Food Consulting Confidential:

Neoliberalism in Silicon Valley Food and Technology Culture

by

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CRQ	Constitutive Research Question
SV	Silicon Valley
Tech	Technology
VC	Venture Capitalist

For the love of fungi, food, family, and friends.

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Abstract

Capitalism in the United States encourages entrepreneurs to participate in the food system with prospects of amassing wealth. However, starting a food company is no easy task given the limited access to resources and the social inequities and oppression that serve as barriers of entry. This thesis investigates Silicon Valley's food and technology (tech) culture in its current state, asking whether and how it is upholding social inequities and injustices through neoliberalism and oppression. Using critical inquiry and content analysis, I examine how Silicon Valley maintains power among elites by controlling or influencing the conditions of production necessary to produce food and tech. In addressing the social issues that condition opportunity in Silicon Valley's food and tech culture, I turn to food democracy as a means to distribute power and voice back to the people by decreasing barriers of entry into food entrepreneurship. My findings show there is some success among current efforts to engage with food democracy in various formats. I suggest the positioning of social entrepreneurship in discourse and practice as creating a community that strives for social equity through the redistribution of resources. The hope of this thesis is to encourage more research and development in finding new innovations that enhance food democracy and construct a new culture in the food and tech landscape that addresses social inequities and oppression.

Keywords: Neoliberalism, oppression, food democracy, economic justice, social entrepreneurship

Chapter One

Introduction

In late June of 2018, I sat among food entrepreneurs, consultants, investors, and colleagues at a food funded event intended for small companies. The location was in the Presidio, a location that overlooks the Golden Gate Bridge and is far from most forms of public transportation and has limited parking space. The cost of the event was worth a little more than $150 per person with an industry discount and boasted a full day of networking with people who wanted to participate in food entrepreneurship. Amidst the panel discussions, catered lunch, workshops, guest speakers, pitches for investment money, and product tastings, a singular question raised by a woman about how to participate in the food industry piqued my interest. I sat and heard the panelists of CEOs and the host say the same thing, “do your homework.” Their answers were not addressing her question. That moment struck me as the pivotal point in understanding that the social issue I describe next is systemic. The narrative of hard work and individualism that Silicon Valley weaves into the lives of prospective and current food entrepreneurs was definitely a concern to me as I listened to the question and responses.

The panelists were talking about their experiences to get to the fast track to food success. Naturally, the woman asked about how a friend of hers, a Senegalese man living in Oakland, would participate in the food industry. She explained that this man fled his home in Senegal under persecution based on his sexual orientation. This man does not speak English and works multiple jobs, which explains his absence from the networking event. This man wanted to share his simple love of food and his culture to people, but he doesn’t know where to start. As such, this woman was so compelled to visit the networking event and inquire further on his behalf. He did not have the opportunity to become a business owner of a restaurant because he lacked the

education, language skills, time, and money to invest in learning the regulations, business skills, and process to own a restaurant that is approved by the city and state. Again, all the CEOs who received investment money and the host of the event advised to have the Senegalese man "do his homework."

When I left the networking event that day, I thought about the woman's question and how all these CEO's didn't give sound advice. Do homework. What is this "homework?" As a food science consultant, I should know what this "homework" is, right? I later discovered that the answer to this homework was not easy to find. The latest fads, trends, and food-related talking points are conceptualized and commercialized with a Silicon Valley food and tech culture mindset, which believes that brands and products will shape the world from supermarkets to online grocery stores and from the home kitchen to the restaurant experience. I am at the intersection of it all as a San Francisco Bay Area native, having been born and raised in the heart of Silicon Valley, San Jose, California. Today, I participate as a consultant working behind the scenes in product development, regulatory review, process engineering development, commercialization, supply chain analysis, and financial review to ensure launch and financial stability of many food consumer packaged goods.

As I attempted to do this homework that the CEOs assigned, I discovered the answers were appalling. Silicon Valley food and tech startups are claiming to innovate and disrupt the market. They do it by saturating the market with very similar products and influencing the consumers through a market-driven agenda where consumption of products is the answer to food issues. It is this neoliberal agenda that reproduces, perpetuates, and exacerbates systemic oppression and social inequities via economic injustice. The people in power are controlling and distributing the conditions of production to continually favor those in power. The systemic issue

is integrated in the food system and permeates Silicon Valley. The ideas behind innovation and disruption are just marketing tools that mask the social issues that still need to be addressed. This "homework" that was assigned by the CEOs at the networking event is a lot harder for the people like the Senegalese man to understand and complete.

This thesis aims to look at how Silicon Valley food and tech culture operates in a socially unjust manner through neoliberalism and oppression, and how food democracy can remediate some of the issues. In order to evaluate the social injustice in Silicon Valley, I examine four conditions of production that create food startups from concept to commercialization. This research is for people like the gay Senegalese man or other people who want to participate in food entrepreneurship and don't know how. The hard-working and extra hard-working people who are oppressed through exploitation, marginalization, and or powerlessness have no voice because of how the food system is set up. These people are the ones who want to make a difference in their community and share their love and passion for food but are the same people who have a much more difficult time getting their ideas to the market.

In the following chapters, I demonstrate how neoliberalism, an economic system and ideology that instills ideas that the free market is the only solution to food issues; it reproduces and perpetuates systemic oppression and social inequities in Silicon Valley food and tech culture through controlling and distributing the conditions of production. I also suggest that food democracy is a means to counter neoliberalism and oppression by redistributing the conditions of production so that more people can participate in food entrepreneurship. In Chapter Two, I provide the background of the social inequities and oppression in the food system and significance of those social injustices that shapes Silicon Valley food and tech culture. That is where I also define key terms and consider whether and how social problems that exist in the

food system are reproduced in SV food and tech culture. In Chapter Three, I describe my methods and methodologies that determine what and how I am evaluating my research. It is in this chapter where I also explain my positionality and why my observations and analysis in this thesis are important. In Chapter Four, I explain my results, analyze them, and offer contributions. Chapter Five wraps up with concluding remarks on what key lessons to take away from this research and any thoughts to transition and transform Silicon Valley food and tech culture in a more equitable manner.

Chapter Two

Background and Significance

This chapter explains the background of the thesis by defining and elaborating key terms and concepts in order to understand the significance of the social and research issues in Silicon Valley food and technology (tech) culture. The first section lays out the social problem by introducing social inequities and oppression existing in the current food system. The first section also explains how neoliberalism perpetuates social inequities within the food system. The second section introduces Silicon Valley food and technology (tech) culture and how it capitalizes on neoliberalism to reproduce oppression and social inequities. The third section introduces food democracy as a means of countering the social inequities and oppression that exist in food systems upholding neoliberal practices. The fourth and final section introduces the central research question of my thesis and the constitutive research questions that help address the central research question. I also provide details on how the central research question and constitutive questions relate to the social problems of oppression and social inequities perpetuated by neoliberalism.

Social Problem: Oppression in the Food System

In this section, I explain oppression drawing on Young's (2014) *Five Faces of Oppression*. In Young's work, oppression is categorized into five faces: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Of the five faces, I describe the three most pertinent to the research topic and present one example for each: exploitation, marginalization, and powerlessness in that order (Young 2014, 65 - 66). Each example illustrates one of the many sectors of the food industry exhibiting oppression. Additionally, I explain neoliberalism and how it perpetuates oppression, although neoliberalism is not one of the faces

of oppression itself. Through oppression and neoliberalism, the food system maintains power struggles between social groups which will later be exhibited in Silicon Valley food and tech culture.

Exploitation

One way the food system maintains oppression is exhibited between the power struggles around exploitation between the proletariat, working class, and the bourgeoisie, capitalists. The working class who participate in the food industry, especially in food manufacturing, are offering their labor in exchange for financial stability, which may give power to the capitalists to exploit. The exchange seems to be negotiable, but in fact favors the class controlling the manufacturing facilities and resources. Exploitation is understood to be the "transference of the results of one social group to benefit another" (Young 2014, 61). That is to say that the laborer who offers their services in food manufacturing are benefitting their employer with surplus value; they produce value worth more than their wage. This transactional relationship is unfavorable for the worker as the employer is trying to increase their profits at the expense of the worker.

In the case of Imperial Foods, the Hamlet, North Carolina chicken-processing plant, a fire broke out that killed 25 laborers of 200 and injured another 56 (Harvey 1993, 335). The root cause of the death of the workers stems from the poor working conditions and locked exit doors in the factory. Exploitation is exhibited by how much the workers at the factory gave up to work at the chicken factory. Not only did the workers give up safe and sanitary working conditions, but the workers exchanged their work for minimum wage which was not enough to cover their cost of living (Harvey 1993, 335). Exploitation exists in the food industry where a working class transfers their power in the form of labor in exchange for wages, but these wages are not enough,

given there is little room for raises, added benefits, security, respect, and honor of a life. Often, exploitation is not a tactic that is used alone when oppressing social groups.

Marginalization

In conjunction with exploitation, marginalization is used against a social group to ignore the group's voice and take away their participation in normal affairs. Marginalization is contextualized as one of the harshest forms of oppression; the marginalized social group is "deprived of cultural, practical, and institutionalized conditions for exercising capacities in a context of recognition and interaction" (Young 2014, 64). A dominant social group can take advantage of the situation and preference the dominant group over the marginalized group. The restaurant industry, for example, "traditionally has been populated by marginalized workers with distinct gender (female), ethnic (minority), and age (young or old) characteristics" (Sachs et al. 2014, 6). More specifically, we can look at how women are marginalized in the restaurant industry.

Women play a large role in the front of the house as either a gendered-assigned position, waitress, or as a non-gendered-assigned position, server. The role a waitress plays in the restaurant industry is inequitable based on their wages earned compared to men, in the likelihood of sexual harassment experienced, and in the patriarchal expectations around how a woman dresses or ought to act subserviently. In taking these roles in the restaurant industry, women would face marginalization because their voices would be ignored when compared to men who work in the same field. Women are stereotyped to act in a certain manner and are only likely to be hired based on certain social standards prescribed to women. Their calls for receiving pay equal to men working in the same field go unheard. Furthermore, their voice in addressing sexual harassment goes unheard because of the expectation that women servers fulfill a patriarchal

value of work expected in a domestic setting, "reflect[ing] 'inherent aptitudes' possessed by most women'" (Sachs et al. 2014, 6). The dominant male group take advantage of the situation given that "jobs with a high level of responsibility in the areas of [the] kitchen, and administration are dominated by men'" (Sachs et al. 2014, 6-7). Marginalization exists to limit the participation of women in front of the house work where women are not recognized for their work with equal pay and are only to interact at a lower level of authority. In general, this point about marginalization of women in the restaurant industry serves to illustrate one of many social issues that are integrated into the food industry. Much like exploitation, marginalization is not used independently to maintain oppression.

Powerlessness

Powerless describes situations when one social group is regarded as the authority figure and disregards other social groups. Powerlessness is described as a social group having "little to no work authority, exercise little creativity or judgment, have no technical expertise or authority" (Young 2014, 65-66). In any situation, powerlessness puts some social groups on a pedestal and disregards the powerless. Drawing from analyses of how white racial groups approach organizing food movements, Slocum (2011) assesses how whites put their ideas of what and how a food movement works as a priority over other groups (314). Furthermore, Ramírez (2015) explained how privileged whites believe their ideas apply to all social groups (752). That is to say, the food movement that draws from white ideals and puts aside the credibility and voice or participation of other groups including blacks. The power dynamics between whites and blacks in the agriculture community, for example, influence African American identities through slavery. As part of the black food sovereignty movement, reclaiming farmland empowers the black community by "replanting the seeds of liberation, reconnecting urban black geographies to

the black food geographies that cultivate power through farming" (Ramirez 2015, 759). Because of the history of slavery, black rights movements and black food sovereignty movements focused on empowering their communities to combat powerlessness. As these faces – exploitation, marginalization, and powerlessness – exist as forms of oppression, an ideology takes shape to maintain oppression for those in power. This ideology is neoliberalism, which I explain next subsection.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberal ideologies and practices exacerbate oppression in the food system. Neoliberalism is an ideology rooted in individualism based on market trends that downplays social issues and collective action. Under neoliberalism, the "discourse of rights and entitlements [is] replaced by arguments about individual responsibility" (Allen 2004, 124). The United States exhibits neoliberal practices by "restructuring the economy on both national and local levels" to control its people through control and distribution over resources including land such as office space (Denton 2018, 1). As Durrenberger (2012) points out, neoliberalism makes "people [think that they] need to be flexible to meet the demands of the market" (4). By emphasizing the "free market" as an external force, the people in power maintain control, asserting that there is no alternative in changing the entire system. Further, in a market context, the responsibility of addressing social issues is placed on the individual, not the social group (Fairbairn 2012, 220). Under this ideology, social groups fight amongst each other for the same rights and resources rather than focusing their attention collectively against those in power. Oppression through exploitation, marginalization, and powerlessness takes away the voice and power of social groups fighting for their rights by reinforcing neoliberal ideas based on individualism as the only

means to address issues. Consequently, the general understanding on neoliberalism focuses on individual versus collective dimensions.

Overall, oppression in the food system manifests in every sector, affecting many different social groups. The existence and reproduction of oppression is exhibited in all sectors of the food industry, which is maintained using neoliberalism as a hegemonic value over collective rights of social groups. In the next section, I discuss neoliberal ideology and practice in the context of Silicon Valley.

Silicon Valley Food and Tech Culture: Innovation, Disruption, and the Conditions of Production

In this section, I explore how Silicon Valley (SV) adopts a neoliberal approach to the food system that maintains oppression and social inequities. This happens through a narrative that focuses on individualism rather than collectivism. I begin by defining the conditions of production and how Wood (2012) describes the *Agrarian Origins of Capitalism* that will later applied to SV food and tech culture. Then, I dive into the background of Silicon Valley, explaining how it got its name and its shift toward the contemporary geopolitical climate that defines SV culture. Lastly, I explain how innovation and disruption is understood and implemented in SV culture.

To best understand how the economic system in Silicon Valley functions, I need to first explain the capitalist model and conditions of production. This capitalist model maintains the social structure of two main classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie are the people who own the conditions of production, whereas the proletariat are the laborers who exchange their work for money. Prior to a capitalist model, there existed a feudal system where peasants worked their own lands but gave away their surplus production to other classes (Wood

2012). When transitioning to a capitalist model, the socioeconomic shift meant that the conditions of production or the properties that are inherently owned by the producer were taken away from the producer and given to the appropriator (Wood 2012). This means that the main difference between capitalist and pre-capitalist models is that the people who control the conditions of production changed hands from the laborers to the capitalists. These conditions of production include the land, the labor, the raw materials, and the capital to create the services or goods necessary to survive in the market of a capitalist society (Marx 1887). For the purposes of this thesis, the conditions of production integrate both the factors of production and the means of production under one term and will be used as a larger categorical framework as the basis of understanding the food system.

Much like the agrarian societies shifting to more capitalistic conditions of production, SV mirrors this capitalistic model for the food and tech industry. The culture follows the means of controlling production and hierarchal system between classes (Stolzoff 2018). Those in power control the conditions of production necessary for the viability and sustainability of a business model in the food industry: venture capital to fund food startups; the raw material from ingredients to equipment; the labor through wages that are not suitable for the cost of living in the San Francisco Bay Area; and the land that contains commercial kitchens, food processing facilities, distribution centers, fulfillment warehouses, and office spaces necessary for the start of a business. Representative discourse in Silicon Valley food and tech culture claims SV is going to disrupt the food system with innovative technologies and products. Each conditions of production are used as tools to implement the disruption or innovative approach. What follows are a breakdown of the conditions of production. The historical relevance in the name behind Silicon Valley provides insight as to how these conditions of productions are used. In Silicon

Valley, like many places, those in power control the conditions for production that I explore next, starting with capital and moving on to labor, land, and entrepreneurship.

Capital

In the context of this thesis, capital is seen as a transferrable object that establishes a power dynamic. Within Silicon Valley, capital is concentrated in the hands of venture capitalists and investment firms. These VCs invest their capital in enterprises that are likely to innovate or disrupt the market in such a way that there is a high return on investment. The selection process goes through rounds of funding or seeding where entrepreneurs will pitch or present their progress on the development of their innovative or disruptive technologies. The control and distribution of capital determines who is in power and who is powerless.

Capital is vital to the functions of SV; it encompasses the entire manufacturing process from concept to commercialization with multiple social relations within the process (Holt-Giménez 2017, 75). The first relationship is between the startup, and the venture capitalist (VC) who decides which startup receives capital and how much to distribute. The second relationship is between the employer and the employee within the startup. When discussing entrepreneurship and capital, I focus more on the second relationship between the VCs and the enterprises. When I discuss labor or the labor force needed for the development of these products, I focus more on the relationship between the employer and employee. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the VCs are leveraging their power through capital to influence how a startup company is able to "create useful values, but [more] specifically expand capital by creating a profit" (Braverman 2012, 53). Entrepreneurship, which will be explained further in its own subsection, focuses on human capacity to transform a concept to commercialized products, but all that the VC cares about in the end product making profits, not the use values created by the startup and its staff.

Land

Unlike labor, land and the resources on the land are owned and used, not always exchanged. Land and what are on the land is what helps create the commodities that can be sold in the market. The land in SV is scarce – from office space to manufacturing space. The land to create food products are in direct competition with land that houses people, government, and other sectors of the economy. In this sense, land is about private property that "confers monopoly ownership rights" (Holt-Giménez 2017, 84). The landowners who own the kitchens and manufacturing facilities dictate how much usage of space costs to maximize profits. With limited space in SV, the worth of the property is much higher than what a lot of people including entrepreneurs can afford (Holt-Giménez 2017, 99). Often as a result, shared spaces including the kitchens and offices are common in SV. Additionally, what is on the land is valuable. The factories, equipment, farms, tools, and infrastructure are what transform raw materials into commodities. In another sense, land also incorporates the raw materials and tools necessary to create added value products for profit. Those in power understand property rights such that they determine who has access to land and what value the land has. With a neoliberal mindset of an individual entity owning exclusive rights to land, accessibility is limited to fewer enterprises – those with access to capital.

Labor

In any type of capitalist system such as SV, labor is used as an exchange value between the employee and the enterprise. The value a person creates in transforming a raw material into a value-added product as a commodity is called surplus value (Holt-Giménez 2017, 75). This surplus value provides the profits necessary to reinvest into the business and to pay the entrepreneur, and the VCs who are the shareholders of the company. Because the VCs control

the capital and determine how an enterprise runs their business through access to resources necessary in creating commodities, the entrepreneurial founding member(s) are hard pressed in figuring out methods to providing surplus value to appease the shareholders (Cameron et al. 2013, 70). Perks and salaries, not coercion, control labor values. This exchange of a salary, benefits, and perks are offered to incentivize the workforce. However, the enterprise needs to maintain profits to survive. The agreed upon wage between the employer and the employee benefits the employer because the surplus value created beyond the wage and cost of production will be kept in the control of the entrepreneur for decision-making on distribution or use. The workers for the enterprise give up their voice on surplus value through a salary contract, which does not compensate for overtime pay. The individual contracts per employer prevents the collective powers of the working class from banding together to negotiate a fair wage much like a union.

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is the social standing or the human capacity to transform a concept to commercial good. The founders of a startup company bring some value to the enterprise, influenced by their social standing and identities based on characteristics including race, gender, orientation, class, able-body, age, and many other identities that add perspective. SV seems to have entrepreneurs who are mostly cis, heterosexual, white men. There are a few exceptions, but most of the food and tech startups are founded by one social group. Under a neoliberal model, these entrepreneurs believe in their success solely on their individual skill sets and don't recognize the hard work of other social groups that are exploited, marginalized, and disempowered (Cameron et al. 2013, 60). It is important to note that the entrepreneur is not a component of the conditions of production, but the entrepreneur's value from their knowledge,

character, and idea contributes to the viability of the enterprise. This value can be influenced through capital, the process in developing their concepts to commercialization.

In addition to understanding the conditions of production that are fundamental for the manufacturing process in SV food and tech culture, innovation and disruption, as jargon, are used to create an approach to thinking of how to use the conditions of production. The discourse on innovation and disruption in SV food and tech culture is used to expand market initiatives. Innovation references a technological advancement that would be implemented at a commercial scale (Delfassy 2018). Innovation does not necessarily mean a new technology is used; instead, innovation is used more frequently as a marketing term. The term disruption is also used to describe a marketing tactic. Disruption, however, takes innovation a step further and makes radical changes to the industry, with the "intersection of knowledge and exploration" serving as the primary motives (Zinn 2017). In short, disruption has been understood to be a technology or tool that challenges the current food system by changing the system. Again, innovation and disruption make up the core of SV food and tech discourse. This approach is reflected in the history of the name.

Silicon Valley started with technological advancement in computer hardware where silicon was heavily used to transfer information digitally. The transition of silicon used as transistors for integrated chips started with portable radios and moved to "computers, mainframes, smartphones, and the facilitation of the internet" (Zinn 2017). These innovations led to the disruption of industries where the "the old order is no longer the way things will be done" (Zinn 2017). The successes and transformational shift in Silicon Valley stemmed from the hardware or tangible pieces, silicon in particular. Further advancements in the field of computers allowed for a rapid phase of change, as in industrialization, where technologies radically changed

society to the point where those who adapted and adopted quickly were able to position themselves as part of the elite or those in power. Over time, the elite concentrated their power and formed large corporations that dominated their field at the expense of the working class. The idea of working in SV was exemplified by the lavish and unique lifestyles of the wealthy elites in the San Francisco Bay Area. They determined the rules of SV culture. Those who have not adapted to their rules are susceptible to being disempowered or further oppressed.

SV food and tech culture mirrors the conventional food system. As power is concentrated, the maintenance of the power dynamics necessitates full control of the conditions of production. In order to do so, those in power had to reorient the approach from fixating on short term and individual solutions to fixing a systemic issue. Whereas other industries move digitally, "food production remains tediously old-fashioned" where there is a lack of focus on the "operational minutia and complexities involved in the food supply chain" (Delfassy 2018). Food entrepreneurs focus more on the finished product that can be sold in the market. These focuses stemmed from the neoliberal model in an economic system. Individuals would fight for resources in the market share in an increasingly saturated market. Instead of enterprises focusing their attention on creating a systemic approach to addressing issues, enterprises are encouraged to create new products in the same system. VCs will put resources to brands and products that are more likely to make more profit, including sparkling water. The same system of oppression continues to exist regardless of what innovative product has been created such as sugary soda replacement with sparkling water (Stolzoff 2018). The illusion of disruption through innovation maintains the same inequitable food system. That is not to say there are not innovations, but the innovations are reproducing the same systemic issues by focusing on replacing old products with new products. Even though SV claims to innovate and disrupt, there is no clarity that the

innovations and disruptions are challenging the food system on a systemic level that addresses oppression and inequity. Therefore, it is important to understand how the ontology or existence of SV culture became what it is today. This is not to say that innovation and disruption are inherently malicious or aims that exacerbate social issues. Rather, how SV uses innovation and disruption has social ramifications that need to be understood to deliver an equitable system. There are indeed systemic issues within SV food and tech culture which promote neoliberal ideals that reproduce oppression and social inequities. However, the SV food and tech model are not the only model that exists. Innovation and disruption can be used in a different framework to allow for alternative models that are more democratic, such as food democracy, which I discuss next.

Food Democracy

In this section, I will introduce food democracy as an alternative model to neoliberal approaches that maintain the oppression and social inequities of the food system. I will provide a broad definition of food democracy and then explain five dimensions important in the identification of food democracy. I will describe how the food democracy movement is used as a tool to counteract the neoliberal and oppressive food system.

Food democracy looks at the food system and aims to empowers majority of people rather than a select minority of wealthy elites to contribute to the decision-making process of food production (Norwood 2015, 1-2). The goal of food democracy is to limit the powers of the elites by reintroducing the ideas of collective strategies. Food democracy is empowering social groups who have been oppressed by supporting collective action over neoliberal policies. Instead of focusing on the narrative where the market forces allow a few individuals who can succeed as

determined under neoliberalism, food democracy focuses on the broader social issues including human rights, safe food production, and social equity.

More specifically, the formation of a democratic food movement needs to consider five key dimensions. Hassanein (2008) explains that not all five dimensions of food democracy are necessary, but a combination of the following elements are important: "collaborating toward food system sustainability, becoming knowledgeable about food and food system, sharing ideas about the food system with others, developing efficacy with respect to foods and the food system, and acquiring an orientation toward the community good" (289-291). In the following subsections, I describe each of the five dimensions and provide an example for several of these, as articulated in Hassanein's (2008) work.

Collaborating Sustainably

In order to establish a food democracy that is sustainable, we need to look beyond the individual enterprise. We need to look at how to build a network of for-profit, non-profit, government, and voluntary institutions to work together for a communal cause. This collaborative effort requires active participation and civil discourse among and between the relationships of each institution. This means that every participant in the food system from institution to the individual will hold each other accountable to continue for a sustainable goal through long term planning.

An example of a collaborative effort within a food system is to look at the local network established in Montana. PEAS, Program in Ecological Agriculture and Society, is a voluntary program in exchange for academic university credit offered to both undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Montana's Environmental Studies Program that works closely with Garden City Harvest, a non-profit that manages and distributes produce on a farm and Missoula

Food Bank (Hassanein 2008, 291-292). What started off as a project to increase access to healthy food to students and the community turned into a local food movement that addressed environmental goals, economic sustainability within the supply chain, and access to food. All of this work was through a collaborative role of community members working together in achieving what their goals were in Montana.

Becoming Knowledgeable

The introduction chapter of this thesis described the "assignment" that the CEOs of food startups assigned as "homework". This "homework" was the gathering of knowledge in understanding more about food and the food systems that inhabit the different regions and the whole of the United States of America. This gap in knowledge among consumers and participants in the United States is what divides the empowered and powerless where powerful agri-food complexes determine the decision-making of food production and consumption (Hassanein 2008). This element of a food democracy takes back control of the decision-making process in the food system. That means empowering ourselves with knowledge about any part of the food chain or any food debate. The truth that is sought out in breaking down the complex food system will bring about more informed participation and thoughtfulness in creating a sustainable food system where people don't need to do extensive "homework" or be told to do "homework" when the lesson was held a secret.

Sharing Ideas

The information that was withheld by the CEOs at the panel demonstrated individualism and the idea that entrepreneurship rewards the hardworking based on merit. However, the hard work initially done conflicts with the truth that there are finite resources (Cameron et al. 2013, 50). Additionally, the success of an enterprise was not created by an individual, but rather

through a collective group that do not receive the same benefits as the individual (Cameron et al. 2013, 50). Dissemination of information allows for participants to participate equitably in the food system such that the shared information mitigate social injustices. Healthy competition is necessary to push for innovation, but in doing so, we limit the amount of innovation and disruption by concentrating on a few perspectives for research and development on novel technologies and ideas. Instead of a neoliberal approach, dissemination of information allows for redistribution of entrepreneurship to more than just one social group to equitably participate in the entrepreneurial space bringing about a social based approach and encouraging the collaborative process to further knowledge.

Developing Efficacy

In order to sustain food democracy as a movement, the collaborative efforts of the community must practice their learnings. The continued active participation and involvement builds momentum to challenge hegemony narrated by large corporations who control and influence the market. To counter these forces, the community must understand their individual and social roles and establish the conditions of production by respecting social groups and respecting the finite amount of resources available for production (Hassanein 2008, 290). By creating thresholds for enterprises that work with and not exploit the system, food democracy can gain enough momentum to create a revolution that makes significant change.

Orienting Toward the Community Good

This significant change in thinking from neoliberalism to food democracy comes in the form of a revolution. In establishing and reaffirming community values through sharing, developing, respecting, and participating, a stronger democratic force emerges that can challenge the hegemony where well-being for a community over self-interests are emphasized (Hassanein

2008, 291). This solidarity ensures that everyone's voices are heard and that the control of the food system is in the hands of everyone involved in the food supply chain. Food democracy recognizes that the sustainability of the food system relies both on a community and the entire process of the food supply chain is integral to transformation.

Hopefully, introducing food democracy will allow for more consideration of collaborating sustainably, becoming more knowledgeable, sharing ideas, developing efficacy, and orienting toward the community good. This orientation may present an alternate food system that is socially just and representative of more meaningful innovation and disruption. The shift of thinking from the individual to the social may help give back the voice and power to oppressed groups. In learning about food democracy, I hope to use it as a tool to empower entrepreneurs in SV culture to level the playing field in entering and participating in the food and tech space. This form of empowerment through entrepreneurship is, for example, exhibited in Oakland where community members are fighting gentrification by creating their own local food enterprises to provide a voice for the community in opposition to the development of new housing that would displace long time community members (Alkon 2018). Food democracy offers a solution for activists to participate in the economy and challenge oppression in the same economic system. By addressing neoliberalism head on and providing an alternative course of action and thought, food democracy engages in social work and advocacy that can demonstrate long term solutions of social equity. Food democracy empowers oppressed groups to participate in their food system through the five dimensions: collaborating sustainably, being more knowledgeable, sharing ideas, developing efficacy, and orienting toward the community good. In the next section, I describe my research problem and questions, which focus on this conflict between oppression in the food system reproduced by neoliberalism and food democracy.

Central Research Problem and Constitutive Research Questions

In this section, I describe my research's central research problem. This research addresses power asymmetry among social groups by evaluating distribution of resources because I want to understand how food business opportunities can be made more accessible to more participants. I want to understand how SV perpetuates or challenges food system inequities so that increased participation can increase access to opportunity in creating food and tech startups. Again, my theoretical approach is looking through the lenses of neoliberalism and food democracy to understand how these concepts are used and can be used in the food system to create more equitable opportunities and outcomes.

My overall research question asks, how are social inequities in Silicon Valley addressed or reproduced through SV innovation and disruption in the food system? In order to understand this complex issue, I ask three constitutive research questions. My first constitutive research question asks how are resources accessed within the SV food and tech space? This question focuses on who is involved, what resources exist and how those resources are distributed. Barriers to and opportunities for accessing resources are foundational to power dynamics and equity in society and help illustrate whether and how the faces of oppression are present. Understanding how this happens in SV, given its focus on innovation and disruption in the food system, is important if we are to find ways to innovate in ways that advance food system equity and justice, rather than just enact neoliberal forms of engagement with the food system. Once addressed, I will move on to ask how food democracy might address the limitations of a neoliberal approach.

My second constitutive research question asks how are people in Silicon Valley working to implement more food democracy and economically just enterprises in the food and tech

space? These resources are the same as the conditions of production controlled by the elites in SV culture as explained above: capital, land, labor, and entrepreneurship. Understanding equitable models of resource distribution is important for bridging the gap between contemporary SV culture and a more just, equitable, and accessible food system. I evaluate existing models within Silicon Valley, but also look outside of SV to see if there are lessons that can be drawn from the successes and failures of other food democracy movements.

My third constitutive research question asks, how might SV move toward more equitable innovation and disruption in the food and tech space? By assessing different efforts in food democracy and groups addressing oppression and neoliberalism, SV may learn how to contribute to a more equitable food system and redefine innovation and disruption. With a better understanding of the key terms and points of contention, the next chapter dives deeper into how I approach these social issues and my research problem in terms of methodology and methods.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Methods

This chapter explains the methods and methodologies used to address my research problem and questions. My research addresses power asymmetry among social groups by evaluating distribution of resources because I want to understand how food business opportunities can be made more accessible to more participants. The next section of this chapter details the methodologies, content analysis and critical inquiry, used to address my research questions. I follow up with my positionality which indicates why and how I chose the scope of my work: Silicon Valley. In the last section of the chapter I discuss the methods used to answer my constitutive research questions. Methods used apply the frameworks conditions of production, neoliberalism, and food democracy. In the methodology section, I explain the two principles that helped me understand how to approach my research topic.

Methodology

This section details the methodologies I used to address my research problem and questions which are content analysis and critical inquiry. I define each and explain its relevance to my research problem in what follows. I chose critical inquiry as a methodology because it looks at human action, connecting actions to the social constructs; critical inquiry allows me to look at the motives that reproduce or mitigate oppression (Comstock 1994, 628). The goal of critical inquiry is to ground theories, like those on oppression, with applications, like the conditions of production (Comstock 1994). In other words, critical inquiry uncovers the relationships, meanings, and contradictions in current society and actively engages in movements to address the contradictions. What made critical inquiry important to my research is that this thesis is not just theory but application. Critical inquiry allowed me to analyze the relationships

between social groups in SV food and tech culture and the contradictions in their discourse. Specifically, I used critical inquiry in order to interpret the context of neoliberal policies and the food democracy movements in and out of Silicon Valley.

I chose content analysis as a methodology because it provided a set of tools for analyzing the data collected. Bengtsson (2016) states that "purpose of content analysis is to organize and elicit meaning from the data collected and draw realistic conclusions from it" (8). What made content analysis useful was that it allowed me to interpret the information about SV food and tech culture and ground the ideas to address social issues. Content analysis is used in the context of a summative approach where I look at the presence and use of keywords such as food democracy and interpret the context of food democracy in its application in and out of SV culture (Hsieh 2005). Specifically, I used this methodology to show how food democracy is important to addressing neoliberalism and oppression in SV culture.

Positionality

In this section, I describe my positionality and why my position is pertinent to the SV food and tech culture. I grew up and eventually worked in and around the San Francisco Bay Area in the food manufacturing space. I started out at a large conglomerate supplier of confectionery products and moved into a medium-sized chocolate factory. I ended up working for a couple of consulting firms, from large to boutique. In a span of 5 years, I worked small gigs in consulting and startups before founding my own consulting firm. I am the senior managing partner of my own firm with several contractors assisting me in different departments from food safety to research and development. I worked hand in hand with entrepreneurs, small family owned businesses, medium sized companies, and large conglomerates in making sure their food products are commercially viable. My understanding of the food industry as a participant within

the space and place gives me insight into critiquing the issues within the food and tech startup culture.

Methods

This section describes the two methods used for each CRQ. As explained in the background and significance, all the CRQs start with understanding how the conditions of production in a capitalist system are distributed in Silicon Valley. Under the CRQ1 subsection, I explain the conditions of production as a framework for all CRQs. Then, I discuss neoliberalism as the second framework used specifically to address CRQ1. Continuing to CRQ2, I build upon the conditions of production framework as explained in CRQ1 with the food democracy framework. Regarding CRQ3, I looked at the next steps for SV and draw from the faces of oppression and food democracy as the frameworks to address the question.

CRQ1: How are resources accessed within SV food and tech space?

To address this question, I needed data on SV food and tech startups' interaction with the conditions of production. I used my food consulting network and screening through the trade shows, investment pitching events, food and tech newsletters, my local food science trade organization chapter meetings, and networking events around SV. Marketing organizations were extremely helpful in locating updated information on the latest food startup. At any food event in the area, marketing collateral, keynote speeches, seminar notes, and panelist discussions guided the search to specific trends, tips, and company websites for more data. Specifically, I looked for food and tech companies that were reproducing one of the faces of oppression, following neoliberal practices, or fall under one of the conditions of production. I organized the data into categories representing the conditions of production: entrepreneurship, capital, land, and labor. After categorizing the food and tech companies into each condition of production, I analyzed and

addressed how SV reproduces and perpetuates the faces of oppression through exploitation, marginalization, and powerlessness. The second constitutive research question referenced food democracy as a method in addition to conditions of production.

CRQ2: How are people in Silicon Valley working to implement more economically just enterprises in the food and tech space?

To address this question, I needed data on enterprises engaging with food democracy dimensions. My process was searching for workshops, non-profit organizations, and incubator spaces that are open to figuring out how to help social groups struggling to get into the food business. Small business associations offered by each city provide additional support for knowledge and consultation. Libraries offered free workshops for individuals or families who are interested with limited information. Non-profits and incubator or accelerator spaces were identified to provide a cost effective and flexible path for social groups who don't have the means to tap into a network or afford their own space. I organized the data on different enterprises by searching for how the enterprises met one or more of the following dimensions: collaborating sustainably, being knowledgeable, sharing ideas, developing efficacy, and orienting toward community good. After categorizing data into each condition of production, I analyzed and addressed how SV is working to take on the faces of oppression of exploitation, marginalization, and powerlessness through food democracy.

CRQ3: How might SV move toward more equitable innovation and disruption in the food and tech space?

The third constitutive research question is addressed in the contributions section of Chapter Four and drew from all methodological frameworks: conditions of production,

neoliberalism, and food democracy. To answer the question, I referenced the results and analysis from CRQ1 and CRQ2 as my data. I assessed the insights from CRQ1 to demonstrate what not to reproduce in SV. Comparatively, I looked at the insights from CRQ2 to demonstrate what can improve. Then, I applied both insights to a new case study implementing food-focused economic development programs. The case study takes place in San Jose, the heart of SV and was analyzed using content analysis focused on food entrepreneurship. In the next chapter, I answer my research questions.

Chapter Four

Results, Analysis, and Contribution

This research addresses SV food and tech culture such that I evaluate the conditions of production, neoliberalism, and food democracy as tools engaged in power dynamics between social groups. My first constitutive research question asks how are resources accessed within SV food and tech space. My second constitutive research question asks how are people in SV working to implement more economically just enterprises in the food and tech space. My third constitutive research question acts as the contribution and asks how might SV move toward a more equitable innovation and disruption in the food and tech space.

This chapter explains the results, analysis, and contribution that respond to my research questions. First, I describe the results and analysis for RQ1 which demonstrate the current distribution of the conditions of production and the neoliberal policies that perpetuate the faces of oppression. Then, I describe the results and analysis for RQ2 which demonstrate how food democracy is a method to redistribute the conditions of production and address the faces of oppression. Lastly, I address RQ3 in the contribution section which explain the next steps for SV with a case study of a city in the heart of SV, San Jose. In that section, I assess the current neoliberal trajectory of the programs planned for San Jose's food entrepreneurs and then I consider the potential of food democracy implementation as an alternative model. I conclude the chapter with considerations on how to improve current approaches to food democracy.

Results and Analysis for Research Question 1

In this section, I explain the results for RQ1 and present an analysis that describes how and why resources in SV are distributed as they are. I organize the data on the conditions of production into four categories: entrepreneurship, capital, land, and labor. I start with capital to

see what companies or ideas get the most funding. I transition to talk about the land to see the distribution of resources in terms of raw materials such as ingredients and equipment and manufacturing space including commercial kitchens and co-manufacturing facilities. Then, I talk about labor in terms of how a laborer is treated by an entrepreneur and how good talent is accessed by the selected companies who are the majority demographic that receive large amounts of funding and have access to many land resources. Lastly, I talk about entrepreneurship which takes into account all the other conditions of production, from concept of the food idea to commercialization of the products that will be sold in the market. Among the wealth of resources for the conditions of production as an entrepreneur, I discover the difficulties in accessibility and how these challenges affect social groups.

Under each subsection on the condition of production, I analyze the data to explain how the current system is set up to reproduce and perpetuate oppression. I reference how the control or ownership over the conditions of production and its distribution exhibit exploitation, marginalization, and powerlessness. I uncover how neoliberalism is used as a tool to perpetuate and reproduce the oppressive narrative given that those empowered will maintain the conditions of production to their advantage.

Capital

Under the capital category, I explore who controls capital and how it is distributed by illustrating with examples in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors. Capital is highly valued in SV because capital, including monetary funds is used to build companies who use the capital to purchase raw materials, labor, and use of land. An example of how much resources are available includes the data on SV venture capitalists investing their capital in their idea of the next big innovation, the disruption of the meat industry, through alternative analogs. These analogs are

food products that are made to mimic meat from other sources, namely vegetables. One such startup company is JUST Foods, a plant-based alternative to meat company that first launched an eggless mayonnaise product. Another example that I will reference is Impossible Foods where they use technology to produce a plant-based burger that bleeds. An example of how much capital is invested into plant-based proteins is looking at JUST Foods receiving $150 million and Impossible Foods receiving $75 million in a given year (Williams 2018). Rounds or series investments are open to interested parties, namely the venture capitalists. In a given time frame, there is a pitch of how much capital is asked from a startup company where the startup like JUST or Impossible Foods receives millions of dollars of funding for their business model. There are plenty of opportunities for any entrepreneur to receive financial capital but the accessibility to the finances are limited by investors.

Aside from plant-based, alternative meat companies that get large funds are cellular agriculture where animal cells are taken from live animals as humanely as possible and mass produced in a lab. There are non-profits who fundraise to assist cell agriculture companies. One of which is New Harvest, a non-profit that helps food and tech startups in the biotechnology space to create animal products like meat, eggs, or dairy in a lab where New Harvest allocates about 57% or $362,698.98 of its expenses into other companies' research (2018a). The non-profit puts its attention into the marketing of technological advancements in pursuing new methods to create meat without the living organism needing to be slaughtered. As such, a large amount of capital is necessary to support a few companies who wish to participate in this field. Even non-profits have managed to fundraise a lot of money for a select few recipients which is only accessible to startups that fulfill a very niche market. The evidence show that capital is concentrated and distributed to a select few startup companies.

Here, I analyze the data on capital and demonstrate how the data reproduces oppression. Powerlessness is exhibited in the relationship between the donors and the recipients of capital where the empowered are the donors and the powerless are the recipients. Both JUST Foods and Impossible Foods were competing among other startup pitches in order to get the necessary funding to scale their businesses which meant that the power dynamics were in the hands of their investors whom accumulated massive amounts of wealth in order to support millions of dollars of investment. What the data suggest is that there is a lot of capital, including financial support that can be offered to many different entrepreneurs, but the key decision-making process of who receives the funding and how much is received is determined by the venture capitalist. The narrative involved in SV is that the entrepreneur who pitches the best idea with the most innovative or disruptive idea for a return on investment would receive ample amount of capital. That strategy is neoliberal which espouses individualism and market forces as the answer to social issues (Allen 2004, 124).

These new eggless products or burger patties that bleed is only to replace eggs and burger patties which serves as a façade to maintain power dynamics. In other words, the empowered are deciding the future of food innovation. Even if we are to look at non-profits as exhibited by New Harvest, there still exists power dynamics, albeit to a lesser degree of magnitude in monetary exchange. New Harvest replaces the direct involvement of a venture capitalist by taking in donations and supporting startup companies with the donations without the influence of the donor. However, the power dynamic still exists in that the criteria of receiving funding fulfills a niche market of cell agriculture that does not address social issues. Rather, social inequities like powerlessness are reproduced such that there is a narrower field of startups who can apply and receive funding. New Harvest is indirectly a part of the power dynamics by serving to limit

funding to only cell agriculture food startups. This is not to say that the technologies developed or conceptualized should not be allowed to participate in the market, but the data serves to demonstrate that the power dynamics feeds into maintaining the current power structure where those in power decide what companies receive funding. If capital was received by more entrepreneurs, the next condition of production, land, presents another set of barriers of entry.

Land

Under the land category, I explore how the resources related to land are distributed. The resources are primarily access to raw materials and space for production which both require land. One company that takes advantage of the available land-related resources is Perfect Day Foods whose mission is to create milk without the cow. As it turns out, Perfect Day Foods received funding from New Harvest as Perfect Day fulfills the criteria of creating alternative proteins using innovations. Using New Harvest's infrastructure, Perfect Day teamed up with ADM, a global food commodities processor and supplier, to scale Perfect Day's innovative cow-free milk proteins. The partnership allows Perfect Day Foods to use ADM's fermentation infrastructure to scale up Perfect Day's innovation and "tap into a growing market that increased 61% in the last five years" (Bandoim 2018). Capital was not enough for Perfect Day Foods to be able to sustain themselves in the market. So, Perfect Day had to reach out and receive support from a large corporation for land-related infrastructure resources. Among all examples found, the distribution of the available resources is allocated to companies who have innovative ideas that show promise for differentiating products against competitors in a saturated space. In other words, these companies receiving capital from those in power are also more likely to access land-related resources.

Another example of land-based resource use in SV is Pilotworks, a for-profit organization that controlled the raw materials and land at their commissary kitchen space. The model that was set up by Pilotworks was supposed to democratize food entrepreneurship by providing resources to a more diverse group of participants. These participants were marginalized groups including people of color, women, and other minority groups who own their food enterprises. The program ultimately failed and went out of business, which, in turn, put more than 175 companies in jeopardy (Carbine 2018). Chew Innovation Labs bought the rights to the space to try and salvage the situation, but ultimately, the company was unable to forecast a profit and stopped the project (Albrecht 2018a). The distribution or access of resources was restricted where many startup companies relied on niche organizations like Pilotworks. When Pilotworks shut down, the companies had no back up location to turn to for their businesses to continue to run. Overall, access to land and land-based infrastructure is limited to select few businesses and is decided by the landowners at the expense of the participants in the food space. Next, I provide another example of how neoliberal approaches use land to further marginalize social groups.

Since land is perceived to have value that can be used for profits, Soylent, one of the companies that made massive success in the market, is now using its own capital to create its own innovation lab for other companies (Ellingson 2018). Essentially, Soylent started off as one of many startup companies and transformed itself with its success into a provider of resources because of the profits they predicted. It is important to note that Soylent's founder is a white male who received massive amounts of capital, an example of marginalization, which will be further detailed in the entrepreneurship subsection. More importantly, the closure of Pilotworks

exposed to the public a social injustice that will not be addressed as is exhibited with Soylent's accelerator program.

By illustrating how land ownership influences SV food and tech culture and opportunities, I demonstrate how land ownership reproduces powerlessness. The land is valuable such that the owners of the land can generate profits. The evidence showed that the land owners are in power whereas the entrepreneurs who need to use the land for producing the food products are powerless. In the SV context, accelerators and incubators have equipment and networks put in place to provide added value to the land so that enterprises don't have to spend their resources on buying everything from scratch. As seen in the case with Perfect Day Foods, access to these facilities are limited to selected few enterprises where these enterprises not only have to show that their innovations are worthy of receiving capital, but also worthy enough to use land resources, which comes at a cost. Demonstrating worthiness, however, depends on initial access to capital, which is limited to privileged as discussed in the previous section on capital. Capital is exclusively determined by the neoliberal elites' idea of what merits are deemed worthy for a brand to receive capital.

The cost of powerlessness can also be revisited with the recent shutdown of the facilities at Pilotworks where none of the 175 entrepreneurs were able to participate in voicing their concerns or opinions (Carbine 2018). The repercussions of a neoliberal model exhibit the social groups of a working class being powerless in the decision-making for the use of resources, land, and future of their own businesses. During the aftermath of Pilotworks bankruptcy, more of the same land ownership type programs were created or strengthened. In the case of Soylent, the participation in providing services and resources from their land allowed for new enterprises to fill in the space that was left behind by Pilotworks, without consideration of powerlessness and

marginalization. What Soylent did was reproduce the same social inequities through power dynamics in exploitation by becoming investors or venture capitalists for other brands which would have to give up their equity in order to participate in the food industry. Once enterprises figure out how to obtain capital and land-related resources for their food startup, these enterprises need to look at how to obtain labor to develop and commercialize their products.

Labor

Under the labor category, I explore the relationship between human labor and entrepreneurs in SV. Consider JUST Foods and their huge scandal and mistreatment of employees, even with more than $150 million of investment money. JUST, the eggless alternative brand, is having "trouble" with funding amidst all their scandals which include many management-level employees getting let go, severance pay cuts, a sex scandal between the CEO and secretary, and numerous allegations of unfair treatment (Rainey 2017). The power dynamic between the founding team of entrepreneurs and their employees is the same as any other business entity in a capitalist system where surplus value from the workers benefits the employer more than the laborer. With more than $150 million of investments, JUST foods as with any other well-funded enterprise would be able to offer a high salary than enterprises without significant funding. This higher wage would entice prospective talents to generate surplus value that would provide a return on investment for the venture capitalists. What is established and reproduced is a model that is no different than any other capitalist, for-profit organization. Power dynamics are reproduced from the employer, JUST Foods, and its employees. The problem is not individualistic. The issue is systemic such that the University of California, Berkeley created a food systems program that educates its students on social issues. This program also includes extracurricular activities such as hosting a career panel. At the 2018 career panel, students were

told about how to get a job through persevering as an individual and were offered solutions that were market-oriented (2018b). Under this neoliberal ideology, students graduating from a prestigious university that is situated in the midst of SV food and tech culture are institutionalized to think about exchanging their labor for work at one of the panelists' companies. Those companies are chosen by venture capitalists that drive the market.

Here, I analyze the information provided under sub-section of labor. Regarding JUST Foods' evidence above, I expand on the exploitation grounded in the established power dynamics. Capital received by JUST Foods is controlled and maintained by the executive team which established the power dynamics of the decision-making process of controlling labor. Exploitation is involved when those in power exert their decision-making policies to affect the labor value of their workforce. The evidence to cut severance pay and poor working conditions is exploitation because the workforce had no say in the decision-making process of their own wages. Furthermore, the lessons on economic exchange values that are taught at institutions such as UC Berkeley are reproducing and institutionalizing the idea that labor value is only as important if hard work was applied. During the career panel, the narrative explained by the prospective employers demonstrated power dynamics that subverts exploitation through neoliberalism. After discussing the conditions of production that is necessary from concept to commercialization, I can elaborate on the most crucial condition of production, entrepreneurship which uses capital, land, and labor to create the products.

Entrepreneurship

Under the entrepreneurship category, I discover who make up the participants in the food entrepreneurial space. In 2017, Ninety-nine food and beverage investments totaling to $1.08 billion were made where a majority of the companies receiving capital were composed of white

men (Williams 2018). Among all the participating food entrepreneurs, most of the founders are dominated by one social group. In 2018, *Forbes* released a statement about 25 companies winning an innovation award. This award listed out a similar demographic where the 25 startup companies consisted of a founding team of mostly white men followed by white women (Caldbeck 2018). There is lack of evidence in a more evenly distributed and diverse background of founders in SV. These opportunities to engage in entrepreneurship do not seem to include a large majority of women, people of color, and other minority social groups. The focus of entrepreneurship is based on the innovation and disruption model where the idea, not the founder is the focus of discussion. This same focus on innovation and disruption subverts the marginalized people who want to participate in the same food system. An example of marginalization in the food industry includes "the acquisition of natural and organic food startups – helmed by mostly young, mostly college-educated, mostly white co-founders" (Noble 2018). More specifically, Epic bison bars who were owned by that demographic were provided more capital than their competitor, Tanka Bars made by Native Americans under a food sovereignty approach (Noble 2018). In particular, the mostly white co-founders are more likely to receive the capital, land, and labor to be successful in the market.

To address marginalization, I analyze here the results of this sub-section on entrepreneurship. Under entrepreneurship, I discuss how alternative to animal companies which are both founded by cis heterosexual white men with privileged backgrounds. The founder of JUST graduated from Cornell whereas the founder of Impossible Foods was a professor at Stanford. Let us not forget the founder of Soylent, the company that is using its own capital and land to create an incubator space for profit-making. With prestige and access to a wealth of networks, these men were able to amass millions of dollars for their own companies based on the

marketing that they can shift consumer habits from eating meat to eating their meat analog products or meal replacement products. Their success stories align with the neoliberal model that individuals can become successful with an idea given that they enter the market at the right time and right place. With the help of venture capitalists who believe in their mission, their companies can change the world. It seems peculiar that these men can accrue so much funding based on their ideas and hard work but that the same cannot be applied across most other startup companies.

Given that there is preference of one social group in SV food and tech culture, marginalization is reflected in the lack of media coverage on the Tanka bars and the limited access to the conditions of production, capital, land, and labor. Recall that marginalization exists to limit the participation of the oppressed. Tanka bars are no exception. The success of Epic bars founded by white people comes at the expense of people of color or in this case, Native Americans. If these companies who are ran by mostly white men are able to amass millions of dollars for their companies, then surely, there is enough funding to go around to other social groups, let alone distribute the current capital to support them. Those in power retain their power by deciding who is likely to return their investments or more specifically, who is likely to keep them in power. What remains a social inequity is that other social groups do not have the opportunity to participate in a similar fashion. This claim is not to discredit the innovation and disruption that has been put forth from these enterprises. Rather, what I want to point out is that there should be an equitable solution by a change in the food system through the process on how capital, land, and labor is distributed and which entrepreneurs receive them.

Thus far, powerless is exhibited throughout the conditions of production where capital and land access positions some entrepreneurs to be powerless. In turn, the already-existing

entrepreneurs display their own power by exploiting their own workforce to maintain return on investments for the entrepreneurs' investors which only serves to mirror the actions of those in power. The powerful carefully choose which candidates who will return their investments with some profits as well as maintain the investors' social status. Typically, the decision-making process marginalizes social groups that do not align with the same standards that fulfill a homogenous SV food and tech culture. Now that we understand that oppression is exhibited through the relationships established within the conditions of production, we can look to food democracy as a way to counterbalance the social inequities and oppression.

Results and Analysis for Research Question 2

In this section, I explain the results for RQ2, which demonstrate how the different practices deployed in SV are providing economic justice. I then present an analysis that describes each factor of food democracy – collaborating, becoming knowledgeable, sharing ideas, developing efficacy with respect, and orienting toward the community good, and how each are used to redistribute the conditions of production in an equitable manner. I discuss what are the current approaches organizations are addressing these concerns.

Here, I provide data on how food democracy addresses the redistribution of the conditions of production. It is here that I reference the same four categories for the conditions of production as in CRQ1. I start with collaboration to talk about how social groups can work to empower each other. Then, I discuss becoming knowledgeable about the food system to see how innovations and disruptions can address sustainability and social justice. I transition to sharing ideas such that enterprises navigate around competition in the market. I then move on to about a discussion of developing efficacy with respect to ensure that the competition among enterprises in the same food category do not feel threatened or marginalized in participating in the food

system. Lastly, I talk about orienting innovation and disruption toward the community good in the context of increasing access to equipment and equitable treatment of a workforce. With all the data on addressing the conditions of production presented in the results subsection, I provide an analysis focused on creating a more socially equitable system.

Collaborating Sustainably

Here, I discuss how collaboration directly affects entrepreneurship such that entrepreneurship is more equitable. A notable example is La Cocina, a non-profit organization that helps people of color, women, and lower socioeconomic groups to establish a means to make and sell their food products. Recently, La Cocina and the city of San Francisco worked together to build a new hall in the Tenderloin, an area of San Francisco that has a high amount of poverty and often neglected of community projects (Pershan 2018). Essentially, La Cocina and the city of San Francisco are using an empty space and asking community members who live around the empty space to create a food hall. This new food hall would house businesses from within the community to bring some wealth and food access back to the community. More specifically, the barrier to entry of these food businesses was the lack of access to the land and its resources to set up a restaurant to serve food that is representative of their identities and reflective of their communities. The power dynamic shifted from the city to the community members and their voice was uplifted such that the community members were empowered to speak about what is going to be in the food hall. Additionally, a voice is heard that was once largely ignored which alleviates marginalization. By collaborating sustainably, the community of entrepreneurs within the Tenderloin of San Francisco have an opportunity to grow, but being more knowledgeable about the food system is necessary to prevent there is little to no reproduction of social injustices.

Becoming Knowledgeable

Here I discuss how becoming knowledgeable redistributes power by empowering entrepreneurship and labor. The Edible Schoolyard Project is an institution that promotes sustainability of the food system through weekly Wednesday seminars that are open to the public and broadcasted online through YouTube. Their platform includes thought leaders who openly discuss their "visions, research, and experiences" on the food system with notable presenters like Danny Meyer asking whether "restaurant careers are sustainable" or Samin Nosrat and Shakirah Simley discussing "diversity and inclusion in the food industry" (2019). These resources and networks are free and accessible such that entrepreneurship can understand how to address social issues surrounding exploitation of labor as discussed with Meyer, marginalization and powerlessness as addressed by Nosrat and Simley (2019). Participants who want to engage in more food democracy are equipped with handling issues about human capacity as founders and employers. Additionally, Leclerc and Nolet (2017) have written and aggregated resources for entrepreneurs and investors to find the best support that fits their needs. In this sense, Leclerc and Nolet established an open source of condensed information for anyone researching about capital and land necessary for the food startups' initial stages. Entrepreneurs now have the power to understand their capital better to seek out alternative sources of funding or negotiate for better capital from a venture capitalist. The power dynamics are shrinking or replacing what exists in SV. In becoming more knowledgeable about the food system, food democracy opens up discourse to the sharing of ideas.

Sharing Ideas

Under the sharing ideas category, I explain how sharing ideas builds upon becoming knowledgeable which reinforces food democracy practices and empowers the community in all

the conditions of production. In SV, the idea of shared spaces where individuals will come together to offset major costs on land in order to participate in their respective individual or community projects. These shared spaces are called makerspaces because the projects turn into some sort of product. Tinker Kitchen is a makerspace and community food hub that allows for more people to experiment with food without the added costs of buying expensive equipment, going through the hassle of large suppliers to use industrial food ingredients, and or accessing expensive texts to learn about food science and technology (Albrecht 2018b). This for-profit model exhibits food democracy in that the barriers of entry to entering the facility to use the space is cost effective. Moreover, sharing the ideas in a community sense opens up discussion in combatting neoliberalism where community projects are collaborative and supportive of a community goal for learning, not for market purposes. The emphasis on a community to interact with ingredients and equipment that are normally cost-prohibitive allows for social groups to work together to access different resources of the land. By sharing ideas, the development of efficacy is the next step to ensure sustainability of food enterprises.

Developing Efficacy

Under the developing efficacy category, I elaborate on how crucial the previous dimensions – collaborating sustainably, becoming knowledgeable, and sharing ideas – are to ensure that the success of participating food enterprises is not limited by oppression and neoliberalism. In the wake of the sudden closure of Pilotworks, the for-profit organization that provided land usage to more than 150 food enterprises, Albrecht (2018c) discusses how to move forward and provided ongoing details of alternative spaces, platforms, and tools to get resituated to resume businesses. From Albrecht's article, food enterprises that were affected by the closure were able to share ideas and become more knowledgeable about alternative options to continue

their livelihood. Furthermore, the suggestions and tools offered a potential to connect enterprises together to build a network that will be explained under the orienting toward community good dimension. One of the suggested tools, an online forum, “connects people who have been impacted with those who want to help” (Albrecht 2018c). The collaboration is an alternative to the neoliberal model which focuses on individualism and the free market prevents helping companies in need. In other words, innovations through online platforms and digital tools created in SV are utilized to develop efficacy.

Developing efficacy is also about considering the labor within the enterprises. These enterprises play a crucial role both as an individual entity and as part of a group of enterprises working in the food and tech space. An example of understanding how important enterprises play in the food system is exhibited by Greyston Bakery, a food manufacturing company that would hire anybody (Anzilotti 2018). Greyston Bakery understands the value of labor and has a hiring policy that is first come, first serve where they train employees to learn their entire baking process. There is no checking or interviews, just faith that the worker will get the job done (Anzilotti 2018). The power dynamics are more equitably distributed to allow opportunities for any laborer to join the bakery while the bakery has a pool of talent that can be accessed to help their own growth. Although, Greyston Bakery still holds power in surplus value, there is progress where alternatives to the current food system can lead to sustainable effects.

Another example can be found in SV food and tech culture. Commercial kitchens such as Forage Kitchen are offering a place for many food startups to get started at a lower price point (Danish 2017). In understanding the needs of the community, Forage Kitchen is finding ways to allow for participants to enter the food business through access to a labor force that is employed and treated fairly, equipment and resources that are part of an added-value of using their space,

and a staff that is adapting to their environment. Other collaborative spaces are offering similar propositions to food enterprises within the same geography (Kane 2018). These spaces are allowing for increased access to land and labor for entrepreneurs who were once unable to scale their products without their own network or vast sums of capital. Again, these examples illustrate the progressive direction in a food democracy that looks at the community through a network. In thinking about long term sustainability, these networks need to continually orient their approach toward the common and communal good.

Orienting Toward the Community Good

Under the orienting toward the community good category, I explore more into establishing networks around community sustainability. Since food democracy pushes for an increase in participation in the food system, the neoliberal model of individualism and competition within the market works antagonistically. This was reflective of the closure of Pilotworks and other examples of oppression established in the CRQ1. As food democracy serves to correct social issues, orienting towards a community, rather than an individual entity, is important to support a sustainable food system. Food enterprises are to work together as a network to collaborate, become knowledgeable, share ideas, and develop efficacy.

This sustainable network is tested out in Oakland, California where entrepreneurship as a means of activism to fight against gentrification (Alkon (2018). Alkon (2018) illustrated that the non-profit Mandela Marketplace and the worker-owned Mandela Foods Co-op created a network between both organizations such that the "decision-making power for [the co-op] lies with the worker-owners [whereas] the non-profit collectively has one vote" to provide input and not control (284). This network establishes efficacy such that the worker-owners who are also residents within the same neighborhood come to think about how to best use their capital in the

interest of their own community. This means the power dynamics is restored to the hands of the laborers/entrepreneurs who all have a voice in the working process and not have an employer exploiting their surplus value. Additionally, the land and capital managed by the non-profit to support the co-op is more interested in the community, not profits. In my findings, I also discover a group of investors who are looking into a building a more community based life line called the Fork Food Lab (Goad 2018). The investors are looking at a different model to sustain a food program where they reoriented their neoliberal model to a community-driven one. What Fork Food Lab aims to do is provide an alternative approach by empowering its community members rather than focusing on a profit-driven board of directors.

Overall, the data have shown that there are challenges in accessing some of the conditions of production for some social groups. As such, Silicon Valley has addressed these concerns with independent organizations and government institutions. With what Silicon Valley has to offer, there are more models that SV can learn from by looking outside its geography. The applications from different models can further improve the systems implemented in Silicon Valley.

Contribution

In this section, I ask what the next steps are for SV in improving food democracy. I do so by presenting SAGE's report with the city of San Jose's plan for a San Jose Food Works program as a case study of the current development to expand opportunities for San Jose food entrepreneurs. SAGE is Sustainable Agricultural Education, a non-profit that focuses on connecting urban landscapes with agriculture. Since this case study is in its initial stages of development, I will draw upon the results and analysis from CRQ 1 as the demonstrative of how neoliberalism and oppression are maintained. Then, I will draw upon the results and analysis

from CRQ 2 to determine how San Jose Food Works can has the unique opportunity to pivot to a more food-democracy-focused role. I will wrap up the Contribution section by suggesting a pragmatic and a radical approach to increasing food democracy in SV.

Again, first, I will elaborate on details of the San Jose Food Works program and point out how their current approach is neoliberal and reproduces oppression. San Jose is the heart of SV; it is where tech culture started. Now, the city of San Jose is looking to revive its long and rich food agricultural history (Kraus 2019). San Jose Food Works kicked off in May 12, 2017 with the primary goal of economic stimulation. However, the city of San Jose council members did not announce to the public the date of the kickoff. Without community members to provide their opinions for new policies that factor in "environmental health, economic opportunity, community culture and safety, healthy food, transportation, housing, and recreation", the city of San Jose has the potential to move forward an agenda that favors neoliberal policies not reflective of community members' needs. Additionally, the city of San Jose may attract new wealthy people to live in the city while pushing out constituents who cannot afford the high costs because gentrification is a tool for government institutions to improve the value of the land at the expense of the lower socioeconomic class (Alkon 2018). What incentivizes the City of San Jose is the glorification of innovation and disruption and an aim to bring economic stability through introducing new people with higher surplus income while driving out long-time inhabitants through high rent. By gentrifying the land, the city of San Jose is imposing their power over their own constituents. The city of San Jose is determining what to do with the city's land and capital while simultaneously marginalizing social groups because these groups' voices aren't heard. Further, the Food Works plan does not mention about labor or entrepreneurship and since the idea of the program centers on economic stimulation, the city of San Jose wants to see a return

on investment on their investments, much like a VC. In turn, the idea of a food system through the lens of neoliberalism allows for new businesses to enter and thrive while perpetuating and reproducing the same capitalistic models of exploitation, marginalization, and powerlessness. Next, I will elaborate more on how the city of San Jose can pivot to consider the needs of their own community as elected officials.

Referencing San Jose Food Works, I will make recommendations on what the program developers might integrate into their plans to address oppression and enhance food democracy. Hassanein (2003) describes that conflict is inevitable because of the political nature of disagreements over values in the food system (79). This means that the suggestions towards a food democracy within the context of San Jose Food Works will be contentious and may require compromise in making a deal. The city planners and program developers could choose among the five dimensions of food democracy – collaborating sustainably, becoming knowledgeable, sharing ideas, developing efficacy, and orienting toward a community good – to work with the current plans. I will make suggestions on how to integrate each dimension independently. Starting with collaborating sustainably, the development of San Jose Food Works would need to take into account the different participants in their local food system. The city meetings on San Jose Food Works needs to notify constituents ahead of time and at an appropriate time. This would mean that prospective entrepreneurship within San Jose permits increased human capacity to be involved in the decision-making processes. The needs of the San Jose entrepreneurs need to be heard, not disempowered through silence.

Next, San Jose Food Works need to consider how to compile a database of information that is easily accessible to all much like The Edible Schoolyard Project. San Jose Food Works should take a step further and integrate food business development and food systems classes that

are for cost-effective, low residency, and time-dependent on the schedules of participants. These classes work to empower the entrepreneurs and laborers by informing them about capital and land such that they can make decisions on how to participate within the confines of neoliberal-leaning program.

Additionally, San Jose Food Works should encourage dialogue between community members and every participant in the food works program. This dialogue can take shape at frequent meetings at city hall or an online platform associated and identified with the San Jose Food Works program. This would ensure that participants inside and outside of the food works organization can communicate freely and build upon each other's' ideas that can challenge oppression and neoliberalism. Furthermore, the development of efficacy requires the food works program to look at how it wants to sustain its model with long term solutions. That means polling their constituents and listening to their needs in what the food program can provide the different neighborhoods. We can also go so far to say that the land be made public and maintained by the city such that the control is given to the community members who participate in the food works program.

Lastly, the orientation towards community good means the city of San Jose will have to keep in mind who they serve. Again, their constituents need to be notified of any decision-making policy. The food entrepreneurs participating in the program will need to pay their workforce a livable wage even if it means lower surplus value for the enterprise. The community must continue to thrive in order to meet a more realistic ideal of a former agricultural hub. Most importantly, economic stimulation must come from a grassroots start because the people who make up the city of San Jose are directly involved in the economics of the city. Ultimately, a network of enterprises, organizations, and the government need to work together in a

collaborative manner that supports community growth with the consent of the community members. In the next paragraph, I will summarize and wrap up my thoughts.

By evaluating the current trajectory of San Jose Food Works as a case study, we see oppression being reproduced. Because the program is still in its developmental stages, I recommend that the city of San Jose and the program developers reassess the trajectory and become a role model for a more democratic food program. The most pragmatic approach is to compromise by looking at incorporating one or two food democracy dimensions – collaborating sustainably, becoming knowledgeable, sharing ideas, developing efficacy, and orienting toward a community good – at a time. This incremental incorporation of food democracy allows for the program to continue to participate in SV food and tech culture while slowly transforming and conforming to new ideals.

Alternatively, the food works program can take a more radical approach such that the whole system is replaced with food democracy. This option does not consider compromises as a means to address social issues. Instead, food democracy is an overhaul of the neoliberal market and focuses on a collective or communal economic system. In order to truly eliminate oppression, we need to rethink who controls the conditions of productions and redistribute the conditions equitably such that the government, corporations, or any powerful group do not have more decision-making power than the majority. In the next chapter, I will provide concluding remarks for the thesis.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I revisit the purpose of the thesis research, reviewing and summarizing the main points of each chapter. My research addresses power asymmetry among social groups by evaluating distribution of resources because I want to understand how food business opportunities can be made more accessible to more participants. Overall, my research question asks how social inequities in Silicon Valley are addressed or reproduced through SV innovation and disruption in the food system. In order to address this overall research question, I asked three constitutive research questions. My first CRQ asked how resources are accessed within SV food and tech space in order to understand the exiting social constructions and relationships. My second CRQ asked how people in SV are working to implement more economically just enterprises in the food and tech space, which exemplifies existing methods in challenging the socioeconomic injustices permeating in SV. My third CRQ asked, how much might SV move toward more equitable innovation and disruption in the food and tech space? I next summarize how I approached my thesis and how I organized my data.

In terms of methodologies and methods, I addressed each of my CRQs using content analysis and critical inquiry. Both were useful in helping me establish a framework to collect, organize, and analyze my data. The first CRQ needed evidence on food and tech startup companies and their interactions with the conditions of production in order to demonstrate the connections between the conditions of production and the faces of oppression. The second CRQ needed evidence on food enterprises engaging with food democracy, which helped determine the current status of how people in SV were addressing oppression and inequity. My third CRQ was integrated in the contributions section and pulled evidence from the findings in CRQ 1 and CRQ

2. In order to understand possible next steps, there was a unique opportunity to analyze a food-focused economic development effort in the heart of SV, San Jose, California. This analysis demonstrated that the current trajectory of the plans that reproduced oppression and the potential to incorporate elements of food democracy as the program was still in its early stages of discussion. Next, I will describe below the key findings of each CRQ.

With this research, I intended to figure out a reason why some people in the food system are having a hard time participating as an entrepreneur. As a food scientist and a food business consultant, I understood the technical challenges in scaling up a food product, but I only saw a part of the food system. I did not understand the systemic issues that draw from larger social constructs including neoliberalism and oppression. Moreover, I participated in helping my clients without fully understanding my involvement in the participation of a system that reproduces oppression with exploitation, marginalization, and powerlessness. The lure of innovation and disruption were focused more on the end product instead of a process overlooking a whole system. Because of a strong neoliberal narrative based on the market and individualism, I did not fully grasp the complexity and magnitude of the conflict between oppression in the current SV food and tech culture and food democracy. In the results and analysis under CRQ1, I found out that how the powerful maintained their control was through the conditions of production – capital, land, labor, and entrepreneurship. The control and distribution over the conditions of production is determined by the wealthy such that their power is maintained among themselves or enterprises who align with their ideals. As I researched CRQ2, what became clear to me was food democracy as a potential movement to counter the neoliberal agenda in maintaining systemic inequities. To allow more participants into the food industry, the barriers of entry must be lowered, and resources reallocated for better accessibility such that people are empowered and

build community driven enterprises. By following the tenets of food democracy – collaborating sustainably, becoming knowledgeable, sharing ideas, developing efficacy, and orienting towards the community good, there will be a revolution to change the system that is more equitable.

In closing, I will revisit the Contribution section of Chapter Four, which addresses my third CRQ on the next steps for SV in terms of improving food democracy. Recall that I mentioned the improvement of food democracy comes from either a pragmatic approach or a radical approach. In a pragmatic approach, food democracy has its own limitations within the constraints of a neoliberal food system. My suggestion in addressing oppression stems from my positionality within the system; I acknowledge that the alternative network that works as a collective will not fully address all social inequities present in SV. It is with hope, however, that humanity can progress with small steps to eventually replace the current system. This hope is derived from the adversity and tenacity that social justice will slowly but surely transform the food system on the basis of the people who work together to critically assess from the ideas of a network into something greater and more just.

Alternatively, the radical approach is much more revolutionary in that the transformation is to overthrow a neoliberal ideology to directly and systemically address oppression with a community-based network food system. Given all this newfound knowledge, I will move on to discuss my reflections on what this thesis can hopefully inspire. In my concluding remarks, I ask you to consider the complexity of the food issues on a systemic level and provide a call to action. In order to achieve a true food democracy, a radical transformation is necessary to provide a new alternative that challenges and overcomes the neoliberal model. Methods for redistribution and maintenance of the conditions of production through a peaceful transfer could happen but to what effect is unknown. Furthermore, this research is hopeful that the discourse around SV

culture provides insight to the direction of creating products with a long-term goal with enterprises addressing social and systemic issues. Of course, there is no one answer in attempting to make the necessary changes to disrupt the food industry with innovations. My hope is to encourage more thought experiments and applications in food democracy such that a social movement can gain the momentum necessary to become a revolution. May the declassification of myself as food consultant be the catalyst to observing and challenging neoliberalism, oppression, and social inequities in Silicon Valley and the entire food system.

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