs and their corresponding conceptual frameworks and analytical criteria. All research questions were guided by the framework of maldistribution. This conceptual framework helped to provided analytical criteria. Finally, this chapter described the research design, explaining how I collected, organized, and analyzed the data to answer each CRQ. The next chapter discusses the findings and contributions of this research, all of which are influenced by the research paradigm, conceptual frameworks, and research design.

Four—Research Applications and Contribution

In this chapter I first discuss the findings for the constitutive research questions (CRQs). I begin by sharing the results for each CRQ. Then I present a summary analysis of the three questions to answer the overall research question (ORQ). After the data results and analysis of the CRQs are presented, I share what contributions the findings make towards understanding this Capstone's social problem and research problem. Finally, I conclude by discussing recommendations for further research.

Research Findings and Analysis

My ORQ addresses my Capstone research problem and social problem by asking, how do the concepts and practices of solidarity economy (SE) address maldistribution of resources between workers and owners in the U.S. food system? I ask this question in order to better understand how SE values and models can reduce maldistribution of resources between workers and owners.

To answer my ORQ, I asked three CRQs. The research findings are organized by CRQ. The first question looks at how SE concepts and practices address aspects of exploitation, which are labor appropriation and powerlessness. The second question considers how SE concepts and practices address aspects of marginalization, which are being confined to poor work and being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society. My third and final question reviews how SE concepts and practices address deprivation, which is being denied basic materials that support a standard of living. Overall, these questions are explorations of how SE concepts and practices can address maldistribution between workers and owners in the food system.

In my data collection, I was looking for a synthetic appraisal of concepts and practices. I did not compare the data I found from different networks; rather, I collected and synthesized into several categories any unique concepts and practices that I found. Here, I first summarize and document concepts and practices for each solidarity economy network. I then synthesize this list of concepts and practices, combining those with similar definitions, to report findings and conduct an analysis. For example, solidarity is named a key concept by the *U.S. Solidarity Economy Network* and the *New Economy Coalition*, whereas *Solidarity Economy Principles* names cooperation, mutualism, and interdependence as key concepts, but do not explicitly call it solidarity. I combine these concepts under the umbrella term of solidarity. Additionally, *Solidarity Economy Principles* names social and racial justice as a key concept, whereas the *U.S. Solidarity Economy Network* calls it "equity (in all dimensions)," and the *New Economy Coalition* did not share a similar key concept. I combine these concepts under the term, equity. Likewise, the *New Economy Coalition* separates key concepts of democracy and public ownership, to which they described as the value to "govern ourselves and control the capital" ("The Solidarity Economy" 2024). I keep these concepts combined as democracy, as the *U.S. Solidarity Economy Network* and *Solidarity Economy Principles* describe democracy in similar terms of being a cooperative structure to participate in their own development and public ownership. Each network names a form of sustainability. The *U.S. Solidarity Economy Network* highlighted that their understanding of sustainability focuses on social and environmental welfare, while the *New Economy Network* called their value a "culture of respect for the earth", and the *Solidarity Economy Principles* specified "environmental sustainability". I combine them under one term, sustainability, with a multi-dimensional meaning. Table 2 summarizes the

concepts and practices identified for each solidarity economy network. I report on findings for SE practices in a similar systematic way.

SE practices are categorized differently by different sources, so I provide here my own synthetic categories. Table 3 indicates how I synthesized this list of concepts and practices, combining those with similar definitions, to report findings and conduct an analysis. For example, the *U.S. Solidarity Economy Network* categorized their practices in terms of production, exchange, consumption, finance, and governance, while the *Solidarity Economy Principles* categorized their practices in terms of creation, production, exchange, consumption, and surplus allocation. *The New Economy Coalition* categorized their practices in entirely different terms, which were land and food; housing; work and labor; money and financing; energy and utilities; and art, media, and technology. Despite different categorizations, practices were very similar and there were only a few practices that were exclusively named by one source. I included all practices in my data collection, but only listed them in one category, even if they appeared in multiple categories in data sources.

Table 2. Summary of Solidarity Economy Concepts and Practices

Solidarity Economy Network	Concepts	Practices					
		Creation	Production	Exchange	Consumption	Surplus Allocation	Governance
U.S. Solidarity Economy Network	Solidarity Equity Democracy Sustainability Pluralism		Worker cooperatives Producer cooperatives Volunteer collectives Community gardens Self-employment Unpaid care work (some)	Collective fair trade CSA(including fisheries) Social currency Timebanks Barter networks	Consumer cooperatives Buying clubs Community land trusts	Community development credit unions Peer lending	Participatory budgeting Collective management of resources
New Economy Coalition	Democracy Cooperation & Public ownership Solidarity Respect for the earth		Worker cooperatives Community gardens	Timebanks Barter systems Non-monetary Local currencies Food & farm cooperatives	Community land trusts	Credit unions Public banking	Participatory budgeting Remunicipalization Public ownership
Solidarity Economy Principles	Cooperation Democracy Social and racial justice Environmental sustainability Mutualism Interdependence & respect	Knowledge Wisdom Land Culture	Community gardens Worker cooperatives Producer cooperatives Collective farms	Sliding scale pricing Timebanks Barter clubs Alternative currency Mutual aid Gift economies	Community land trust Food cooperatives Buying clubs CSAs	Cooperative loan fund Community development credit unions Informal loan club	

Sources: Solidarity Economy Map & Directory 2024; The Solidarity Economy 2024; and What Do We Mean by Solidarity Economy 2024

Table 3. Synthesis of Solidarity Economy Concepts and Practices

	Concepts	Practices					
		Creation	Production	Exchange	Consumption	Surplus Allocation	Governance
Capstone Synthesis	Solidarity Equity Democracy Sustainability Pluralism	Knowledge Wisdom Land Culture	Worker cooperatives Producer cooperatives Volunteer collectives Community gardens Self-employment Unpaid care work (some)	Collective fair trade CSA Food & farm cooperatives Social currency Timebanks Barter networks Sliding scale pricing Mutual aid Gift economies	Consumer cooperative Buying clubs Community land trusts	Community development credit unions Peer-lending/Informal loan club Cooperative loan fund	Participatory budgeting Collective management of resources/ Remunicipalization Public ownership

CRQ 1: Exploitation

How do the concepts and practices of solidarity economy address exploitation? This question contributes to answering my ORQ by asking about how SE addresses maldistribution in the form of exploitation. Using directed content analysis, I first identified and defined key aspects of exploitation, which were labor appropriation and powerlessness. Then I developed analytical criteria for labor appropriation and powerlessness that were used to code and determine instances of SE concepts and practices that can address the key aspects of exploitation. The SE concepts relevant to exploitation found in my data collection include solidarity, equity, democracy, and sustainability. I also looked for SE practices. The SE practices relevant to exploitation found in my data collection were producer cooperatives, worker cooperatives, self-employment, and collective fair trade models. In this section, I share findings on concepts and then practices relevant to exploitation.

The first aspect of exploitation is labor appropriation. I found four SE concepts that are relevant to the analytical criteria for labor appropriation, defined as when surplus value is extracted from workers, incomes are inequitably distributed and wages are stolen from workers. The first concept of SE that is relevant to labor appropriation is solidarity. Solidarity is described as a value that "invokes the idea that we are all in this together and that there are common bonds between all human beings" (Loh and Jimenez 2017, 5). Additional words used to describe the value of solidarity were cooperation, mutualism, sharing, reciprocity, altruism, love, caring, gifting (Kawano 2018, 5), collective care, relationships, interdependence, accountability, and respect ("What Do We" 2024). By applying the value of solidarity, labor appropriation in the forms of surplus value extraction, inequitable incomes, or wage theft, may not be an outcome for

workers. This means that the SE concept of solidarity is relevant to all analytical criteria for labor appropriation. There is another SE concept that can address labor appropriation.

A second SE concept that is relevant to labor appropriation is equity. The concept of equity is described as the direct resistance of all forms of oppression which included imperialism, colonialism, racism, classism, sexism, and discrimination based on ethnic, cultural, or religious identities (Kawano 2018, 6). As a value of resistance to class oppression, equity was named as a concept that directly resists neoliberalism and corporate globalization and that builds solutions for laborers (6). By applying the concept of equity, surplus value extraction, inequitable incomes, and wage theft would be less likely to occur. This signifies that the SE concept of equity is relevant to each analytical criteria for labor appropriation. I found a third SE concept that can address labor appropriation.

The third SE concept that is relevant to labor appropriation is democracy. Democracy is the value of participatory engagement that gives decision-making power to people over their own communities and workplaces (Kawano 2018, 7). In a participatory democratic work environment, workers can have a voice and participation that would give them the ability to eliminate surplus value extraction, inequitable incomes, and wage theft. These things are more likely to occur when workers are not included in decision-making processes. As a result, the concept of democracy can address labor appropriation in a way that is relevant to each analytical criterion. There is one final SE concept that can address labor appropriation.

The fourth and final SE concept that is relevant to labor appropriation is sustainability. Sustainability is described in terms of both social and environmental sustainability. Social sustainability is the value of prioritizing people over profits; whereas, environmental sustainability is the value of prioritizing the planet over profits (“Solidarity Economy Map”

2024). The SE concept of both social and environmental sustainability draws from an Andean indigenous philosophy of 'living well' where people live in harmony with one another and with nature (Kawano 2018, 9). To prioritize people over profits would mean that there would not be surplus value extraction, inequitable incomes, or wage theft. Therefore, the SE concept of sustainability is relevant to all analytical criteria for labor appropriation. While the SE concepts of solidarity, equity, democracy, and sustainability can address labor appropriation, one SE concept cannot.

I found that one SE concept cannot address labor appropriation: pluralism. Pluralism refers to not having one singular approach to creating a more equitable economic system (Kawano 2018, 4). The concept of pluralism is vague and does not indicate what the range of strategies are, so is not relevant to the analytical criteria of surplus value extraction, inequitable incomes, or wage theft and therefore cannot address labor appropriation. In addition to looking at SE concepts I reviewed SE practices for their relevance to exploitation; I share these next.

I found three SE practices, focused on alternative production, that are relevant to the analytical criteria for labor appropriation. Alternative production models are a key SE practice for realizing solidarity, equity, and social sustainability principles and addressing the problem of labor appropriation. Alternative production is the process in which goods or services are created in ways that reflect SE values (Miller 2010, 4). The alternative production models that are relevant to labor appropriation analytical criteria include: producer cooperatives, worker cooperatives, and self-employment. Producer cooperatives are businesses that are owned by the people that are producing the product (typically agriculturally focused); similarly, worker cooperatives (at various stages of production) are businesses that are owed by the workers (Kawano 2018, 27). When producers and workers are also the owners, they get to decide how to

distribute profits and can prioritize the wellbeing of all workers so that surplus value extraction, inequitable incomes, and wage theft are not experienced by workers. Additionally, self-employment means people have ownership, independence, and autonomy over their own business. This is a type of self-provisioning that gives workers power over their economic well-being that would not reproduce surplus value extraction, inequitable incomes, and wage theft for themselves. Overall, producer and worker cooperatives and self-employment are alternative production models that are relevant to all analytical criteria for labor appropriation. There are other alternative production practices that cannot address labor appropriation.

Other alternative production practices that are not relevant to the criteria for addressing labor appropriation are community gardens, volunteer collectives, and unpaid care work. While community gardens, volunteer collectives, and unpaid care work create production processes that foster SE values, they do not directly address labor appropriation because they work outside of the monetary economic system and operate within a non-monetary economic system. A non-monetary economic system does not generate incomes or wages so could not address inequitable incomes or wage theft issues and therefore does not address labor appropriation. I found one other type of SE practice that can address labor appropriation.

A second type of SE practice that is relevant to labor appropriation focuses on exchange. There is one alternative exchange practice relevant to the analytical criteria for labor appropriation. Alternative exchange is the process in which goods or services transfer from being produced to being consumed in ways that nurture SE values (Miller 2010, 5). For example, collectively owned and managed fair trade models are an alternative exchange practice. Collectively-owned and managed fair trade models are owned by stakeholders that include workers (“Solidarity Economy Map” 2024). Because workers also get to be owners, they have

power in establishing equitable compensation for themselves. This means that collective fair trade models have the opportunity to not reproduce surplus value extraction, inequitable incomes, and wage theft for workers. However, not all fair trade models are collectively owned and, therefore, do not meet SE values. Rather, they are considered alternative exchange allies of SE. For example, that a company focuses on fair trade does not necessarily mean that workers are part owners or that they are paid an equitable wage but rather the owners have agreed to pay workers a minimum wage, which does not always equate to an equitable one. In summary, the only alternative exchange practice that is relevant to each analytical criteria for labor appropriation is collective fair trade models. There are many other alternative exchange practices that cannot address labor appropriation.

The other alternative exchange practices that are not relevant to the criteria for addressing labor appropriation include: community-supported agriculture, farm and food co-ops, and non-monetary exchanges like social currencies, timebanks, barter clubs, sliding scales, mutual aid, and gift economies. To further explain, community-supported agriculture (CSA) is a model where farmers and consumers share the risks and rewards of their production because consumers commit to paying for a season no matter what the production share ends up being. While this model does support farmer owners, it does not directly address labor appropriation because farm workers can still experience surplus value extraction, inequitable incomes, and wage theft within these models. Similarly, farm and food co-ops are where workers and customers own shares in the business, so that they earn a profit when things go well; however, it does not necessarily mean that inequitable incomes or wage theft are addressed because not all workers may own shares or benefit from the model. Lastly, the non-monetary exchange examples do not operate within a monetary economic system and therefore do not directly address issues of inequitable

incomes or wage theft and therefore cannot address labor appropriation. Now that I have shared the findings of which production and exchange practices are and are not relevant to the analytical criteria for labor appropriation, I will describe SE practices found in their entirety to not be relevant to labor appropriation.

There are four types of SE practices that are not relevant to labor appropriation: creation, consumption, surplus allocation, and governance. The practice of creation refers to the formation of both natural and cultural things such as ecological growth and language development (Miller 2010, 4). As it is described, creation is not relevant to surplus value extraction, inequitable incomes, or wage theft and therefore cannot address labor appropriation. Additionally, consumption practices - the process in which people use goods and services (Miller 2010, 5) - is not relevant to the analytical criteria of labor appropriation because it is focused on the consumer experience, not workers. Likewise, surplus allocation practices refers to how resources are integrated back into the economy (Miller 2010, 5). This category first appeared as though it may address labor appropriation. However, after further reading, surplus allocation is talked about in terms of community financing (e.g., banking, savings, loans) and not in terms of workplace profit allocation, which could have addressed surplus value extraction and inequitable wages. Lastly, governance practices are the ways that policies and procedures of institutions facilitate SE values (Miller 2010, 5). The governance practices that are described are examples of how local, state, or federal governments could establish democratic and equitable policies and procedures, but not necessarily how workplace policies and procedures could be more democratic and equitable. However, if the SE governance practice of participatory budgeting was applied to the workplace, there could be the elimination of surplus value extraction, inequitable

wages, and wage theft, which means they could address labor appropriation. Next, I share the findings about the second key aspect of exploitation: powerlessness.

Powerlessness is the second key aspect of exploitation. I found that three concepts are relevant to the analytical criteria for powerlessness, which are solidarity, equity, and democracy. The first SE concept relevant to the criteria for powerlessness is solidarity. As explained above, the value of solidarity supports cooperation, mutuality, altruism, accountability, respect, and sharing (Kawano 2018, 5). The concept of solidarity is anti-hierarchical in its nature and does not reproduce power-over ideologies or structures, undemocratic workplace environments, and loss or lack of control, autonomy, or decision-making for workers. This means that the SE concept of solidarity can address powerlessness in ways relevant to all analytical criteria. I found a second SE contempt that can address powerlessness.

The second SE concept that is relevant to powerlessness is equity. Once again, equity is the direct resistance of all forms of social injustices, including class oppression (Kawano 2018, 6). Hierarchical and power-over ideologies or structures, undemocratic workplace environments, and loss or lack of control, autonomy, or decision-making for workers can be forms of class oppression because the inequities are experienced based upon workers economic and work status. So, if the concept of equity is applied to work environments, the inequities - analytical criteria for powerlessness - may not be replicated. As a result, the SE concept of equity can address powerlessness in terms of all analytical criteria. There is a third SE concept that can address powerlessness.

The third and final SE concept that is relevant to powerlessness is democracy. Democracy is a central principle to SE because democracy builds an ecosystem that fosters liberation and self-governance (“The Solidarity Economy” 2024; “What Do We” 2024). It is

important to note that participatory democracy is highlighted here, rather than representative democracy. Participatory democracy allows for people to have direct decision-making power so that people can govern themselves and their resources (Kawano 2018, 7). This is different from representative democracy, which we may be more familiar with, that has an elected representative to make the decisions on behalf of their community. By applying the value of participatory democracy, powerlessness - hierarchical and power-over ideologies or structures, undemocratic workplace environments, and loss or lack of control, autonomy, or decision-making - might not be an outcome for workers. For that reason, the SE concept of democracy is relevant to each analytical criteria of powerlessness. There are, however, two SE concepts that are not relevant to the analytical criteria for powerlessness.

I found that two SE concepts do not address powerlessness: pluralism and sustainability. Pluralism, as it has been previously described, is about utilizing many approaches to obtain an equitable economic system. Since the concept does not directly indicate what those approaches are, it cannot be determined how the concept would be relevant to the analytical criteria of powerlessness. Sustainability, on the other hand, is described as valuing people and the planet over profit. Valuing people over profit does benefit workers, as demonstrated in the context of labor appropriation. However, it does not explicitly mean that applying the concept of sustainability would not reproduce hierarchical or power-over ideologies and structures, undemocratic work environments, and the loss or lack of control, autonomy, and decision-making for workers. Thus, sustainability does not necessarily or directly address the analytical criteria for powerlessness. Next, I share the findings on the SE practices that can address powerlessness.

There are two types of SE practices that are relevant to the analytical criteria for powerlessness. They are production and exchange practices. The first type of SE practice that can address powerlessness focuses on alternative production. Three alternative production practices are relevant to the analytical criteria for powerlessness. The first is producer cooperatives, which are businesses where people that are producing and creating a product have ownership. Likewise, worker cooperatives are businesses where people that are workers have ownership. Both of these cooperative models allow for workers to also be owners and therefore dismantle hierarchical and power-over ideologies or structures, undemocratic workplace environments, and loss or lack of control, autonomy, or decision-making for workers. A third alternative production practice that is relevant to the analytical criteria for powerlessness is self-employment. To reiterate, self-employment is where people have ownership, independence, and autonomy over their own business. This type of alternative production allows for self-provisioning and self-sufficiency that empowers workers to have all decision-making abilities for their working conditions, meaning that it can address powerlessness for workers. In summary, producer and worker cooperatives and self-employment are alternative production models that are relevant to the analytical criteria for powerlessness. There are other alternative production practices that cannot address powerlessness.

Other alternative production practices that are not relevant to the criteria of powerlessness are community gardens, volunteer collectives, and unpaid care work. All of these practices have a wide range of implementation and their power structures are not specifically described by SE so I cannot determine that they can address hierarchical or power-over ideologies and structures, undemocratic work environments, or loss of control, autonomy, and decision making. This

further means that these SE production practices cannot address powerlessness. I found one other type of SE practice that can address powerlessness.

The second type of SE practice that is relevant to the criteria of powerlessness focuses on exchange. Out of all the examples of exchange practices, I found that one is relevant to the analytical criteria for powerlessness: collective fair trade practices. This is another practice where fair trade businesses are organized through small farmer and grower cooperatives allowing workers to also be owners which gives them decision-making power. Since workers have shared ownership and a sense of control, this practice does not reproduce hierarchical or power-over ideologies and structures, undemocratic work environments, or loss of control, autonomy, or decision making. There are other exchange practices – e.g., CSAs, food and farm cooperatives, and non-monetary currencies. However, they focus on consumer needs and are not relevant to the analytical criteria of powerlessness. Now that I have explained which production and exchange practices are and are not relevant to the analytical criteria for powerlessness, I will share why other types of SE practices are found in their entirety to not be relevant to powerlessness.

Types of SE practices that do not address powerlessness include creation, consumption, surplus allocation, and governance. These types of practices do not address the analytical criteria of powerlessness. Starting with creation practices, they focus on natural and cultural development and do not address how workers experience hierarchical or power-over ideologies and structures, undemocratic work environments, and loss or lack of control, autonomy, and decision-making in the workplace. Consumption practices focus on how to make goods and services more accessible and equitable for consumers and do not focus on workers and therefore do not address their powerlessness. Additionally, surplus allocation practices focus on

community financing and are not relevant to the analytical criteria of powerlessness. Lastly, the governance practices that were described have potential for addressing the analytical criteria for the powerlessness of workers; however, because the practices are described in ways of political governance and not of workplace governance, the governance practices do not directly address hierarchical or power-over ideologies and structures, undemocratic work environments, and loss or lack of control, autonomy, and decision-making experienced by workers. These types of SE practices are not relevant to the analytical criteria of powerlessness. Next, I will summarize the findings for CRQ 1.

In conclusion, there are SE concepts and practices that can address different aspects of exploitation. First, the concepts of solidarity, equity, democracy, and sustainability are relevant to all of the analytical criteria for labor appropriation. The SE practices of producer and worker cooperatives, self-employment, and collective fair trade are relevant to each of the analytical criteria for labor appropriation. Comparatively, the concepts of solidarity, equity, and democracy are relevant to each analytical criteria for powerlessness. The same SE practices - producer and worker cooperatives, self-employment, and collective fair trade - are relevant to each analytical criteria for powerlessness. Table 4 summarizes the SE concepts and practices that can address exploitation.

Table 4. Constitutive Research Question 1 Findings

Aspects of Exploitation	Analytical Criteria	Relevant SE Concepts	Relevant SE Practices
Labor appropriation	• Surplus value extraction • Inequitable incomes • Wage theft	• Solidarity • Equity • Democracy • Sustainability	• Producer cooperatives • Worker cooperatives • Self-employment • Collective fair trade

Powerlessness	• Hierarchical or power-over ideologies and structures • Undemocratic work environments • Loss of control • Lack of autonomy • Lack of decision making	• Solidarity • Equity • Democracy	• Producer cooperatives • Worker cooperatives • Self-employment • Collective fair trade

Sources: Solidarity Economy Map & Directory 2024; The Solidarity Economy 2024; and What Do We Mean by Solidarity Economy 2024

CRQ 2: Marginalization

CRQ 2 asks, how do the concepts and practices of solidarity economy address marginalization? This question contributes to answering my ORQ by asking about how SE addresses maldistribution in the form of marginalization. Using directed content analysis, I first identified and defined the key aspects of marginalization, which were being confined to poor work and being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society. Then I developed analytical criteria for each key aspect of marginalization that were used to code and determine instances of SE concepts and practices that can address being confined to poor work and being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society. The SE concepts relevant to marginalization found in my data collection include: solidarity, equity, democracy, and sustainability. Additionally, I looked for SE practices that can address marginalization. The SE practices relevant to marginalization found in my data collection are producer cooperatives, worker cooperatives, self-employment, collective fair trade, participatory budgeting, collective management of resources, volunteer collectives, community gardens, (some) unpaid care work, social currencies, timebanks, barter clubs, mutual aid, and gift economies. This was the process for collecting and organizing data for CRQ 2; next, I share the findings.

The first aspect of marginalization is being confined to poor work. I found four SE concepts that are relevant to the analytical criteria for being confined to poor work. The first

concept of SE that is relevant to being confined to poor work is solidarity. Solidarity is about a common bond between all people that puts cooperation and mutuality above competition and profit (Miller 2010, 6). The value of solidarity connects people in a way that one person's suffering is all of our suffering. The opposite is also true, where one person's flourishing is all of our flourishing. By applying the value of solidarity to workers, being confined to poor work - being denied access to paid, safe, or desirable work and not having opportunities for advancement - would not be an outcome. This means that the SE concept of solidarity can address each analytical criteria for being confined to poor work. I found a second SE concept that can address being confined to poor work.

The second SE concept that is relevant to being confined to poor work is equity. Once again, equity is the resistance of all forms of oppression so that there is social justice for all people. The value of equity can address class oppression and does not deny people desirable or paid work, safe working conditions, or the opportunity for advancement. This signifies that the SE concept of equity is relevant to all analytical criteria for being confined to poor work. There is another SE concept that can address being confined to poor work.

The third SE concept that is relevant to being confined to poor work is democracy. Democracy is the value of participation so that people have a direct voice in decision making. The value of participatory democracy invites all people, including workers, to have liberation and autonomy over their working environment by having a voice in work that is accessible, safe, desirable, and allows for advancement within the workplace. Therefore, the SE concept of democracy can address being confined to poor work in a way that is relevant to each analytical criterion. There is one final SE concept that can address being confined to poor work.

The fourth and final SE concept that is relevant to being confined to poor work is sustainability. The value of sustainability refers to social and environmental sustainability. Social sustainability is prioritizing people over profits and where everyone lives well and in harmony. Furthermore, social sustainability stands for people having a "dignified quality of life" (Kawano 2018, 8), including workers. Applying the concept of sustainability to workers could mean that they are not denied access to paid, safe, or desirable work and that they would have opportunities for advancement that leads to their dignified quality of life. The SE concept of sustainability can address all analytical criteria for being confined to poor work. While the SE concepts of solidarity, equity, democracy, and sustainability can address being confined to poor work, I found one SE concept that cannot.

The SE concept not relevant to being confined to poor work is pluralism. Pluralism is the value of creating many approaches for achieving an equitable economic system; however, the concept of pluralism does not describe what the approaches or strategies are and therefore it cannot be determined that the concept addresses workers being denied access to paid, safe, and desirable work or opportunities for advancement. Therefore, pluralism as its own concept cannot address being confined to poor work. Next, I share the findings on what practices are relevant to being confined to poor work.

There are three types of SE practices that are relevant to the analytical criteria for being confined to poor work. First, I found three SE practices that focus on alternative production that can address being confined to poor work. Those three alternative production practices include producer cooperatives, worker cooperatives, and self-employment. Producer and worker cooperatives are where workers have ownership in the business. When people have direct ownership in the business they work for, they will have autonomy and power to offer

opportunities for advancement or provide access to paid, safe, and desirable work. Likewise, self-employment gives the same autonomy and power to not reproduce being confined to poor work. This means that producer and worker cooperatives and self-employment are alternative production models that are relevant to all analytical criteria for being confined to poor work. There are other alternative production practices that cannot address being confined to poor work.

The other alternative production practices that are not relevant to the analytical criteria for being confined to poor work are community gardens, volunteer collectives, and unpaid care work. These production practices do not change or increase access to paid work or opportunities for advancement since they are outside of the monetary system; however, these models do give opportunities for people that are excluded from the monetary market to participate in desirable work. Overall, these alternative production practices are not relevant to all of the analytical criteria for being confined to poor work and therefore cannot address being confined to poor work. I found a second type of SE practice that can address being confined to poor work.

An additional type of SE practice that is relevant to the analytical criteria for being confined to poor work focuses on alternative exchange. I found one exchange practice that can address being confined to poor work, collective fair trade. Collective fair trade is when workers have ownership in the fair trade business that they work for. This specific type of fair trade practice would then give workers the power and autonomy to have access to paid, safe, and desirable work as well as opportunities for advancement. This means that the SE practice of collective fair trade can address being confined to poor work in a way that is relevant to all analytical criteria. I found some SE practices focused on exchange that cannot address being confined to poor work.

The other alternative exchange practices that are not relevant to the criteria for being confined to poor work are CSAs, farm and food co-ops, and non-monetary exchanges. CSAs and farm or food co-ops do not address workers' needs and therefore it cannot be determined that they can address access to paid, safe, or desirable work or that they offer opportunities for advancement. Similarly, non-monetary exchanges like timebanks, barter clubs, or gift economies do not address workers being confined to poor work because these systems operate outside of the monetary economic system where workers can still experience lack of access to paid work or advancement opportunities. In summary, the only SE practice focused on alternative exchange that is relevant to all analytical criteria for being confined to poor work is collective fair trade. There is one final type of SE practice that can address being confined to poor work.

I found that there is one SE practice that focuses on alternative governance that is relevant to the analytical criteria for being confined to poor work. Governance practices speak to the ways that policies and procedures of institutions (particularly local, state, or federal governments) facilitate SE values (Miller 2010, 5). A type of SE governance practice is participatory budgeting. Participatory budgeting is the democratized process of governmental spending determined by its citizens (Kawano 2018,32). When people that are confined to poor work have participation in determining their community’s budget, access to paid, safe, or desirable work is possible through money allocation to support their access. For example, people that are most likely to be marginalized are people with disabilities, mothers, people of color, migrant workers, and elderly people and through a community budgeting process they could allocate resources to support their access to paid, safe, and desirable work. In conclusion, participatory budgeting is relevant to each of the analytical criteria of being confined to poor

work. There is a second governance practice, however, that cannot address being confined to poor work.

The other SE governance practice, which is not relevant to the analytical criteria, is the collective community management of resources. Collective or community management of resources is when stakeholders have collective ownership, control, and management of shared resources (Kawano 2018, 10). Communal resources range from natural resources like water, air, and land to social resources like public spaces or open-source technologies (34). The practice of the commons is to govern and manage these resources together and in ways that promote SE values. While this practice allows for people that are confined to poor work the ability to influence community resources, it is not clear how those community resources would promote their access to paid, safe, and desirable work or provide opportunities for advancement in the workplace. Now that I have shared the findings on which production, exchange, and governance practices are and are not relevant to the analytical criteria for being confined to poor work, I will share why other types of SE practices were found in their entirety to not be relevant to being confined to poor work.

Three types of SE practices that are not relevant to being confined to poor work and they are creation, consumption, and surplus allocation. Creation practices refer to both environmental and cultural stewardship, it is about how we create and preserve land or water and how we create and preserve stories or ideas. This further means that creation practices are not relevant to the analytical criteria for being confined to poor work. Likewise, consumption practices do not directly address workers being confined to poor work because they focus on the consumers, not workers, which makes these practices not relevant to the analytical criteria for being confined to poor work. Lastly, the SE practices focused on surplus allocation were focused on community

financing and are not relevant to the analytical criteria of being denied access to paid, safe, or desirable work, or access to opportunities for advancement. Next, I describe the SE concepts and practices that can address the second aspect of marginalization, being seen as an unproductive dependent of society.

Being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society is the second key aspect of marginalization. I found that two concepts are relevant to the analytical criteria for being viewed as unproductive dependents of society: solidarity and equity. The first SE concept that is relevant to the criteria for being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society is solidarity. In addition to solidarity valuing interdependence, unity and mutualism, it values non-monetized acts of mutualism and unpaid community care such as elder or child care, volunteer work, or neighborly support (Kawano 2018, 6). This definition of solidarity counters the societal ideology that people are valued only for what they monetarily bring to society. This further means that the concept of solidarity is relevant to the analytical criteria because it challenges and does not reproduce societal resentment of welfare programs and their participants, the belief in the self-made myth, victim blaming, or social apathy. The SE concept of solidarity can address being viewed as unproductive dependents of society in a way that is relevant to all analytical criteria. There is a second SE concept that can address being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society.

The second SE concept that is relevant to the analytical criteria for being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society is equity. Equity resists all forms of oppression. Being viewed as an unproductive dependent of society is a form of class oppression, because when workers live off of low or poverty wages that are supplemented by social programs, society views those workers as an undeserving underclass not working hard enough. The value of equity

is relevant to the analytical criteria - societal resentment of welfare programs, self-made myth, victim blaming, and social apathy - because equity works towards reducing and removing class-based stigmas. This means that the SE concept of equity is relevant to all analytical criteria and can address being viewed as unproductive dependents of society. There are SE concepts that are not relevant for being viewed as unproductive dependents of society.

The SE concepts that are not relevant to being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society are democracy, sustainability, and pluralism. Democracy does not address being viewed as unproductive dependents of society because while the concept values participation from all people, it does not mean that society will shift their consciousness to value all people or to shift ideologies away from societal resentment of welfare programs, self-made myths, victim blaming, or social apathy. Likewise, sustainability does not directly address the analytical criteria of being viewed as unproductive dependents of society because it focuses on practices that put workers over profit and not necessarily the societal opinion of workers. Lastly, the SE concept of pluralism is the value of many approaches for achieving an equitable economic system but does not directly address how workers are viewed as unproductive dependents of society. Next, I share findings on what practices can address this aspect of marginalization.

There are SE practices that are relevant to the analytical criteria for being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society. I found that three SE practices focused on alternative production can address being viewed as unproductive dependents of society. The three alternative production practices that are relevant to the analytical criteria for this aspect of marginalization are volunteer collectives, community gardens, and some unpaid care work. These three alternative production practices work outside of the monetary economic system and are a way of self-provisioning. It is important to specify that some, but not all unpaid care work

is considered a SE practice. That is because there are many examples of unpaid care work that are oppressive. Only models of unpaid care work that align with all SE concepts are included. Otherwise, volunteer collectives, community gardens, and some unpaid care work can be ways that people that are viewed as unproductive dependents of society can provide for themselves within their community. This gives society the opportunity to build connections between those that are on social welfare programs and those that are not. Being in proximity to those that are on social welfare programs can demonstrate their humanity and resilience in spite of systems and structures that create their hardship and build social support for welfare programs and empathy. Although it is difficult to say what can shift the consciousness of society, these practices may give the opportunity to move away from victim blaming, resentment of welfare programs, self-made myth narratives, and social apathy. These practices also give people an opportunity to contribute. In summary, volunteer collectives, community gardens, and some unpaid work can address being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society in a way that is relevant to each analytical criterion. There are SE practices focused on production that cannot address being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society.

The SE production practices that are not relevant to this aspect of marginalization are worker and producer cooperatives and collectives of self-employment. These production practices do not address being viewed as unproductive dependents of society because while they do present the opportunity for workers to provide for themselves, they do not directly address the societal perception of workers that need to supplement their income by receiving social program support. This means that worker and producer cooperatives and self-employment practices are not relevant to the analytical criteria of being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society. I

found one other type of SE practice that can address being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society.

The second type of SE practice that can address being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society focuses on alternative exchange. I found that five alternative exchange practices can address the analytical criteria for being viewed as unproductive dependents of society. Those five alternative exchange practices are all non-monetary exchange models and include: social currencies, timebanks, barter clubs, mutual aid, and gift economies. Specifically, social currencies are local forms of money that work alongside any formal currency but allows for community-regulation and maintaining a localized economy where local money does not leave its participating community (Kawano 2018, 29). Comparatively, timebanks are an exchange system where participants earn credit hours based on the time they work, and can then use those earned credits to "purchase" goods or services from another participant (Kawano 2018, 29). Similar to timebanks, barter clubs or networks are communities of people that exchange goods or services with one another without the use of money but based upon what people have and what others need. Mutual aid is a broader practice in which communities take care of one another's needs, specifically when society via their governments or nonprofits are not meeting a community need. Lastly, gift economies are an economic exchange built on relationships and reciprocity that allows for someone to give resources or services to others with no expectation of when, how, or if they will get something in return (Miller 2010, 4).

These five alternative exchange models honor solidarity and equity as a way of participating in a non-monetary economic system that brings social benefits to everyone and can reduce the stigma of social support by providing infrastructure for resource sharing and may shift society's perception of marginalized people. This means that these five alternative exchange

practices can address being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society in a way that is relevant to all analytical criteria. There are more alternative exchange practices that cannot address being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society.

The alternative exchange practices that are not relevant to the analytical criteria for being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society are collective fair trade, CSAs, farm and food co-ops, and sliding scale pricing. Starting with collective fair trade, this practice gives workers the opportunity to be owners, but does not address being viewed as unproductive dependents of society because it does not directly address the societal perception of workers that need to supplement their income by receiving social program support. While, CSAs and farm or food co-ops are practices that focus on consumer participation and access and do not describe how or if it supports workers and any stigmas they face; therefore, these practices are not relevant to the analytical criteria. Additionally, sliding scale pricing is a consumer-facing benefit where people can access goods or services based upon a ranged monetary amount, which increases accessibility but does not address or reduce worker's stigmas. These four alternative exchange practices are not relevant to the analytical criteria. Now that I have explained which production and exchange practices are and are not relevant to the analytical criteria for being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society, I will share why other types of SE practices are found in their entirety to not be relevant to this aspect of marginalization.

Four SE practices are not relevant to being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society: creation, consumption, surplus allocation and governance. In general, creation practices do not directly address societal resentment of welfare programs, the self-made myth, victim blaming, or social apathy. However, there are two creation practices that could possibly shift social consciousness and be relevant to the analytical criteria of being viewed as unproductive

dependents of society if paired alongside other SE concepts. Those two creation practices are how society creates wisdom and knowledge. If societal wisdom and knowledge is created within the context of solidarity and equity, it might not replicate worker stigmas. Creation, however, as a standalone concept, does not address being viewed as unproductive dependents of society. Another type of SE practice that is not relevant to the analytical criteria are consumption practices because they focus on the consumer. Additionally, the SE practices focused on surplus allocation are not relevant to the analytical criteria because these practices focus on community financing and society's perception of workers. Lastly, governance practices are not relevant to the analytical criteria for how workers are viewed as unproductive dependents of society because they focus on community resourcing not worker stigmas. These types of SE practices are not relevant to the analytical criteria of being viewed as unproductive dependents of society. Next, I will summarize the findings for CRQ 2.

In conclusion, there are SE concepts and practices that can address different aspects of marginalization. First, the concepts of solidarity, equity, democracy, and sustainability are relevant to all analytical criteria of being confined to poor work. And the SE practices of producer and worker cooperatives, self-employment, collective fair trade, and participatory budgeting can address being confined to poor work in a way that is relevant to each analytical criteria. Comparatively, the concepts of solidarity and equity can address each analytical criteria for being viewed as unproductive dependents of society. And the SE practices of volunteer collectives, community gardens, some unpaid care work, social currencies, timebanks, barter clubs, mutual aid, and gift economies can address each analytical criteria for being viewed as unproductive dependents of society. Table 5 summarizes the SE concepts and practices that can address marginalization.

Table 5. Constitutive Research Question 2 Findings

Aspects of Marginalization	Analytical Criteria	Relevant SE Concepts	Relevant SE Practices
Being confined to poor work	• Denied access to paid work • Denied access to safe work • Denied access to desirable work • Denied access to opportunities for advancement	• Solidarity • Equity • Democracy • Sustainability	• Producer cooperatives • Worker cooperatives • Self-employment • Collective fair trade • Participatory budgeting
Being viewed as unproductive and dependent on society	• Societal resentment of welfare programs • Self-made myth • Victim blaming • Social apathy	• Solidarity • Equity	• Volunteer collectives • Community gardens • Unpaid care work (some) • Social currencies • Timebanks • Barter clubs • Mutual aid • Gift economies

Sources: Solidarity Economy Map & Directory 2024; The Solidarity Economy 2024; and What Do We Mean by Solidarity Economy 2024

CRQ 3: Deprivation

CRQ 3 asks, how do the concepts and practices of solidarity economy address deprivation? This question contributes to answering my ORQ by asking about how SE addresses maldistribution in the form of deprivation. Using directed content analysis, I first identified and defined the key aspect of deprivation, which was being denied basic materials for a standard of living. Then I developed analytical criteria for being denied basic materials for a standard of living, which was used to code and determine instances of SE concepts and practices that can address the key aspect of deprivation. The SE concepts relevant to deprivation found in my data collection included: solidarity, equity, democracy and sustainability. Additionally, I looked at SE

practices relevant to deprivation. The SE practices relevant to deprivation found in my data collection were producer cooperatives, worker cooperatives, self-employment, collective fair trade, and participatory budgeting. This was the process for collecting and organizing data for CRQ 3; next, I share the findings.

The key aspect for deprivation is being denied basic materials for a standard of living. I found five SE concepts that can address the analytical criteria for being denied basic materials for a standard of living. The first SE concept that is relevant to the analytical criteria for being denied basic materials for a standard of living is solidarity. Solidarity is about standing with all people, mutualism, collective care, and empathy. When the value of solidarity is applied, it can address the criteria, which are low wages, poverty wages, inability to build wealth, and lack of access to capital, land, and work benefits because mutualism, standing with all people, and collective care does not reproduce deprivation. The SE concept of solidarity can address being denied basic materials for a standard of living in a way that is relevant to each analytical criterion. I found a second SE concept that can address being denied basic materials for a standard of living.

The second SE concept that is relevant to the analytical criteria for being denied basic materials for a standard of living is equity. Equity addresses oppression and inequities of all kinds, including addressing class oppression for workers. The analytical criteria for deprivation, and maldistribution as a whole, are class oppressions. Therefore, low wages, poverty wages, inability to build wealth, and lack of access to capital, land, and work benefits could be addressed if the value of equity is applied to workers in the food system. The SE concept of equity can address all analytical criteria for being denied basic materials for a standard of living.

There is another SE concept that can address being denied basic materials for a standard of living.

The third SE concept that is relevant to the criteria of being denied basic materials for a standard of living is democracy. Democracy is a value that engages people and gives them access to decision-making power both at a community and workplace level. Community and workplace participation can influence social resources to address low or poverty wages, inability to build wealth, or lack of access to capital, land, and work benefits. The SE concept of democracy can address each analytical criteria for being denied basic materials for a standard of living. There is one final SE concept that can address being denied basic materials for a standard of living.

The fourth SE concept that is relevant to the analytical criteria for being denied basic materials for a standard of living is sustainability. In terms of social sustainability, this value prioritizes social welfare of people first, not profits and stands for people's right to a dignified quality of life (Kawano 2018, 8). When the concept of social sustainability is applied, the wellbeing of people is prioritized and could mean that workers would not be denied basic materials for a standard of living. Since social sustainability is described as the value of people's right to a dignified quality of life, the concept of sustainability is relevant to each analytical criteria, which are low and poverty wages, inability to build wealth, and lack of access to capital, land, and work benefits. While the SE concepts of solidarity, equity, democracy, and sustainability can address being denied basic materials for a standard of living, one SE concept cannot.

There is one SE concept that is not relevant to the analytical criteria of being denied basic materials for a standard of living, pluralism. Once again, pluralism is a SE value where there are many ways of achieving an equitable economic system; however, this value does not directly

address the analytical criteria for deprivation. Next, I share the findings on what SE practices can address being denied basic materials for a standard of living.

There are SE practices that are relevant to the analytical criteria for denied basic materials for a standard of living. The first type of SE practice that I found focuses on alternative production. There were three examples of alternative production practices, the first being producer cooperatives, while the second was worker cooperatives, and the third was self-employment. All three of these examples of alternative production practices give workers opportunity for ownership and control over their working conditions and can influence the resources that are available to them such as shifting resources to address low and poverty wages, inability to build wealth, and lack of access to capital, land, and work benefits. This means that producer and worker cooperatives and self-employment can address each analytical criteria for being denied basic materials for a standard of living. There are other alternative production practices that cannot address being denied basic materials for a standard of living.

The other alternative production practices that are not relevant to the analytical criteria are: community gardens, volunteer collectives, and some unpaid care work. These types of production practices operate in a non-monetary economic system and therefore could not address low and poverty wages, inability to build wealth, or lack of access to work benefits. However, community gardens could have the potential to provide access to capital (e.g., agricultural tools) and land, but do not address other analytical criteria of being denied materials for a standard of living. I found another type of SE practice that is relevant to the analytical criteria being denied basic materials for a standard of living.

The second type of SE practice that can address being denied basic materials for a standard of living focuses on exchange. I found that there is one example of alternative exchange

practices that can address being denied basic materials for a standard of living, it is collective fair trade. Once again, collective fair trade models are examples where workers have ownership in the business and therefore have decision-making power and control over resource distribution that could address low and poverty wages, inability to build wealth, or lack of access to capital, land, and work benefits. This means that the SE practice of collective fair trade can address being denied basic materials for a standard of living in a way that is relevant to all analytical criteria. I found some SE practices focused on exchange that cannot address being denied basic materials for a standard of living.

The other alternative exchange practices that are not relevant to the analytical criteria are social currencies, timebanks, barter clubs, mutual aid, gift economies, CSAs, farm and food co-ops, and sliding scale pricing. Social currencies, timebanks, barter clubs, mutual aid, and gift economies are not relevant to the criteria for being denied materials for a standard of living even though they provide alternative and non-monetary economic systems for workers to participate in. That is because these examples of alternative exchange practices do not directly address low wages, poverty wages, or lack of access to work benefits. What they could address is the inability to build wealth, and lack of access to capital or land, and give workers access to purchase goods or services through other means of exchange that are not limited by their low or poverty wages. But this still means that the SE practices are not relevant to all the analytical criteria for being denied basic materials for a standard of living because workers are still being deprived of resources by the worker-owner relationship that they are in. CSAs and farm and food co-ops are not relevant to the analytical criteria because they focus on ways for consumers to have participation and ownership in the business that they purchase goods from but do not focus on worker participation or ownership that could address workers being denied basic materials for

a standard of living. Likewise, sliding scale pricing is a benefit to consumers that improves access to materials. Sliding scale pricing could benefit workers by providing access to capital or land; however, it does not change worker wages or work benefits. This means that sliding scale pricing is not relevant to all analytical criteria. There is a third SE practice that can address being denied basic materials for a standard of living.

The third and final SE practice that is relevant to the analytical criteria for being denied basic materials for a standard of living focuses on governance. There is one governance practice that can address being denied basic materials for a standard of living, participatory budgeting. Participatory budgeting is the democratized process of government spending determined by its citizens (Kawano 2018, 33). This practice allows for people to have decision making power within their communities and how their policies around funding and budgets are allocated, which could address low or poverty wages, inability to build wealth, and lack of access to capital, land, and work benefits. There is another governance practice that is not relevant to the analytical criteria of being denied materials for a standard of living.

The second governance practice that is not relevant to the analytical criteria is collective community management of resources. Collective or community management of resources is when citizens have collective ownership, control, and management of shared resources (Kawano 2018, 10). Communal resources range from natural resources like water, air, and land to social resources like public spaces or open-source technologies (34). These resources are also known as the commons and are collectively governed and managed community resources. Collective management of resources or the commons could address the analytical criterion of lack of access to capital or land, but is not relevant to the other analytical criteria of low or poverty wages or lack of access to work benefits. Now that I have explained which production, exchange, and

governance practices are and are not relevant to the analytical criteria for being denied basic materials for a standard of living, I will share why other types of SE practices are found in their entirety to not be relevant to being denied basic materials for a standard of living.

There are three types of SE practices that are not relevant to the criteria of being denied basic materials for a standard of living. These types of SE practices include creation, consumption, and surplus allocation practices. As explained, creation practices do not address the relationship between workers and owners and are not relevant to the criteria of low or poverty wages, the inability to build wealth, and the lack of access to capital, land, and work benefits. Another SE practice, consumption focuses on consumer needs and not workers' needs, such as having access to basic materials for a standard of living. However, one example of consumption practices that was listed was community land trusts. Community land trusts are about the use or consumption of land for the purpose of making land accessible which does address one analytical criteria of being denied basic materials for a standard of living but not the others. Lastly, surplus allocation is about community financing through cooperative loan funds, community development credit unions, or peer lending, which could address some of the analytical criteria such as providing access to capital and land. But, these examples of surplus allocation practices do not directly address other analytical criteria such as low and poverty wages, inability to build wealth, and the lack of access to work benefits. These types of SE practices are not relevant to the analytical criteria of being denied basic materials for a standard of living. Next, I will summarize the findings of CRQ 3.

In conclusion, there are SE concepts and practices that can address maldistribution in the form of deprivation, or being denied materials for a standard of living. The concepts of solidarity, equity, democracy, and sustainability can address all analytical criteria for being

denied materials for a standard of living. And the SE practices of producer and worker cooperatives, self-employment, collective fair trade, and participatory budgeting can also address being denied materials for a standard of living in a way that is relevant to each analytical criterion. Table 6 indicates the SE concepts and practices that can address deprivation.

Table 6. Constitutive Research Question 3 Findings

Aspect of Deprivation	Analytical Criteria	Relevant SE Principles	Relevant SE Practices
Being denied materials for a standard of living	• Low wages • Poverty wages • Inability to build wealth • Lack of access to capital or land • Lack of access to work benefits	• Solidarity • Equity • Democracy • Sustainability	• Producer cooperatives • Worker cooperatives • Self-employment • Collective fair trade • Participatory budgeting

Sources: Solidarity Economy Map & Directory 2024; The Solidarity Economy 2024; and What Do We Mean by Solidarity Economy 2024

Analysis, Insights, and Implications

Here I present insights that I gained from the analysis of all three CRQs. I do so by sharing synthetic analytical insights relevant to all questions. The first insight I share is about how SE practices work better together than separately. The second insight is about how linking SE practices creates a SE value chain. The third insight is about the benefit of building non-monetary infrastructure. And finally, the fourth insight I share is about the importance of identifying SE ally practices.

Solidarity economy practices are more relevant to addressing maldistribution when evaluated holistically. I found that there are SE practices that address the three expressions of maldistribution, which are exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. However, some SE practices address the analytical criteria for the different aspects of exploitation, marginalization,

and deprivation more clearly and independently. It seems that when SE practices are viewed holistically and not in isolation, they have a stronger potential to be relevant to the analytical criteria for a particular form of maldistribution. This was not something I considered in my research design and because of that, the findings for what SE practices address exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation look more rigid and irrelevant than they actually may be. I interpret this to mean that neither the SE concepts nor practices are meant to be standalone values and models, but rather are meant to work together. When SE concepts and practices are integrated with one another they create their own economic system known as a SE value chain. A SE value chain is better able to address all analytical criteria for the forms of maldistribution because a SE value chain builds a network and community that is committed to values and practices that are for their economic, social, and political wellbeing.

A SE value chain can be applied to the food system. The three networks that I collected data from exist in part for the purpose of building linkages that strengthens the movement. The importance of connecting various SE practices is that those linkages create and sustain a SE value chain (Kawano 2018, 20 and Miller 2010, 7). Imagining how this may look in the food system, there could be a community that decides to invest - via their participatory budgeting process - in local food infrastructure by developing a food cooperative. That food cooperative could be financed through their community development credit union. Once in operation, the food cooperative would purchase their products through a collectively owned fair trade network. Then, community members would purchase their groceries from it, using social currency to make their purchases. This creates a value chain that includes a non-monetary system.

Developing a SE value chain includes building institutions and infrastructure that operate outside of a monetary system. Community gardens, volunteer collectives, and unpaid care work

were all named as SE alternative forms of production. These practices are not paid forms of production and in isolation did not address the analytical criteria for exploitation, the first aspect of marginalization, or deprivation. However, in a SE value chain, community gardens, volunteer collectives, and unpaid care work would be practiced within a larger network of SE practices such as the exchange practices of sliding scale, bartering, or timebanking. In this context, the practices (together) are relevant to the Capstone's analytical criteria because the pairing of these alternative production and exchange practices create a completely different economic system where exploitation and deprivation are not reproduced and workers needs are met outside of the monetary system. In addition to developing a SE value chain to address maldistribution of workers, it could be important to uplift ally practices.

Solidarity economy ally practices can also support moving society towards a more just food system for workers. In my research design, I named some values and practices that could be found in my research data, like support for unions to address powerlessness or social wages to address deprivation. However, I found that these were not SE values or practices and instead were named as allies that shared common ground with SE (Kawano 2018, 8). It was explained that these were ally practices because both union contracts and social wage policies can be changed or taken away, the power and resources that they offer are not fully democratic or sustainable and therefore do not meet the standards of SE concepts and practices. Under the SE value of pluralism - implementing many approaches to achieving a more equitable economic system - it seems important to name ally practices. Because it can help identify what additional practices can help society address the social consequences of capitalism, one being the economic inequities between workers and owners in the food system. Next, I will share the contributions that this Capstone makes towards addressing the social problem.

Contribution

This section evaluates how the findings and analysis deepen the understanding of the social problem and explains how the findings and analysis address the research problem. As a reminder, the social problem is the economic inequities among workers and owners in the food system. Economic inequities show up as maldistribution of resources between workers and owners. The research problem focuses on understanding ways that SE can address this maldistribution. The ORQ asked, how do the concepts and practices of SE address maldistribution of resources between workers and owners in the U.S. food system? Three CRQs were used to collectively answer the ORQ and address the research problem and social problem.

The first CRQ brings understanding of how SE concepts and practices can address maldistribution in the form of exploitation. Briefly, both aspects of exploitation were addressed by several concepts and practices, but some concepts and practices were not specified enough to indicate that they were relevant to all of the analytical criteria of surplus value extraction, inequitable incomes, wage theft, hierarchical or power-over ideologies and structures, undemocratic work environments, and loss of control, autonomy, and decision making. The second CRQ brings understanding of how SE concepts and practices can address maldistribution in the form of marginalization. Briefly, both aspects of marginalization were addressed by several concepts and practices, but some were not specified enough to indicated they were relevant to all of the analytical criteria of being denied access to paid, safe, and desirable work, being denied access to opportunities for advancement, societal resentment of welfare programs, self-made myth, victim blaming, and social apathy. And the third CRQ brings understanding of how SE concepts and practices can address maldistribution in the form of deprivation. Briefly, the aspect of deprivation was addressed by several concepts and practices, but some were not

specified enough to indicate the concepts and practices were relevant to all of the analytical criteria of low wages, poverty wages, inability to build wealth, or the lack of access to capital, land, and work benefits. Overall, I discovered that various SE concepts and practices do address different categories of exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation and that when SE concepts and practices work together in a whole system their possibility to address maldistribution of resources is stronger. Together these findings help to bring understanding of how SE can address the economic inequities among workers and owners in the food system, which is the overall contribution of this Capstone. Next, I will elaborate on specific contributions, which are building a SE framework for addressing maldistribution and building awareness about SE's potential to address maldistribution.

This Capstone has developed a SE framework for addressing maldistribution. First, it is important to say that these research findings are preliminary and not exhaustive. This Capstone is a starting point for creating a deeper understanding and developing a framework for how SE concepts and practices address key social justice issues (like maldistribution) caused by capitalism, which is important because SE endeavors to resist and reimagine a system beyond capitalism.

I find that there are two main contributions in building an exploratory framework for how SE addresses maldistribution. The first is that it demonstrates the need to pay attention to implementation and impact. The way that SE grounds their work in concepts and practices are a great starting point; SE practices need to be developed and enacted in order to address social inequities, like those present in worker-owner relationships. This exploratory framework helps SE build the connection between its concepts and practices to focus and enhance its potential impact.

The second contribution in developing this framework is that it demonstrates where SE can also evolve or clarify their concepts and practices and potentially identify new practices that can address the gaps of where they are not currently addressing social injustices. For example, governance practices showed a lot of potential for addressing the analytical criteria for the categories of exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation; however, because the governance practices were highly connected to how local, state, or federal policies and procedures are created and not more broadly applied to additional institutions like a workplace environment, it was difficult to say how or if they could directly address the analytical criteria. Demonstrating how a framework could be built out for better understanding how SE addresses social justice issues that it proclaims to resist is particularly important for reimagining social justice with food systems and society. Since SE is a large social and political-economic framework that can be applied to any industry, this Capstone also demonstrates how it can be applied to the food system specifically. This leads me to the second contribution of this Capstone, which is about awareness.

Building awareness of SE and connecting it to the food system is an important contribution. In my own personal and professional conversations about the economic inequities that exist in a capitalist system, people want to know what alternatives there are because, as a society, we have a difficult time imagining another system. This is why building awareness of alternative economic concepts and practices that address economic inequities and oppressions is an important contribution. This Capstone builds awareness of one alternative economic system that exists - SE - and that many people have likely interacted with while not knowing it. For example, it is likely that many people have heard of cooperatives, whether it be producer, worker, farm, or food cooperatives, but did not have the framework of SE to describe how these

are alternative practices to capitalism. On the other hand, there are other people who may be familiar with or who have heard of SE, but due to its vagueness, are unsure of how it operates in the real world. This Capstone demonstrates what concepts and practices are included and how they can address real world social injustices. Having that knowledge can help people better understand how SE is already being practiced and can be an alternative economic system to capitalism. Overall, building awareness and deeper understanding about SE is important because it can shift social consciousness, strengthen the SE movement, and create more practices which all can lead to a stronger SE network and connectivity or value chain, which leads to a more equitable and just society.

Recommendations

The purpose of the recommendations section is to offer insights on where research can go next, according to the findings and analysis that I have shared. I have three recommendations for further research based upon my findings and analysis. The first recommendation I have is to better understand the interconnectedness of the U.S.-based SE networks. As I shared in the analysis, I found that the concepts and practices named by different data sources were well-aligned with little variation. I interpret this to mean that across the three SE networks within the U.S. that I collected data from, there is a shared understanding of what SE values and practices are. This observation has made me interested in a research project that compares and contrasts the various networks across the U.S. to see how they collaborate. I think understanding how the SE networks co-exist and collaborate would build further understanding of how principles and practices are applied on the ground and with each other in the movement. While this was not the focus of my research, I did notice how the *New Economy Coalition* referenced *Solidarity Economy Principles* on their website to understand more deeply about principles and what

practices are formed from them. And, in the middle of my research while collecting data, I noticed that the *U.S. Solidarity Economy Network* updated its website. In the latest revision named the *New Economy Coalition* as a collaborator along with others, but not *Solidarity Economy Principles*. Creating a more connected network feels important given the shared values of relationships and connectivity.

Another recommendation I have for further research is a case study. My research focused on how SE concepts and practices could theoretically address maldistribution. I think the next step for this research is to complete a case study about how some of the practices that I found to address the different categories of exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation apply in the real world. This would provide further validation and context for the findings and analysis that I presented here.

The third and final recommendation I have for further research is to expand the focus to consider other forms of social injustice. It could be valuable and interesting to see how SE concepts and practices address other types of social injustices. Since my Capstone focused on economic injustices and how SE concepts and practices could address maldistribution, I would like to see further research looking into how the same SE concepts and practices address cultural and political injustices. This could further our understanding on how SE can address all aspects of social injustices as viewed through the lens of parity of participation. That research project could develop our understanding of how SE concepts and practices address the misrecognition and misrepresentation of workers, since my Capstone focused on how SE concepts and practices addressed maldistribution. These are the recommendations I have for further research.

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In summary, this chapter presents the findings, analysis, and contributions of my research. I discovered that various SE concepts and practices do address different categories of exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation and that when they work together in a whole system their possibility to address maldistributions of resources is stronger. This chapter also included a section about the Capstone's contributions to the larger body of research and conversation about economic justice for workers in the food system. Overall, the contribution that it makes is building awareness about SE and its application to the food system and society. Lastly, I gave recommendations for further research and what can be done next. The recommendations I gave are to discover what the connections are between the U.S. SE networks, to develop a case study using my findings, and to conduct similar research to better understand how SE concepts and practices address misrecognition and misrepresentation. In the next and final chapter, I conclude my Capstone Research Synthesis.

Five—Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the Capstone's contributions to social justice in food systems and society. I share what I have learned about society's role to respond to social problems and, more broadly, what I learned about possibilities for social change. Then, I summarize how the conceptualization of social justice, social change, and critical inquiry can be utilized to address social problems beyond this Capstone's work.

Economic inequities between workers and owners in the food system is a social problem, where workers experience maldistribution of resources in the forms of exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. I demonstrated exploitation using the examples of inequitable incomes between workers and owners and union busting effort by owners. I demonstrated how workers experience marginalization using examples of having a lack of access to job opportunities and victim blaming narratives from owners and society. Lastly, I demonstrated that workers experience deprivation using the examples of having a lack of access to livable wages, inequitable work-sponsored benefits, and inequitable access to wealth building. The social injustice of maldistributed resources between workers and owners exists within the oppressive economic system of capitalism, a systemic problem that motivated the research inquiry.

The Capstone research problem looks at how society can respond to the social problem, so that the food system and society can be brought closer to social justice. Historically, social movements have provided a collective purpose for people to respond to social injustices. I was particularly interested in the social movement of SE, which claims to resist and reform a system beyond capitalism. Specifically, the ORQ asked, how do the concepts and practices of solidarity economy address maldistribution of resources between workers and owners in the U.S. food

system? This question helped to better understand what values and models of SE exist that do not reproduce the social problem.

I collected data from three U.S. based SE networks and their grey literature and from the findings was able to develop a list of SE concepts and practices that address exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. There were some SE concepts and practices that addressed the analytical criteria for each CRQs more directly and independently. However, in my analysis I observed that when SE concepts and practices are viewed collectively with other SE concepts and practices, they have a stronger potential to directly address exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. Overall, my findings demonstrated that there are alternative values and models provided by SE that do not replicate maldistribution between workers and owners and that when applied holistically those concepts and practices have a stronger potential to address the social problem and move the food system and society closer to social justice.

Throughout my Capstone I have learned about the role that research and scholarship has in responding to social justice problems. Most notable is that there is space in social movements for academic activists to work alongside grassroots activists in advancing social justice and social change. This partnership establishes a non-hierarchical rather than co-creator opportunity where both activists have places of influence that the other does not, making their efforts stronger together. Partnership between academic activist and grassroots activist would mean that there is value and respect for one another and that the expertise that both activists contribute is recognized. Prior to this Capstone, I would not have considered research to be a part of activism or social change. Research appeared to be far removed from social movement action. Throughout this process I have come to an understanding that intellectual work is a form of activism and is critical in the conceptualization of social justice and social change work.

An important contribution that academic activists can provide to conceptualizing social justice and social change work are conceptual frameworks. I learned that the importance of conceptual frameworks is how they provide understandings and boundaries that can organize research *and* that can guide social movements. Throughout this Capstone I relied on the conceptual framework of parity of participation. Parity of participation provided this Capstone with a definition of what social justice is and criteria for when social justice was being violated. This conceptual framework also helped me to develop my research questions and make meaning out of the data. Parity of participation was a common thread throughout my Capstone that grounded my research in specific theories about social justice and how to bring about social change.

Equally as important to grounding my research in specific theories about social justice and social change was the conceptual framework I used for my research paradigm, critical inquiry. Critical inquiry guided me to explain the pervasiveness of social inequities and to find social solutions. By applying critical inquiry to my research, it has taught me the importance of finding remedies of social problems that address causes and not merely consequences. This insight further leads me to believe that applying the concept of critical inquiry as a framework for other social-justice-focused research would be relevant and powerful because critical inquiry focuses on root causes of social inequities and finding social solutions that bring social change.

Conceptual frameworks are valuable tools in conceptualizing social justice and social change beyond this Capstone's work. There are many conceptual frameworks that exist and can build better understanding and approaches to addressing social justice problems. I believe that building conceptual frameworks is the iterative process between academia and grassroots activists. This has been true of SE as a conceptual framework, where its concepts and practices

were being observed and researched by academics who put theory behind the action they witnessed on the ground. And in return, people that were a part of the SE movement have gathered and further conceptualized what SE is, expanding how it can apply to real world circumstances. This is just one example of how conceptual frameworks can and do help us to think more critically about the social problems we experience as well as guide us towards solutions.

There are many ways to conceptualize and address social injustices within society. What I have demonstrated in this Capstone is that there are ways we can think more intentionally about social injustices, so that we can act. This is important because understanding concepts that teach us how to function socially, politically, and economically as a just society, is a vital first step towards creating a society that reflects social justice. We need to learn and imagine what is possible, so that we can create it.

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