

**Agency, Mobility, and Food:
Developing a Capability Theory for the Food System**

by

Stephen 'Ano'i Garfield

Capstone Research Synthesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate Program in Food Systems and Society

of the

Graduate Program in Human Nutrition

Oregon Health and Science University School of Medicine

In partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science in Food Systems and Society

May 23, 2022

Copyright © 2022 by
Stephen 'Ano'i Garfield

Abstract

The social problem of economic inequality negatively affects millions of people in the United States every day. Experiencing firsthand how difficult it is to participate in “the American Dream” and rise up out of poverty motivates this research. The overall question that guides this research is, “How can agency and structure be conceptualized in the food system in order to increase social mobility for the lower classes?” The research, based on data gleaned from food justice and food sovereignty literature, utilizes the capability approach, established as a method to evaluate human wellbeing. Building on this framework's previous applications, the inquiry develops a capability framework for the food system, creating a list of essential capabilities and their corresponding structural constraints in order to situate food movement efforts with regard to upward social mobility among the lower classes. The result is a capability framework for the food system that allows apparently disparate food movement efforts to be evaluated against a large-scale, unifying goal of shrinking economic inequality through the development of social mobility through food system action.

Keywords: social justice, food system, agency, structure, constraint, capability, economic inequality, food justice

Table of Contents

One—Introduction: A Fractured Society	6
Two—Background and Significance: The Unequal Distribution of Food System Agency	11
Domain of Food Systems and Society	11
Social Problems and Social Justice in Food Systems and Society	14
Capstone Research Problem and Overall Research Question	23
Three—Methodology and Methods	29
Capstone Research Paradigm	29
Capstone Research Questions	32
Capstone Research Design	38
Four—Research Applications and Contribution	44
Research Findings	44
Contribution	75
Five—Conclusion: Capability and the Social Justice Process	80
References	84

Tables

Table 1. Nussbaum's List of Basic Capabilities Source: Nussbaum 1992, 222.....	16
Table 2. Nussbaum's Basic Capabilities, Organized by General Category (Numbers Correspond to Nussbaum's List; see Table 1)	47
Table 3. Food System Capabilities Organized According to General Capability Categories	50
Table 4. Must-Have Capabilities in the Food System for Fostering Social Mobility Among the Lower Classes.....	58
Table 5. A List of Essential Capabilities for Developing Social Mobility and Their Corresponding Structural Constraints.....	69

One—Introduction: A Fractured Society

Living in the United States in the 21st century, it is easy to study history and consider just how advanced our society has become over the course of the last three centuries. Just think of the appalling social inequality that led to the French Revolution, when traditional monarchy and aristocracy faced a reckoning after having brought their subjects to the brink of starvation. The top ten percent of society at the time raked in a massive 50% of all of the country's total income, enjoying the trappings of the royal good life in gilded palaces. Of course, there was a revolution; how could a society possibly sustain such levels of inequality? Unfortunately, the United States did not leave inequality in the dustbin with the advent of American democracy. In 2010, the top 10% of US society took in—you guessed it—50% of the nation's total income. And the gap is only widening: some projections show the top 10% taking in over 60% of total income by 2030 (Piketty 2018).

These statistics paint an alarming picture; one of a society that is becoming increasingly divided, to the point where it almost feels misguided to refer to it as a society. At what point does this become a nation populated by multiple societies, distinguished by vast differences in wealth and income, daily lifestyle, and which opportunities are available to whom? Is there a future in which one might claim—without any sense of irony—that the United States are in fact united? What can we do?

The economic inequality that the statistics above describe is difficult to truly understand. In the same way that it is impossible to actually grasp the difference between the sizes of planet Earth and, say, the sun, grappling with the extreme economic disparity on display in the US can be a trying exercise. Consider this: last month, I found twenty dollars in the pocket of a shirt I bought from a thrift store. I'll be transparent here—as a part-time worker also making my way

through a graduate program, that twenty-dollar bill was a big deal. In fact (and this is being *very* transparent), that fortuitous thrift store discovery increased my net worth by 2%. It might not sound like very much, but that was a meal from my favorite restaurant that I might not have been able to get otherwise. Now, if Elon Musk (currently listed as the richest person in the world) were to find an amount of money that was equally as significant to him as my twenty was to me, he would have to miraculously discover 4.8 billion dollars hidden away in the depths of his (voluminous) shirt pocket. To think of this difference another way, if the richest person in the world were to somehow misplace 4.8 billion dollars, *he would still have 98% of his wealth left over.*

You might assume this a particularly extreme example—and it is, to some degree. After all, choosing the richest person in the world as a point of comparison will always be slightly misleading. However, *slightly* is the key word there. And unfortunately, the nature of capitalism is such that without significant intervention, these disparities will only continue to grow, and those of us lucky enough to find 2% of our wealth in a shirt pocket will continue to find it difficult to climb the socioeconomic ladder.

Where to intervene? The problem of economic inequality is vast and overwhelming, so it helps to compartmentalize. The experiences of poverty and general economic insecurity are an everyday reality for millions of people in the US, so it only makes sense to start with something that is also a part of everyday life: food. In many ways, the food system is a reflection of the economic system at large. First of all, there is the simple and inescapable fact that we have to buy our food. And, like other commodities, food is generally produced in a distant location, distributed widely, and represents employment for millions of people. Plus, we can find in the food system stark illustrations of inequality. Just think of how my twenty-dollar bill bought me

another meal—while Musk’s two percent could have bought three meals for every single person in New York City. If we could find ways to improve the inequalities represented in the food system, it would go a long way toward addressing the same issues in society in general.

If we think of justice as fairness, then it is clear that these levels of disparity are unjust. The goal of social justice in general is to assist those who are experiencing undue hardship, and to reform those aspects of society that create this undue hardship in the first place. I became interested in social justice and the particular problem of economic inequality when I realized that the conditions of relative scarcity that I grew up in did not affect everyone; some people, in fact, never know scarcity at all. As I have investigated issues of inequality and injustice, I have also realized that there are millions of people who experience not just scarcity, but abject poverty, hunger, and inhumane conditions. These conditions are not natural; they are not inherent to human social life. They are social problems that emerge from the way we have designed our society. For many, this is the reality of everyday life, and despite the persistent American individualist “bootstrap” narrative, it is extremely difficult to experience upward social mobility when one is houseless or living paycheck to paycheck with a food insecure family.

The existence of systemic barriers to social mobility is the research problem motivating this inquiry. If we as a society were able to develop effective ways to address conditions of poverty and financial insecurity, it would be a huge step toward shrinking the wealth disparities and overall economic inequality that divide the very different life experiences of the top 1% and the bottom 50% in the US.

So, we return to the big question: what can we do? To address the research problem of limited social mobility in the lower socioeconomic classes in the US, I have taken this overwhelming question and approached it literally. What are we *capable* of doing? Within the

daily routines of lower-class, marginalized, and impoverished people in food system, which actions are limited by the way we have structured society? And how might existing social movements address these limitations to make rising up out of poverty a real possibility? This research addresses economic inequality by asking about capabilities and structural constraints within the food system, as well as evaluating food movements' efforts in these contexts, in order to identify actions that might be taken to more directly engage social immobility. Pursuing these questions has revealed that if we are to increase upward social mobility through actions in the food system, there are specific capabilities and corresponding structural constraints that must be targeted—and though significant work is underway, it might behoove social movements in the food system to more explicitly claim shrinking disparity as a goal.

Chapter 2 lays out the background and significance of the social problem of economic inequality, situating it within the domain of food systems and society and connecting it to a specific capability approach to justice. Chapter 3 explains the perspective with which I have approached this research, and outlines the methodology and methods employed to answer the set of constitutive questions that structure it. Chapter 4 discusses the findings from my research, explains how I identified essential capabilities and their corresponding constraints, provides a preliminary example of the capability framework applied to food movement analysis, and suggest possible future directions for this vein of research. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes this inquiry, expressing the overall contributions this research process has made to my personal understandings of social problems, social justice, and how we as a society might equitably progress.

It is my hope that this research takes steps toward answering some of the questions asked in this chapter—but before we get there, it is important to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and problems that constitute economic inequality.

Two—Background and Significance: The Unequal Distribution of Food System Agency

In this chapter I establish the purpose of my Capstone inquiry, defining and articulating fundamental concepts that will serve as the basis for the research and analysis to follow. I begin by explaining the domain of my research; namely, food systems and society. I then define social problems in food systems and society and relate them to social justice. I next elaborate my conception of social justice, as this is a vital first step in a critical inquiry endeavor that seeks to address injustice and potentially instigate social change. This is followed by a description of the social problem that serves as the starting point for my research: economic inequality. I provide a general outline of the problem and its causes, who is affected, who benefits, and give brief attention to potential cures. Within the context of this social problem, I further specify the scope of this research, which asks about social immobility in the lower classes. The chapter concludes by articulating the defining, overall question driving this inquiry, and a research statement establishing what I wish to accomplish with this work. The questions broadest in scope, however, are where this research process begins: Why focus on food systems, what do food systems have to do with society, and how does this relate to social justice?

Domain of Food Systems and Society

The domain of my Capstone research is that of food systems and society. There are two significant interpretations of the term “food system.” First, we can define a food system as a set of sub-systems comprised of components, actors, inputs, and outcomes that are involved with the production, processing, distribution, and disposal of food within given geographical or social bounds. This functional understanding is often the perspective taken in introductory textbooks and descriptions of the food system found in popular discourse (Neff and Lawrence 2014; Barber 2014; Schlosser 2012). However, in the process of working toward progressive change in this

system, we must also take a more conceptual view. From this perspective, we can conceive of “food systems” as a conceptual framework in itself. Within this framework, analysis considers the systemic effect of interventions, acknowledging the necessity of trade-offs between disciplines and interests (Béné et al. 2019; Brouwer, McDermott, and Ruben 2020). This perspective is important when we consider the breadth of actors within the food system. The variety of individual/collective interests, risks, responsibilities, as well as the framing, causes, and effects of problems abound, and any intervention developed to address a particular problem requires some amount of “consensus and engagement of multiple national and local stakeholders” (Brouwer, McDermott, and Ruben 2020, 2). “Food systems thinking” in this regard is epistemologically and methodologically defined; the ways of building and utilizing knowledge are oriented toward the ecology of the system’s drivers, components, and actors implicated in the definition above (ibid., 3; Rocha, Frison, and Jacobs 2021). This second interpretation is particularly important for this work; both in providing context for the research itself as well as in my attempts to suggest future directions of research and intervention toward a more equitable society.

Society is the integral second aspect of the domain of this research. Food is one of the most fundamental needs for every human being, and all societies are in part organized to the specific end of providing sufficient and reliable food to facilitate social reproduction. The food system, as defined above, is thus a social construction in both of Crossley’s (2005) senses of the term. First, it is “an emergent property of the social world;” in other words, the food system only exists because society has produced it (297). Second, it is not actually a static “thing” at all; it is an “ensemble” of social interactions that, taken together, continually produces and organizes what we conceive of as the food system (298). The fact that the food system is a social

construction makes it all the more necessary to utilize the aforementioned food systems conceptual framework, as any interventions require consideration of the many evolving interests, harms, and benefits at stake. The systems produced by social interactions and societies take as many forms as there are discrete societies—all of which hold the potential to challenge or reinforce inequities. As food is a fundamental aspect of social life, inequities that arise from various social structures find expression in food systems.

One such inequity, and the ultimate focus of this Capstone research, is the economic disparity between classes in the US food system and society. Vast differences in income and wealth across social groups mean that certain people have near-unlimited capacity to pursue their wishes, desires, and wellbeing, while others face a dearth of choices that inhibit their social mobility and negatively influence food-system-related health outcomes (Kilty 2015; Bourdieu 1986; Bedore 2014; Miewald and McCann 2014). Throughout this research, I utilize the term “food system agency” to refer to the capacity—or lack thereof—to fulfill desired capabilities within the domain of food systems and society. Trubek et al. (2017) assert that “to have ‘food agency’ is to be *empowered to act* throughout the course of planning and preparing meals within a particular food environment” (298). My use of “food system agency” expands upon this interpretation, applying the concept to a larger set of capabilities within the food system, beyond the relatively micro-level planning and preparation of meals. Thus, the focus of this Capstone research is on developing a clearer understanding of the consequences of economic inequality in the food system for decision-making and social mobility, and what steps might be taken to empower those who suffer under the current exploitative structure by increasing the set of capabilities available to them or removing those structural constraints. The social inequities

that are a part of all food systems are clear social problems, necessitating analysis and intervention in order to improve society and ensure a basic level of agency for all peoples.

Social Problems and Social Justice in Food Systems and Society

Broad social inequalities and injustices that develop in society are often reflected in the food system, due to its fundamental, quotidian, and distributive nature. Given the food system is a social construction rooted in the fabric of society, the inequalities and injustices present in the food system can be thought of as *social problems*. A social problem is that which causes harm to a certain party (either an individual or particular social group), where the primary responsibility or cause lies outside the victim(s), in the social environment. In other words, as Alessio (2011) concisely frames it, a social problem negatively affects multiple social entities, and has social causes, effects, and remedies (3). Social problems both create and reflect existing sites of injustice, harming specific social groups while benefitting others. To further elucidate this connection, in the following section I explain my conceptions of social justice and injustice—this will serve as the basis for framing the social problem of economic inequality.

Social Justice

The definition of social justice that I employ throughout this inquiry is negatively defined. That is, I understand social justice to consist of the actions taken to redress inequities within a particular society. These inequities are enacted and perpetuated through social relations and organizations that position certain groups as either privileged or disadvantaged—i.e., social problems emerge from the unequal structuring of society. Social groups do not necessarily strive to achieve social injustices; these inequalities emerge from social structures designed to benefit specific groups. However, social groups *do* strive to achieve social justice, in response to the

emergence and existence of injustice. With this in mind, social *justice* can be understood to be the process of mitigating the damage done by social problems and constructing more equitable alternative structures. This definition's focus on ongoing action to address inequities assumes that we will never find ourselves living in a "perfect" society, and that there will always be inequities of some kind. Thus, "social justice" as a guiding principle of this inquiry represents more of a process than a condition in itself. However, as we will see we can use absolute and relative criteria to evaluate progress and arrive at conclusions about which injustices require attention and what actions must be taken.

To elaborate absolute criteria for social justice, I turn to a capability theory of justice. Here, I introduce a capability theory of justice as articulated by Nussbaum (1992) as a foundational conceptual framework for understanding the social and research problems that this Capstone addresses; I provide a more elaborate explanation in Chapter 3. Nussbaum (1992) proposes a list of ten "basic functional capabilities at which societies should aim for their citizens" in order to establish a baseline of human wellbeing (221):

- 1) Being able to live to the end of a complete human life, as far as is possible; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.

- 2) Being able to have good health; to be adequately nourished; to have a dequate shelter; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction; being able to move from place to place.

- 3) Being able to a void unnecessary and nonbeneficial pain and to have pleasurable experiences.

- 4) Being able to use the five senses; being able to imagine, to think, and to reason.

- 5) Being able to have attachments to things and persons outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence, in general, to love, grieve, to feel longing and gratitude.

- 6) Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life.

- 7) Being able to live for and with others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of familial and social interaction.

- 8) Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.

- 9) Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

- 10) Being able to live one's on [sic] life and nobody else's; being able to live one's own life in one's very own surroundings and context.

Table 1. Nussbaum's List of Basic Capabilities Source: Nussbaum 1992, 222.

Criteria such as these provide normative benchmarks by which to evaluate the progress of social justice—in this case, working to make Nussbaum's list a reality. The capabilities in this list are not available in their entirety to most social groups. In the United States (US), the current political-economic organization of society is based on a capitalistic structure that inherently produces inequality. This is due to the fact that in capitalism, surplus value is extracted from the labor of the working class and accumulated as profit for the owners of the means of production—in this system, someone necessarily gains while another loses. The harms of this inequality are often imposed upon and experienced by marginalized social groups, separated from the dominant

culture by boundaries of ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, or sexual orientation (among others). These inequities are manifested in economic, civic, and cultural relations—and often, some combination of all of these. In a society where autonomy and mobility are defined and produced on a daily basis by its capitalist economy, economic injustice can be conceived of as a primary structural mechanism or medium of privilege and disadvantage. Because of the primary role that the capitalist economy plays in modern social life, and considering the ubiquity of its effects, any analysis of unjust inequality must focus on expressions of these dynamics in particular domains.

The food system is a domain that clearly demonstrates the effects of economic inequality. As discussed above, the relationship between humans, society, and food is fundamental and inextricable—as such, analysis of specific sites of injustice in the food system will also produce indictments of broader inequities built into social structures. Given that the US food system was developed alongside its capitalist economy, there are many examples of economic effects expressed as injustice in the food system (Holt-Giménez 2017). We can see injustice in a statistical examination of nutrition-related health problems and access to healthful diets among various demographic groups in the US (Freeman 2007; Slocum 2006; Drewnowski and Darmon 2005; Kern et al. 2017; Odoms-Young 2018). The scholarship here shows a direct correlation between the US capitalist economic system and an unequal (read: unjust) distribution of negative health outcomes. These comparisons of demographic groups introduce another way to identify injustice: by using relative criteria.

Using relative criteria to evaluate equity and frame problems demonstrates the unequal distribution of poverty among social groups. A comparison of the rates of food insecurity experienced by different social groups illustrates this point—e.g., Black and Hispanic households

are at least twice as likely to experience food insecurity as non-Hispanic whites (Odoms-Young 2018). We can identify social injustice in this case by observing the drastic difference in outcome depending on demographic category. While the national average for household food insecurity in the US is 10.5%, food insecurity is experienced at a rate of 21.7% and 28.6% for Black households and households with incomes below 185% of the poverty line, respectively (USDA 2021). This example illustrates that there is a clear correlation in the US between food insecurity, race, and conditions of poverty. Because procurement of food is tied directly to economic status, we can connect the broader problem of poverty in society to its manifestation in the food system using rates of food insecurity (Poppendieck 1998). Relative comparisons such as these can be useful in identifying and describing aspects of social problems, highlighting how structural harm is concentrated among particular social groups. Thus, to summarize, both absolute and relative criteria are crucial to the process of social justice; while absolute criteria are helpful in defining goals for creating just social structures, relative criteria aid in understanding the relative distribution of injustice and thus where progress is needed.

Given the importance of articulating absolute social justice criteria or capabilities for making progress toward a socially just society, how might we state social justice criteria in the context of the food system? Off the cuff, a capability list *à la* Nussbaum (articulated in terms of “beings”; see Table 1) might look something like this:

1. Being able to embody and express one’s identity free from fear that these acts predetermine their class positioning and thus, access to the full spectrum of food choice.
2. Being able to enjoy a right to food that is not conditioned by socioeconomic class.
3. Being able to always access nutritious foods.

4. Being able to know that public and private institutions are committed to deconstructing the structural conditions that create and perpetuate food insecurity.
5. Being able to assume, with some level of confidence, that state policies to address food insecurity will attempt to be inclusive of all social groups.

Developing criteria such as these to identify social justice and injustice as it relates to economic inequality in the food system is the overall purpose of my Capstone inquiry.

Specifically, I seek to develop a greater understanding of those dynamics within the food system that constrict individual agency and perpetuate social immobility among the lower economic classes.

Social Problem

As discussed above, in conceptualizing social problems throughout this inquiry, I invoke the definition of “social problem” articulated by Alessio (2011) which, to reiterate, characterizes social problems as negatively affecting multiple social entities, and having social causes, effects, and remedies (3). I utilize this definition because it highlights the potential for social change—the problems under discussion here emerge from the structures of society, which are determined by social mechanisms and are thus mutable. The broad social problem that I address in this Capstone is economic inequality—specifically, the expression of this inequality as social immobility and a lack of agency in the lower classes.

Economic inequality represents, at its most basic level, the fact that some have control over and possession of a preponderance of wealth and resources, while others have less than they need to survive. The issue is particularly acute in the United States, in which the disparity between the wealthy at one end of the economic spectrum and the poor at the other is vast and continues to grow (Kilty 2015; Thorbecke and Charumilind 2002). This spectrum is broken up

into sets of socioeconomic statuses commonly understood to be divided into classes. These classes “refer to a person’s position relative to the economic sector,” as well as to “social position in the context of characteristics like education, prestige, and religious affiliation” (Kilty 2015, 35).

“Social mobility” refers to the movement of groups or individuals across the socioeconomic spectrum—and social *immobility* refers more specifically to the inability to transition out of a particular class position. Though wealth inequality is an extremely significant factor in socioeconomic positioning (with important implications about social dynamics and inter-generational wealth), in this research I focus on income inequality. I am concerned with social immobility—and if this condition is the case, then we can safely assume that the wealth level of these individuals is low, as greater wealth enables greater mobility (ibid.). Income as a measure of socioeconomic position is more dynamic than wealth, which suggests it as a good basis upon which to theorize about potential interventions to enable social mobility.

The Gini coefficient (which measures income inequality across a nation’s population) and the Palma ratio (which more effectively compares the extremes of the economic spectrum within each nation) both indicate that the US exhibits more economic inequality than all other “first world” nations (OECD 2021). The nature of a capitalist economic system is exploitative in that employers profit off of the surplus value of their employees’ labor—wages allow workers to remain static on the economic hierarchy while accumulation of surplus allows capitalists to ascend (Young 2011, 60-61). These disparities, inherent in a capitalist system, are on full display in a food system that simultaneously relies on the existence of low-wage workers and low-quality food for food system profitability, as well as monetary exchange for access to quality food—a structure that necessarily limits access to quality food for workers that produce it. As

such, critically analyzing the food system and economic inequality together is productive in identifying ways to disrupt the reproduction of unjust systems that make upward mobility difficult or impossible for members of the lower classes.

Examining the US food system alongside the broader capitalistic economic structure reveals a vicious cycle in which the damaging and restricting outcomes of inequality on people's lives reproduces the structural inequities that give rise to the problem in the first place. Food, in our society, is not a basic right—it is a commodity and category of good that is exchanged for resources (Anderson 2013; Clapp and Isakson 2018). As a result, the food that a particular individual is able to consume is dependent on their position in the socioeconomic hierarchy. With increasing concentration and vertical integration in agrifood corporations, and their subsequent influence in policy development, the structure of the food system (which foods are cheap or expensive, which foods are sold where, which types of foods are available to which social groups) is set by capitalist entities (Clapp and Fuchs 2009). These decision-makers have a vested interest in maintaining class disparity and restricting the agency of lower classes for the maintenance of a cheap labor pool (Alessio 2011, 93). While those with higher levels of wealth enjoy a greater breadth of choice when it comes to diet, those at the lower end of the economic spectrum face a dearth of choice (Kern et al. 2017; Otero 2018). Many experiencing low or very low food security have no choice but to take what is given them through either limited low-cost options or a food assistance system that depends on charity (Poppendieck 1998; Kurtz et al. 2019; Otero 2018; Freeman 2007). Thus, the social problems of poverty and economic inequality manifest in the food system as both food insecurity and reduced dietary choice, both of which have consequences that reinforce and reproduce the original problems of poverty and economic inequality.

The consequences of food insecurity and the constriction of food system agency reproduce economic inequality through poor public health and nutritional outcomes, powerlessness, and marginalization. The food available to those experiencing low or very low food security (e.g., cheap food, food distributed by food banks) often provides substandard nutrition (Guthman 2011 a; Otero 2018; Freeman 2007; Thirlaway and Upton 2009). This has biological and public health ramifications, as insufficient nutrition can result in deficiencies in childhood development, as well as the proliferation of long-term health issues such as obesity or diabetes (Gundersen and Ziliak 2015; Brown, Noonan, and Nord 2007; Nisbett 2019). Health outcomes such as these become very expensive over the course of a lifetime—in terms of medical costs for both individuals and the state, as well as time spent unable to work—undermining the social mobility of the poor (Rocha, Frison, and Jacobs 2021; Reinhardt, Boehm, and Salvador 2021). Restriction of choice also leads to pervasive feelings of powerlessness, which Young (2011) identifies as a major “face” of oppression. Powerlessness describes the sense that circumstances cannot change, referring to the inability of people to “regularly participate in making decisions that affect the conditions of their lives and actions” (ibid., 65). This condition often leads to a reduction of autonomic critical thinking—serious consequences in a society so discursively dependent on individual initiative and the promise of social mobility (Jensen and Glasmeier 2010, 86; Chackal 2016; Young 2011; Allen 2004; Bageant 2007).

Economic inequality in the food system is also an “intersectional” (Crenshaw 1991) social justice issue, in that we can see inequity in distribution of harm across different social categories. To say that these problems are intersectional means that while economic disparity affects people regardless of race, gender, or creed, the confluence of various axes of oppression in individuals and social groups makes some much more likely to acutely experience the harms

of economic inequality. One illustration of this is that evidence suggests historically marginalized groups are disproportionately impacted by social immobility, with socioeconomic ascension being more difficult to achieve for those historically subordinated on the basis of race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, or ability (Musolf 2017; Kearney 2006; Assari 2018). This uneven distribution of harm also applies to diet-related illness, which disproportionately affects certain social groups while also being inextricably tied with stigmas associated with marginalization (Earnshaw and Karpyn 2020; Brown, Noonan, and Nord 2007). That specific demographic groups unequally experience the harms of economic inequality, and that this inequality is so thoroughly represented in the food system further highlights the need for critical attention. Food insecurity, constricted food system agency, inequitable negative health outcomes, low social mobility, and economic inequality in general are all consequences of the social problem of economic inequality, which emerges from the particular structure of US society. That this social problem has social causes means, to return to Alessio's interpretation of a social problem, that remedies can be developed through social action.

In an effort to identify potential steps forward in addressing economic inequality in the food system, I have developed a literature-based research inquiry that may shed light on the problem and possible actions that can be taken to address it.

Capstone Research Problem and Overall Research Question

The overall social problem that this research addresses, as outlined in the previous section, is economic inequality derived from the inequitable economic system that privileges certain social groups over others and results in vast inequalities manifested in various ways throughout the food system. To narrow the focus of this research, I specifically examine the

political economic barriers to and opportunities for increasing lower-class agency in the food system, positioning this issue as a key factor at the heart of economic inequality in the US. In addition to being placed at a disadvantage as a result of inequitable social structures, certain social groups are then held in this position by social mechanisms that limit capability in the food system. Results of such limited capabilities include food insecurity and other poor health and social outcomes, thus reproducing inequality and social immobility. This constriction of lower-class agency is important to focus on because it is a central feature of economic inequality and must be targeted in order to move toward a socially just food system.

This section explains this Capstone’s research problem and outlines relevant conceptual frameworks focused on social structure, individual agency and capability, and food movement efforts to both address economic inequality and advance individuals’ capacity to act. Finally, it introduces the overall research question asked in this research in order to address the social and research problems.

As stated above, the conditions and mechanisms of economic inequality are *structural*—so it follows that we begin with a review of conceptualizations of social structures. Musolf (2017) asserts that “structure influences social action, and it refers to patterned social relations, rules, and resources,” going on to elaborate that “structure also refers to the innumerable social facts *external to the individual* and over which the individual does not have much control” (3). Defining social structure in this way immediately suggests structural opposition to individual agency—essentially, that which is in the realm of “structure” is that to which the individual exerts little control. However, societies cannot do away with structure in favor of individual agency, because a social structure is simply any form of construction that organizes the relations between individuals in a society. Because of this, we must conceive of structure and agency as a

dialectic, illustrated by Musolf's "structure-and-agency perspective." Musolf argues that over-emphasis of either agency or structure result in deleterious individualism or determinism, respectively (ibid., 5). To address economic inequality and social immobility, then, we must find ways to both address harmful structures and increase individual agency.

In terms of agency, I utilize frameworks of the capability approach developed by Sen (1999), elaborated upon by Robeyns (2017), and specifically applied to justice and the development of lists (Nussbaum 1992; Claassen 2017, 2011). I view structural economic exploitation as a basis for evaluating what is unjust in the food system, hence my focus on class relations, governance, and the agency of the lower classes. The capability approach is useful in this application because it is focused on finding a nuanced and comprehensive way to describe varying states of wellbeing. To (over)simplify, Sen asserts that fairness and justice are be socially produced through just action—as opposed to being defined states that can be predetermined and achieved. In other words, justice is a condition comprised of the actions and interactions of social agents who have the capacity to act in just ways; there is no threshold that, once crossed, means that we now live in a just society. However, by articulating criteria such as the capability lists described previously, it is possible to normatively evaluate social actors' capacity to act justly, in order to then evaluate overall progress toward social justice. In this sense, we might describe a "just society" as one whose structure allows individuals the capability to act in just ways. In light of this, the political economic and cultural conceptions of justice can be combined to inform a sense of justice that focuses on social mechanisms of the constriction or development of agency. Thus, examining agency through the lens of capability is central to conceiving of pathways toward socially-just progress.

To better understand pathways toward socially-just progress, I apply these concepts to ongoing social movement efforts in the food system. In doing so, I focus on their presence in food justice and food sovereignty frameworks, which serve as a conceptually compatible ground upon which to conduct analysis. This inquiry is born from a desire to interrogate the relationships between agency, structure, and the food system in order to glean information about the social problem of economic inequality. In order to do this, it is vital to engage with scholars and literature relevant to social movements in the food system whose ontological positions presuppose problems characterized by harmfully restrictive social structures and real instances of restricted agency. To identify these movements and literature about them as conceptually compatible for analysis, I relied on the work of Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2017) and Lozano-Cabedo and Gómez-Benito (2017). Each of these analyses offer useful tools for identifying the ontological and epistemological orientations of various food movements, which can serve as a basis for identifying the social structures they believe exist and their priorities for understanding and changing the food system in a way that enhances agency and social mobility. Using this work, I selected food justice and food sovereignty as specific movements to analyze, as they are primarily concerned with what people can and cannot do in the context of an oppressive social structure (*Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability* 2011; Gottlieb and Joshi 2010; Hassberg 2020b; Campesina 2007; Clendenning, Dressler, and Richards 2016; Grey and Patel 2015). Engaging these food movements thus provides rich material with which to examine structure and agency in the food system that influences social mobility, as well as conduct preliminary analysis using the frameworks of structure and agency that this research constructs. These movements provide a conceptual foundation, helping to identify points of entry for social

justice in terms of what actions might be taken within the food system to address economic inequality and social immobility.

Critical consideration of these social problems, utilization of the various frameworks, and application of criteria of justice will all be conducted within the guiding bounds of an overall research question. This question can be condensed as follows: how can agency and structure be conceptualized in the food system in order to increase social mobility for the lower classes? This research addresses economic inequality by interrogating capabilities and structural constraints within the food system, as well as evaluating food movements' efforts in these contexts, in order to identify actions that might be taken to more directly enable social mobility.

This chapter has illustrated the importance of my particular focus of inquiry through an elaboration of the social problem of economic inequality in the food system and the research problem of this Capstone, which focuses on developing our understanding of both structural barriers to and opportunities to support individuals in realizing food system equity. Attention must be devoted to social justice in the food system, as this system represents a fundamental infrastructure with inherent imbalances and discrepancies that harm specific members of society. In the context of the food system—and within a nation that purportedly celebrates individual initiative and social mobility—we can see huge disparities in quality of life and levels of individual agency. Structural aspects of the food system actively constrain people's (particularly those of the lower classes) ability to choose healthful diets and to participate in constructive processes. This Capstone inquiry serves to take a closer look at these situations, unpacking issues of lower-class agency within the food system, in terms of capability and system structure. The

following chapter elaborates on this research process, fully outlining the constitutive questions I ask and the methodologies and methods I used in order to answer them.

Three—Methodology and Methods

This chapter explains the methodology and methods of this inquiry, as well as the conceptual frameworks that inform its research questions. I begin with a brief articulation of my research paradigm in which I explain what I see as the purpose of research in general, elaborate my ontological and epistemological positions, and describe the personal positionality that motivates my research. Following the outline of the research paradigm, I lay out the research questions that guide the process; these consist of the overall question driving the inquiry and three constitutive questions which help focus my approach. These three questions focus on capability, structural constraint, and the structure/agency dialectic in food movement activity. The first two constitutive questions seek to overlay the capability framework on instances of agency and inhibitive structure in the food system. The third CRQ focuses on application of the capability framework to specific food movement efforts. The chapter concludes with a description of the specific methodologies and methods I employ to answer each of the constitutive questions. But, before all this, I start from the beginning—why conduct research at all?

Capstone Research Paradigm

In its broadest possible interpretation, research exists to ascertain, accumulate, and develop knowledge. The practice of research “involves intensive reading, exploring ideas, drawing connections, choosing alternative paths, testing and analyzing, and disseminating results” (Brooks et al. 2019, 39). This practice becomes much more complicated, however, when we consider not *what* research is, but *how* and *why* it is conducted. A variety of ontological and epistemological positions differ on what the purpose of research is and how it should be carried

out. For instance, the positivist paradigm views the purpose of research as the uncovering of hidden aspects of a universal reality through the practice of positing theories and engaging in objective, replicable research methods to prove or disprove those theories (Spencer, Pryce, and Walsh 2014, 83). Constructivism, on the other hand, believes reality not to be universal, but instead existing in multitudes, each constructed from particular social positions and foundations (Spencer, Pryce, and Walsh 2014, 85). While positivist paradigms see objective distance between the researcher and the subject as crucial to the legitimate development of knowledge, constructivist paradigms operate under the assumption that true objectivity is impossible, because knowledge is relative and all aspects of the research process are heavily influenced by the researcher's social position and background. Researchers using either of these paradigms conduct research in order to develop knowledge. I personally believe that the purpose of social research and the development of knowledge should be to find ways to improve conditions and contribute to the elevation of the overall quality of life, particularly for those who are victims of inequity. This leads us to the paradigm of critical inquiry, which acknowledges the importance of the researcher's relationship to the researched, and places an emphasis on utilizing knowledge to improve and make more equitable historically imbalanced dynamics of power (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba 2017).

I believe critical theory to be an essential approach to improving food systems and advancing social justice. This research paradigm allows for engagement with the conceptual breadth of food systems—with the ability to utilize both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. In this way, the researcher gains a robust understanding of the conditions of social problems by examining historical trends and current statistical and phenomenological data. Critical inquiry also demands attention to what can be changed—investigation gathers evidence

and constructs a reflexive relationship between the researcher and the subjects of study, which informs the overall goal of addressing injustices present in social systems. Within this paradigm, I operate using a constructivist ontology; I believe individuals and social groups construct and experience unique realities, and that knowledge developed within these discrete realities can be equally legitimate and valuable. Epistemologically speaking, this orientation indicates that analysis of these socially constructed realities can contribute valuable knowledge describing relationships of power between privileged and oppressed groups. Considering these orientations, I might say that I take a “critical constructivist” perspective in this research.

These orientations also acknowledge the fact that the selection of particular foci of study and adoption of specific approaches reflect the unique positionality of the researcher, and that this influences the investigative process and interpretation of findings. This positionality—or situatedness—refers to “the perspective of the problem by the researcher and the positionality of the investigator relative to the problem” (Jensen and Glasmeier 2010, 82). I have oriented the overall question guiding this Capstone to keep a focus on praxis—action informed by theory and reflection—making sure that the critical research and findings are oriented toward application to justice. In this case, that means aligning the critical inquiry in such a way that data gathering, reflection, and action lead to a disruption of the cycle of exploitation perpetuated by the limited agency of the lower classes. Economic inequality—the social problem at the heart of this research—and the lack of capability for many disadvantaged groups is an issue with which I have significant embodied experience.

As a lifelong member of the lower classes myself, I am well-acquainted with the bounds of limited capability in the context of food, and the effects that such constriction can have on quality of life. I also firmly believe in the necessity of incorporating lived experience into the

realm of “real” knowledge. This can be achieved by conducting research that centers the embodied knowledge of disadvantaged social groups with historically limited capability of expression. Such research plays a vital role in the development of equitable policy and practice that can increase justice and quality of life for all people. I have chosen to focus on this social problem and specific research agenda as a result of my own personal experiences as a member of the lower economic classes—but with the caveat that I have had the immense privilege of being able to move across class boundaries that prove impassable to many in our society. This is the motivation driving my critical inquiry into social immobility, class division, and economic inequality in the food system. Importantly, I must acknowledge that this research itself is possible as a direct result of my own privilege of mobility.

For me, this necessitates a critical perspective—we cannot rely on luck (as I have) and archaic social narratives to facilitate social justice.

In this section, I have explained the broad strokes of my approach to this inquiry. I believe that the development of knowledge through research should be used to improve social conditions. I understand various socially constructed realities to be vital sources of information that can inform research in the name of social justice, indicative of my critical constructivist orientation. My particular social situatedness has led me to this research, both informing research design and interpretation. The next section will outline the questions that organize my research into structure, agency, food movement interventions, and economic inequality.

Capstone Research Questions

In this section I present the questions that guide my critical inquiry. I first state the overall research question that drives this research process. Then, I describe the constitutive

questions that provided the structure within which I investigated the overall research question. In clearly stating these questions and laying out the guiding structure of my inquiry, I hope to lay a foundation to facilitate an understanding of the ensuing research. I begin by briefly rearticulating the social problem, research problem, and research statement described in the previous chapter.

The social problem that I speak to in this inquiry is that of economic inequality in the food system. This can be expressed through the lens of social mobility—or, more appropriately, social *immobility*. Depending on social status, it can be incredibly difficult to overcome structural economic barriers to socioeconomic movement within the established class hierarchy. The problem of social immobility, and its reproduction, is vast and beyond the scope of this particular research—as such, my research problem identifies a more specific aspect to work with.

In this Capstone, I engage the political economic barriers to and opportunities for increasing lower-class agency in the food system. In addressing this problem, I describe instances of structure and inhibited agency within the food system and examine the focal points of ongoing social movements to understand how they engage agency in the food system and the structures that constrain it. The food system focus of this research problem allows for a tighter scope in the research process while producing results that can apply to economic inequality in general and to broader social justice issues. This research addresses economic inequality by interrogating capabilities and structural constraints within the food system, as well as evaluating food movements' efforts in these contexts, in order to identify actions that might be taken to more directly enable social mobility. All of the work to follow is driven by this overall question: how can agency and structure be conceptualized in the food system in order to increase social mobility for the lower classes? If we conceive of the structural constriction of lower-class agency

as a mechanism for the maintenance and reproduction of social immobility and economic inequality, then the necessity of a close examination of structure and agency becomes apparent.

For this reason, the first two constitutive research questions ask, 1) what capabilities *must* lower-class people have in order to increase their social mobility; and 2) what structures in food systems and society inhibit those capabilities? Together, they address the roles and elements of structure and agency that respectively enable and constrain social mobility in the food system. The first constitutive research question addresses the social problem by identifying specific aspects of food system agency that must be supported in order to develop social mobility and disrupt the cycle of economic inequality. The second question addresses the structural environment, which is dialectical with agency. Addressing a lack of social mobility requires attention to both developing agency and reforming or removing structural constraints that inhibit it.

To begin thinking about applications of the answers to CRQ 1 and 2, CRQ 3 focuses on food movements' efforts to support social mobility. The third constitutive question asks: how does the capability framework make visible the efforts of food movements in increasing social mobility by addressing both capabilities and the structures that impede them? CRQ 3 addresses the reproduction of economic inequality by framing how ongoing movement efforts both dismantle oppressive structures in the food system and generate social mobility and agency among the lower classes. In the following sections, I review conceptual frameworks relevant to agency, then structure, and finally food movements.

CRQ 1: Instances of Agency in the Food System

For CRQ1, I approached agency through the concept “food system agency” and used the capability approach and examples of capability-based theories of justice (Sen 1999; Robeyns

2017; Nussbaum 1992; Claassen 2011, 2017) to better understand the presence or absence of agency in the food systems domain. The capability approach was originally developed by Amartya Sen (1999) in an attempt to more fully describe “wellbeing” in economic terms. The approach considers capabilities and functionings to be the “evaluative space” of any analysis adopting this perspective (Robeyns 2017, 51). In other words, analysis in this vein is concerned with what people can and cannot do (their capability), whether or not they choose to fulfill that capability by taking a particular action (a functioning). Robeyns builds on Sen’s work by establishing a “modular” view of the capability approach, harnessing the interdisciplinary strength inherent in the perspective by casting it as a general framework that can be constructed into various capability theories with more specific applications. She describes the capability approach as a “conceptual framework for a range of evaluative exercises, including most prominently the following: (1) the assessment of the individual levels of achieved wellbeing and wellbeing freedom; (2) the evaluation and assessment of social arrangements or institutions; and (3) the design of policies and other forms of social change in society” (24). I utilize the capability approach because the three exercises outlined above by Robeyns correspond almost exactly with the constitutive questions I am asking, while centering the notions of freedom of choice and agency that lie at the heart of my research.

Scholars have gone on to apply this approach in a wide variety of social analyses, including capability-based articulations of justice—as we have seen above, in Nussbaum’s (1992) list of “basic human functional capabilities” (222). These capabilities and functionings are also frequently referred to in the literature as “beings” and “doings,” respectively. Nussbaum’s capability list (see table 1) also serves as a good example of the conceptual distinction between a focus on beings (capabilities) or doings (functionings). Each item on the

list begins with “being able to...” because, as she argues, “capability to function, not actual functioning, should be the goal of legislation and public planning” (ibid., 221). Claassen (2017) builds on Nussbaum by describing the relationship between agency (of participational and navigational varieties), capability, and justice. Importantly, Claassen suggests that because the development of capability lists is culturally and historically situated, we should attempt to create “substantive but non-perfectionist capability theories of justice” that offer certain capabilities as intrinsic to a just society while maintaining democratic flexibility in their definitions (2017, 1297). Thus, in developing a capability list for the food system, it is important to try to identify capabilities that are broadly applicable, but also mutable depending on their application to particular environments and problems. While the first constitutive question is primarily concerned with agency and capability, the second focuses on constrictive social structures.

CRQ 2: Structures that Constrict Food System Agency

This second question asks: what structures in food systems and society inhibit agency-generating capabilities? To understand these structures, I focused on definitions of social structures as articulated by Musolf (2017) and Claassen (2017). These authors highlight the interrelatedness of social institutions (structure) and the capabilities that exist within their contexts; to the point where, as Robeyns (2017) points out, it is critically important in any capability analysis to define both. Musolf states that social structure “refers to patterned social relations, rules, and resources,” as well as to “the innumerable social facts *external to the individual* and over which the individual does not have much control” (Musolf 2017, 3). Claassen builds upon this definition by pointing out that because socio-cultural practices are particularly situated, the structure in which they take place “both enables and constrains individual action” (2017, 1288). In considering constrictive structures, it is also useful to refer to

Clapp's (2015) notion of "distance," which refers to the fact that individual actions in navigating the food system are often conceptually divorced from the social structures that facilitate or constrain them. This condition of distance obscures the connections between structure and agency in the food system, further necessitating analysis of the two in tandem. Thus, I conducted this research using interrelated frameworks that conceptualize agency and structure as a distanced dialectic. These frameworks together provide a conceptual foundation for the third constitutive question, which asks about the ways in which certain food movement efforts address inhibited capabilities and their corresponding structural constraints.

CRQ 3: Food Justice and Food Sovereignty's Engagements with Capability

The third constitutive question that guides this research turns an eye toward applying the framework developed through CRQs 1 and 2: how does the capability framework make visible the efforts of food movements in increasing social mobility by addressing both capabilities and the structures that impede them? First, it should be noted that when I refer to a "food movement," I am referring to a type of *social movement*. In general, a social movement refers to collective activity, generally outside of established, institutional channels, that expresses some agreed-upon desire for social change based on identified, mutual grievances (Snow et al. 2019; Gupta 2017). Food movements, or social movements focused on increasing food system equity and sustainability, are in many ways primary drivers of just change in the food system and may be able to disrupt the reproduction of economic inequality, even beyond the scope of the food system. Though a generally recognized "food movement" arose out of "calls for quality, environmental sustainability, and safety of food (e.g., fresh, organic, local)," it has since incorporated rising awareness about the plight of marginalized groups (Holt-Giménez and Wang 2011, 85; *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability* 2011).

Since a comprehensive review of all food movements with relation to the structure/agency dialectic is beyond the scope of this Capstone, I have chosen to focus the movement analysis at the heart of this question on the most relevant and conceptually compatible examples. In the context of the questions discussed above, it is useful to examine those food movements that seek to mediate the space between oppressive, inequitable structures and individual agency—thus, as discussed in Chapter 2, I have chosen to analyze food justice and food sovereignty movements and their most common interventions. To pursue this third constitutive question, I apply the framework developed using Musolf’s (2017) “structure-and-agency perspective” in tandem with the findings of my initial two constitutive questions. This preliminary food movement analysis serves as an exercise to evaluate the efficacy of the capability framework in this context. It also illustrates how the lens of capability promises to shed light on how movements might more effectively engage with constricted food system agency among the lower classes.

Up to this point, I have established the overarching conceptual frameworks for and points of inquiry, which address 1) food system capability, 2) how food system structures inhibit lower-class agency, and 3) food movements’ engagements with economic inequality and social immobility in terms of the structure/agency dialectic. In the next section, I will explain the methodology and methods used to address each of the constitutive questions discussed above.

Capstone Research Design

To reiterate, the overall question directing this research is: how can agency and structure be conceptualized in the food system in order to increase social mobility for the lower classes? Research to this end was divided into three constitutive questions as described in the previous

section. This section will outline the methodological approaches I have taken to answering each of these constitutive questions. The explanation of the research design is organized by question, outlining for each the unit of analysis, methodological approach, and methods employed in the research process. I begin with the first constitutive question, which establishes a conceptual foundation for an explanation of methodology and methods for the subsequent questions.

CRQ 1

The initial question asks: what capabilities *must* lower-class people have in order to increase their social mobility? The unit of analysis for this question is the set of food system capabilities that influence social mobility and, consequently, economic inequality. In other words, to answer this question we need to say something about the connection between what actors are able to do within the food system and the social problem of economic inequality. To establish a preliminary set of relevant instances of food system agency, I conducted a qualitative content analysis of the ways in which agency is represented in literature discussing food justice and food sovereignty movements in the US. Qualitative content analysis refers to the process of textual analysis in search of patterns, themes, or recurring instances of particular concepts (Boréus and Bergström 2017). As discussed in Chapter Two, I focused the scope of the research on food justice and food sovereignty movements and literature about them because of their critical ontological foundations that make visible what people can and cannot do in the food system. The unit of observation for this question is thus the set of explanations and instances of food system capability within literature related to food justice and food sovereignty movements-

To find this literature, which was my data source, I conducted keyword searches based on my analytical criteria. I limited searches to peer-reviewed research conducted in the US since 2000, which both narrowed the search scope and acknowledged the relatively recent growth of

critical food system scholarship. Exceptions to peer-reviewed literature include primary sources such as mission statements and self-descriptions from specific food movement organizations. Within the scope of literature related to food justice and food sovereignty movements, I distilled results using keywords that connected any potential sources to the overall focus on agency: “capabilit*,” “capacit*,” “choice,” “free*,” “agen*,” “structure*,” “inhibit*,” “prohibit*,” “afford*,” and “access*.” This range of keywords reflects the influence of the capability approach in my conception of agency in the food system, and limits the sample within the bounds of the structure/agency dialectic. From the resultant sample, I was able to identify specific food system capabilities that relate to social mobility.

To organize the content analysis and data I employed multiple strategies to ensure a structured process. Each source in the sample was coded in Endnote with keywords (e.g.; “navigational capability, social capability”) that indicate how the “doings” or “beings” represented within relate to the previously determined categories of agency in the food system. In addition, I created a research “notebook” document in Microsoft Word that breaks down the entire inquiry into its constituent parts, organized by research question and concept. Each source that proved relevant was annotated, with the annotation logged into the research notebook in its appropriate section. This constitutive question lent itself to an inductive approach to determining analytic criteria in order to further organize the data. During the process of conducting the content analysis, it became clear that categorization of instances of food system agency would be necessary; to that end, I inductively derived general categories of agency from Nussbaum’s list of basic capabilities (see Table 1)—this process will be discussed further in Chapter 4. Using similar methodology, I shifted from agency to a structural focus in the second constitutive question.

CRQ 2

Having developed a list of essential capabilities in the food system, I turned in the second question to describing oppressive structures, asking: what structures in food systems and society inhibit agency-generating capabilities? The purpose of this question is to establish and describe the set of social structures in the food system that act as obstacles to capability and the social mobility of the lower classes. Answering this question provides insight as to what aspects of the current US food system represent an unjust limitation of capability, and thus require the attention of social justice-oriented movements.

The unit of analysis for this question was the range of oppressive structures in the food system represented in literature relevant to food sovereignty and food justice movements, specifically those that have a dampening effect on lower-class agency. The methodology, units of observation, and approach to data collection employed to answer this second question mirrors that of the first. The exception to this is the fact that the unit of observation for this question is structural constraint, instead of capabilities. As the goal for answering CRQs 1 and 2 was to create a list of capabilities with a corresponding list of the structural barriers that inhibit them, I was able to use the data sources and sample from CRQ 1. For data analysis, instead of combing through the sample for instances of agency that generate social mobility, I identified the corresponding social structures that inhibit these capabilities. After working through conceptualizations of structure and agency in the food system in CRQs 1 and 2, I then conducted a preliminary social movement analysis to address CRQ 3 and illustrate how the application of this framework might work in practice.

CRQ 3

Having constructed a framework of structure and agency in the US food system, the third constitutive question asks: how does the capability framework make visible the efforts of food movements in increasing social mobility by addressing both capabilities and the structures that impede them? This question applies the lists developed previously to an analysis of movement interventions. With the first two constitutive questions, I utilized the sampled literature relevant to food justice and food sovereignty movements to identify essential food system capabilities and their corresponding structural constraints. In the third constitutive question, I applied the assembled frameworks of structure and agency to cases identified in this literature that are representative of common efforts for each food movement (food justice and food sovereignty). CRQs 1 and 2 developed the criteria to be employed in a practical analytical application. The purpose of this framework is to situate existing food movement efforts in relation to the ultimate goal of shrinking economic inequality by using food movement actions to increase social mobility. The unit of analysis for this question is this capability framework itself, in a preliminary effort to understand what the framework does or does not make visible in a social movement analysis.

While the methodology for the first two questions mined literature about food justice and food sovereignty movements for instances of agency and inhibitive structures, the content analysis here identified interventions common in the movements in question. The unit of observation for this question is, then, the ways in which food movement analysis and movements efforts themselves align with the framework. I used the same set of data sources – i.e., food justice and food sovereignty literatures – to identify the efforts to analyze.

In this chapter, I have elaborated upon the process that will guide this research inquiry. I established that the research is conducted from a critical constructivist orientation—I believe that particular conceptions of reality are useful in identifying patterns that can inform social justice efforts. I outlined the research questions that serve as the structure of this Capstone, indicating that the research focuses on defining essential capabilities and structural barriers in the food system as well as positioning food movement efforts in terms of that framework. The process for answering these questions involves content analysis of literature about particular food movements, as well as critical analysis of their intervention strategies. In the next chapter, I present the results, analysis, and contribution achieved as a result of this research process.

Four—Research Applications and Contribution

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of my research seeking to address the constitutive and overall questions detailed above. I begin by restating the overall question that guided the research process and explaining how it relates to the social problem and research problem I address. The chapter is organized by constitutive question—I present results and explain my analysis of the data for each question before moving on to the next. Following the discussion of results and analysis is a section devoted to a statement of the contribution of this work. Here I revisit how my analysis relates to the overall research question, detail how this project contributes to addressing the social problem of economic inequality, and offer suggestions as to future research and practice. Before diving into the presentation of results and analysis, I restate the overall research question and purpose of each constitutive question so as to provide some context for the ensuing discussion.

Research Findings

The general social problem that I hope to address with this research is the condition of economic inequality produced by systems that privilege certain social groups over others. Specifying further, the research problem within the larger issue of economic inequality is the structural restriction of lower-class agency in the US food system. Thus, the overall question research question asks how we might neatly conceptualize individual agency and structure with the explicit aim of increasing social mobility for the lower classes. The research conducted in the service of the overall question addresses these problems by providing a conceptual foundation for analyzing food movement efforts—with such tools in hand, it may be possible to more effectively direct food system social change efforts toward addressing restricted agency, limited social mobility, and overall economic inequality.

By establishing what agency in the food system looks like through the lens of capability, the first constitutive question highlights which specific categories of capability are most salient in an effort to increase mobility for the lower classes. By identifying the corresponding structural constrictions on those categories of capability, the second constitutive question completes a “structure-and-agency” framework that can be applied to food movement analysis (Musolf 2017). Constitutive question three provides a preliminary application of the framework constructed in the previous two questions and examines the focus of food movement efforts with specific regard to how they address limited agency and/or constrictive social structures. In so doing, the conceptual framework constructed in answering CRQ 1 and CRQ 2 is also evaluated.

In the following sections, I present the results and analysis for constitutive questions one, two, and three. For each question a presentation of the results is followed by analysis. Findings for CRQ 1 consist of an explanation of the process of categorizing sets of capabilities in the food system, and a discussion of which of these categories are most directly related to social immobility and economic inequality. Findings for CRQ 2 revolve around the elaboration of a table outlining the particular social structures that inhibit the capabilities identified in CRQ 1, with a brief discussion regarding structural scale. Findings for CRQ 3 are presented in the form of a preliminary food movement analysis focused on food justice, food sovereignty, examples of representative interventions of each, and what the capability framework offers in this context. I begin with the question of lower-class agency in the food system: which capabilities are necessary to achieve a basic level of agency, and which structures inhibit this process?

CRQ 1: Instances of Agency in the Food System

The first constitutive question asks: what capabilities *must* lower-class people have in order to increase their social mobility? The goal in asking this question was to identify patterns of specific capabilities in literature relevant to food justice and food sovereignty movements that represent a connection to social mobility. Even within this subset of literature, there remained an overwhelming multitude of particular instances of capability, many of which were irrelevant to this inquiry, or so case-specific that they did not lend themselves to the broad framework I wished to construct. In order to arrive at a succinct list of capabilities, I created categories to organize the varied instances of food system capability in the literature. As this is a social justice-oriented inquiry, I began with Nussbaum's (1992) capability theory of justice, partially articulated as a list of basic capabilities (see Table 1). This list of ten capabilities theoretically applies to human society in general, and thus it served as an appropriate starting point to determine broadly applicable categories that could organize the full gamut of forms of food system agency. I grouped each item on Nussbaum's list into categories, which coalesced into the following: navigational capability, intellectual capability, environmental capability, and pleasure capability. I explain each category in what follows.

Navigational¹	Intellectual	Environmental²	Pleasure
1) “Being able to live to the end of a complete human life, as far as is possible; not dying prematurely, or before one’s life is so reduced as to be not worth living.”	4) “Being able to use the five senses; being able to imagine, to think, and to reason.”	5) “Being able to have attachments to things and persons outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence, in general, to love, grieve, to feel longing and gratitude.”	3) “Being able to avoid unnecessary and nonbeneficial pain and to have pleasurable experiences.”
2) “Being able to have good health; to be adequately nourished, to have a dequate shelter; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction; being able to move from place to place.”	6) “Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one’s own life.”	7) “Being able to live for and with others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of familial and social interaction.”	9) “Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.”
10) “Being able to live one’s own life and nobody else’s; being able to live one’s own life in one’s very own surroundings and context.”		8) “Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.”	

Table 2. Nussbaum's Basic Capabilities, Organized by General Category (Numbers Correspond to Nussbaum's List; see Table 1)

Claassen (2017) characterizes “navigational agency” by explaining that “navigational agents are able to choose which practices to participate in, i.e. to make decisions about *entry and exit* in social practices,” essentially referring to an individual’s ability to move and act in society (1290). My category of navigational capability is based around this—the general ability for an

¹ I had originally distinguished between navigational and biological categories of capability. However, given the inextricable connection in the US capitalist food system between health, socioeconomic status, and ability to navigate the food system, it became clear that the capability to lead a healthy life is almost entirely contingent on the navigational capability of an individual. The reality for most individuals within the food system is that the ability to engage in the social practice of healthful living depends on being able to determine their own diet, or “to choose which practices to participate in”—the fundamental aspect of navigational agency.

² “Environmental” in this context relates to the relationships between human individuals and other human individuals (i.e., social relations), as well as between human individuals and the natural environment.

individual to move and act within the food system. Despite the fact that only three of Nussbaum's ten capabilities are deemed navigational (items 1, 2, and 10), this category is critically important for my work because of the connections between food system capability, socioeconomic position, and social mobility.

The second category of capabilities is intellectual. Items 4 and 6 on the list refer to the ability to think/imagine and to critically reflect, respectively. Given that the focus of this research is to advance social justice in the food system, the capacity of individual actors in this domain to critically reflect (item 6) is key. As I discussed in Chapter 2, there is a direct connection between constrained agency, feelings of powerlessness, and decreased critical thinking. If one cannot reflect on experiences and imagine a more socially-just food system, it will be difficult to realize. It is important here to state that "intellectual capability" in this context is not related to arbitrary measures of intelligence like the intelligence quotient or any other normative standard of individual intelligence. Categorizing certain instances of capability in the food system as intellectual simply refers to the potential for an actor to think, imagine, and critically reflect—not whether they are "smart enough" to do so.

The "environmental" category represents items five, seven, and eight on Nussbaum's basic capability list. These capabilities have to do with the relationships between human individuals and the environment around them. This can refer to the social environment (items five and seven) or the natural environment (item eight). Essentially, the environmental category of Nussbaum's list represents her assertion that a basic aspect of social justice is that social conditions should allow everyone the freedom to connect and dictate relationships with the world around them. In the food system domain, this might manifest in individuals' abilities to volunteer

for food bank programs, or to make purchasing decisions out of a concern for preservation of the natural environment.

Finally, the “pleasure” category (items three and nine) refers to those capabilities that promote the condition of happiness. The capability approach was developed foremost as an attempt to comprehensively describe wellbeing beyond the purely material. Thus, it is logical that pleasurable experiences and laughter—in a word, joy—should appear as criteria for social justice. Pleasure has clear manifestations in the food system; after all, the act of eating is both an immediate sensory experience and a social act of commensality that holds the potential for immense individual and interpersonal pleasure.

Determining these categories (navigational, intellectual, environmental, and pleasure) was an organizational task that laid the groundwork for applying Nussbaum’s original list to food movement analysis. It allowed for a relatively simple approach to the complex and nebulous notion of “capability in the food system.” Overall, the process of categorizing capability is conceptually similar to the categorization of food justice efforts into “nodes,” which sees the spectrum of food justice efforts aligned with their relationships to trauma/inequity, exchange, land, and labor (Cadieux and Slocum 2015; Slocum and Cadieux 2015). Once I had categorized Nussbaum’s basic list of capabilities, the next step was to apply these categories to the instances of food system agency identified in the literature (see Table 3). Specific instances of food system agency or capability were grouped into larger categories—each of the instances of food system capability shown in Table 3 are in fact themselves categories of capability. “Food procurement,” for example, represents a whole host of food system actions represented in the literature (e.g., purchasing healthful foods, shopping at prestigious grocers). The use of categories here instead of the multitude of ultra-specific capabilities was necessary for a coherent conceptual

framework. These food system-specific capabilities were organized according to Nussbaum’s categorized list of capabilities, which facilitated the process of evaluating which capabilities translate most directly to increased agency in terms of social mobility.

Navigational	Intellectual	Environmental	Pleasure
Food procurement (economic ability to purchase food, availability of food retail, availability of food variety, access to healthy, nourishing food)	Food education & food literacy	Freedom from stigma	Food utilization (for taste)
Food production (ability to grow, process, and distribute one’s own food)	Democratic participation in food system design	Ability to participate in food movements	Cultural relevancy
	Ability to participate in food movements		Ability to labor within the food system free from unnecessary and nonbeneficial pain
	Food system education/critical awareness		
	Food utilization (for health)		

Table 3. Food System Capabilities Organized According to General Capability Categories

In the navigational category, instances of agency relating to food procurement were most prevalent in the food justice literature by a significant margin, while instances relating to food production received primary attention in the food sovereignty literature. Food is a commodity, traded in a marketplace like any other commodity—and as Holt-Giménez points out, “money is the medium through which this exchange occurs...” (2017, 60). So, despite the fact that all people equally need food to survive, only those with sufficient monetary means are able to freely purchase it for themselves. In other words, in the US, the ability to navigate the food system is directly correlated to socioeconomic position. This “being” (i.e., being able to navigate the food

system freely) consists of the potential for a variety of specific “doings,” or functionings—which many of us perform daily without a second thought. Purchasing fresh vegetables at the local farmer’s market, growing carrots in backyard garden beds, and selecting a favorite store to shop at are all examples of actions that constitute food system navigation.

In the literature, discussion of these navigational capabilities is most often discussed in terms of inequity. Food justice and food sovereignty movements share the core grievances that not all people are given equal opportunity to realize the above functionings. Much scholarship in the late 20th and early 21st centuries has been devoted to the topic of “food deserts,” and how to describe and explain these areas of relative food scarcity and limited access (MacDonald and Nelson 1991; Chung and Myers 1999; Morland et al. 2002; Cummins and Macintyre 2006). These studies establish that categorical and systemic obstacles to adequate food procurement exist in higher prevalence for demographic groups who find themselves lower on the socioeconomic hierarchy. Those who struggle to procure adequate food have also historically been dispossessed of their ability to produce their own, whether by physical removal from traditional lands, forcible disconnection from cultural tradition, systemic economic coercion—or all the above (Fairbairn 2012; Graddy-Lovelace 2017; Ramírez 2015). As such, subaltern demographic groups in the US face nearly comprehensive barriers to their capability to navigate a food system characterized and dictated by the capitalist economy. Kraus and Tan (2015) briefly define social mobility as “the ability to move up or down in education and income status,” and as the above scholarship shows, this socioeconomic status has a direct correlation to the ability to navigate the food system (101). Without the capability to reliably purchase or grow their own food or to generally access sources of healthful foods, an individual faces extreme difficulty in changing their socioeconomic status (Freeman 2007; Bedore 2014; Lo and Koenig 2017). Thus,

the navigational category of capability in the food system also has a direct correlation to social mobility.

While the importance of socio-economic status for navigational capabilities was an expected finding, I was surprised at the extent to which intellectual capabilities must also be supported if a movement aims to foster agency and social mobility. I had approached the research with the assumption that navigational capability would be the category most critical to increasing social mobility in the lower classes, but the categorization process discussed above revealed a more complex dynamic. Considering the concept of the navigational category is tied directly to mobility in society, it was somewhat surprising to realize that in themselves these capabilities were not sufficient to increase social mobility. Awareness and education came up many times during the research process as important for realizing agency and social mobility/socially-just food systems. Broad (2016), for example, discusses at length the efforts of Community Services Unlimited Inc. (CSU), which originated as a chapter of the Black Panther Party and has worked for some time in the Southern California area on food justice issues. One of their primary approaches is to develop educational programs that encourage youth not only to learn about the food system, but “to develop the critical thinking skills that allow them to analyze the key cultural and social issues that shape their lives, as well as to build practical skills that make them more successful as students, workers, and community members going forward” (71). That education is key to positive social advancement is nothing new, but it is important in terms of food system capability—specifically that “being able to critically evaluate the food system” is a vital piece to the social mobility and food system capability puzzle.

This capability of “food system awareness” in the intellectual category is distinguished from “food education.” In the context of significant, systemic social change, scholars caution

against too heavy a reliance on education about food itself, e.g., popular food literacy discourses proffered by such cultural figures as Michael Pollan or Chef Dan Barber (Pollan 2008; Barber 2014). Though itself important, this education discourse assumes that lack of knowledge is the primary barrier and consequently often neglects to confront the structural nature of economic inequality as represented in the food system. Instead, *food system awareness* as used here refers to an ability to critically examine the social structure of the food system (Clendenning, Dressler, and Richards 2016; Cadieux and Slocum 2015; Bradley and Herrera 2016). Allen (2008) points out scholars' crucial role in advancing the standard of what is considered possible in the realm of social change. Bradley and Herrera (2016), in discussing their positionality, observe how combinations of embodied education and access to institutional resources facilitated their decolonial critiques of both the food system and progressive but colonial food justice movements. Like the example discussed above, critical education has been vital to the food justice efforts within subaltern communities for both enhancing community ties as well as spreading awareness about movement efforts and social problems (Broad 2016; Garth 2020; Hassberg 2020b; Sbicca 2017; Loo 2014). This is particularly true in food sovereignty movement efforts, which though inclusive of the concept of a return to an agrarian ideal are also explicitly aimed at severance from a globalized, neoliberal food system (Hodgson 2012; Tursunova et al. 2020; Campesina 2007). These points highlight the fact that social mobility in the food system requires, to some extent, awareness that *immobility* is a problem in the first place.

The environmental capability category in this research is focused on social relations in one's social and built environments. Environmental capabilities were less clearly visible in the literature, as many of the prominent efforts in each movement are focused on either the economic aspects of individual agency, or on fostering education and awareness within specific

communities. I should point out that I did not focus as intently on capabilities with regard to the natural environment. Despite the major role the modern food system plays in environmental degradation and ecological disruption, as well as the ecological foundations of the food system, these issues are beyond the scope of this research. I am primarily concerned with the specific socioeconomic dynamics of the US food system, and the food system agency of individual actors.

One of the more common instances of social capability represented in the literature reviewed had to do with the prestige of certain methods of food procurement. Though related to navigational capability, the ability to be free from social stigma is a distinct condition that is more related to the environment and social relations around an individual than the economic system per se. As discussed above, sites of food scarcity in the US are inequitably distributed, producing “food deserts” exacerbate the difficult living situations of marginalized communities. Along with direct obstacles to healthful food procurement, one of the results of inequitably distributed food retail options is the hierarchical social associations that develop. In other words, certain demographic groups (e.g., low-income urban African-Americans) become associated with the limited retail sites available to them, while others (e.g., upper-middle-class white people) become associated with those retail sites to which they have access. Inevitably, a hierarchy of prestige develops, and the act of purchasing food at particular stores becomes situated on a spectrum of social acceptability, while certain populations become “outsiders” in specific retail sites (Dover and Lambert 2016). Stigmatization such as this is not only prevalent in the geographical and social distribution of food procurement opportunities.

Food system actors, particularly those in the lower classes, also face stigma from groups who purport to be advocates for progressive food system change. As awareness regarding

healthful diets and responsible food sourcing increases, those with little access find many of their food-related practices (e.g., shopping, food preparation at home) characterized by a sense of defensiveness as they are unable to meet new standards of living well (Clark-Barol, Gaddis, and Barrett 2021). Bedore (2014) and Miewald and McCann (2014) discuss the manner in which well-meaning interventions can often worsen stigmatization and othering if the intervening parties neglect to include those targeted for assistance in strategy development. Alkon and McCullen (2011) emphasize the fact that even if a site of alternative food system action—such as a farmer’s market predominantly operated and patronized by white people—is not overtly exclusive, it can be so in practice because associations between these markets, visible economic mobility, and whiteness are deeply internalized by those who do not identify as such. This results in strong feelings that farmer’s markets (and other sites of food system agency that project a certain level of socioeconomic security and mobility) are not meant for those outside the bounds of wealth and whiteness. Cloke, May, and Williams (2017) and Clark-Barol, Gaddis, and Barrett (2021) discuss ways in which these forms of stigmatization might be mitigated in food assistance programs. They highlight the marked difference in experience for lower-class participants who feel more comfortable in assistance situations, which translates into increased effectiveness of assistance programs as levels of participation rise, and those who need help are open to receive it. There are many programs and interventions within the food system that aim to assist those with little means, but the efficacy of many of these are contingent upon the capability of their participants to be free from stigmatization in assistance and other food procurement environments. Bearing all of this in mind, it is clear that the environmental category of capability—particularly the capability of being free from social stigma—is vital to increasing the social mobility of lower-class groups.

The subject of pleasure, the final category of food system capability, is somewhat obscured in the literature on food justice and food sovereignty. Of primary focus are issues of access, health, economic inequality, inequitable distributions of harm, and ongoing efforts to address these social problems. Specific movements adjacent to the food justice and food sovereignty domains, such as the Slow Food Movement, center pleasure and taste in their strategic approaches to reforming the food system (Petrini 2001). However, in this context, the pleasure of eating is essentially cast as a reward for accomplishing the aims of the movement. In the case of the Slow Food Movement, discussion of diet quality and the pleasure of food comes as a corollary to the overall goal of shrinking food networks and focusing on the local food output of particular geographical locales. It is apparently rare to find discussion in the food justice and sovereignty scholarship about the capability of pleasure for pleasure's sake, though Nussbaum (1992) argues that this is a fundamental aspect of wellbeing integral to a just society. However, the capabilities of being able to prepare culturally relevant food and being able to labor within the food system free from unnecessary and nonbeneficial pain (to echo Nussbaum's language) frequently arose in the literature. I categorized these as pleasure capabilities because they refer to the relatively abstract notion of individual happiness/contentedness, which I felt to be distinct enough from the other three categories of capability to warrant a separate label.

Though I deemed cultural relevancy of food to be within the "pleasure" category, I have dismissed it as absolutely necessary to increasing social mobility. The issue of cultural relevancy generally arises alongside discussion of the tensions between subaltern communities and the social and distributive networks of the locales in which they live (Mares and Peña 2011; Alkon and Norgaard 2009; Horst 2017). This topic crops up with relative frequency but is complicated by contradictions between establishing cultural relevancy of foods as a fundamental tenet of food

justice efforts and larger concerns in the alternative food movement regarding sustainability of global food networks and more apparently pressing issues of access to sufficient nutrition. Thus, though access to culturally relevant food is a topic that is personally important to me, I do not feel it has sufficient connection to the questions of economic inequality and social mobility that are at the heart of my research.

The capability of being able to labor within the food system free from unnecessary and nonbeneficial pain, however, is an instance of pleasure capability that is quite salient to these questions. The prevalence of labor abuses and inhumane working conditions in the food system has been well documented. Farmworkers in the US (predominantly immigrants) face long hours, wages on which it is impossible to survive, arduous labor with few enforceable safety regulations, exposure to harmful chemicals, physical abuse, and in some cases, outright enslavement (Holmes 2013; Estabrook 2018; Minkoff-Zern 2017; Graddy-Lovelace 2017). Though many of these workers have internalized the American rags-to-riches narrative and hope their hard work translates into upward social mobility, their subjection to unjust conditions often ensures their stasis among the lowest socioeconomic classes in the US. The same is true throughout the various stages of the food system, from processing and distribution to retail and foodservice (FCWA 2016; Jayaraman 2013; Dalla, Ellis, and Cramer 2005). Because of the primacy of labor issues in the food system, and the clear connection between low socioeconomic status and employment in the food chain, I argue that the capability to labor free from pain is another key to any effort to increase social mobility among the lower classes.

In answering this first constitutive question of my research, I have sought not only to identify instances of agency within the food system, but specifically those that have a strong connection to the capacity for social mobility among the lower socioeconomic classes in the US.

Table 4 is a list of must-have capabilities in the food system derived from the data presented above. It is presented as a list and in a similar format to Nussbaum's (1992) list of basic capabilities.

Food System Capability

1) Being able to access healthy, nourishing food.
2) Being able to exercise some degree of choice in food procurement.
3) Being able to access education regarding food; i.e., how to grow, process, and/or prepare nutritional food.
4) Being able to access education regarding the food system; to critically reflect upon the design and implementation of food system structures.
5) Being able to equitably and democratically participate in food movements and food system design.
6) Being able to be free from social stigma regarding food procurement and/or preparation methods.
7) Being able to labor within the food system free from unnecessary pain.

Table 4. Must-Have Capabilities in the Food System for Fostering Social Mobility Among the Lower Classes

The findings of this constitutive question establish a list of necessary capabilities to increasing upward social mobility through actions in the food system domain. Laying this groundwork is a vital first step toward developing a clearer picture of the structure-and-agency dynamic in a food system context. The discussion now turns from agency to structural restriction in the food system, with specific regard to the restriction of lower-class agency.

CRQ 2: Structures that Constrict Food System Agency

The second constitutive question asks: what are the constrictive structures in food systems and society that must be reformed or eliminated in order to support increased social mobility? As Robeyns (2017) points out in her description of the modular view of the capability approach, the development of a capability theory requires both an account of agency and an account of structural constraints (63-66). This is a requirement because if we are to describe a social actor's particular level of capability, we must acknowledge that this is a product of the dialectical relationship between agency and the social structures that facilitate or inhibit individual or collective action. The first constitutive question was, according to Robeyns's framework, an account of agency in the context of socioeconomic mobility in the food system. To complete this capability theory for the food system, it is necessary to assemble a corresponding list of inhibitive aspects of social organization, that is, an account of structural constraints. As this list of social structures is intended to mirror that of the capabilities outlined in CRQ 1, I will proceed item by item, explaining the primary structural constraints associated with each capability, as observed in the literature. Due to the complex nature of the interactions between individual agency and structural constraint, the following discussion is intended to be illustrative, rather than a comprehensive description of all possible constraints.

I begin with items 1 and 2, which are tightly interconnected: being able to access healthy, nourishing food, and being able to exercise some degree of choice in food procurement. It is important at the outset of this discussion to reemphasize the distinction between a capability and a functioning—and these specific capabilities provide helpful context to do so. I am not concerned with whether or not an individual fulfills a specific capability (i.e., enacts a functioning). The food system actor is free to choose healthful foods or not; to shop at a food co-

op or Walmart; to grow their own food or purchase pre-packaged meals. The measure of justice in this framework is whether or not the individual is *capable* of doing these things.

Thus, in examining the first two items on the list of capabilities compiled in Table 4, it is necessary to extrapolate from the literature if the possibility of choice is available to particular individuals, rather than quantitatively gathering data regarding whether or not they have actually made specific choices. Because individual/collective agency and social structures exist as a dialectic, if a food movement participant or scholar observes an actor's *inability* to act in a particular way, we can assume there is some form of structural constraint in place that prevents them from doing so. It must also be said that the emphasis on choice in item 2 is comprehensive; that is, I am not simply referring to strategies such as increasing the number of retail locations so the actor can "choose." In this context, "choice" is illusory, as Patricia Allen (2004) points out: "For those who lack economic means in a market system based on choice, the distinction between coercion and choice becomes meaningless" (125). In claiming "being able to exercise some degree of choice in food procurement" as an essential capability to increase social mobility, I refer to the *real* ability, meaning if the individual so chooses, they could fulfill this capability at any given moment in time. This helps to identify the structural constraints on each specific capability, as it places the emphasis on more systemic root causes of the problems. In the case of items 1 and 2, this systemic root cause is the inequitable economic system in the United States.

Taking the widest perspective on this capability shows us that the underlying reason many members of the lowest socioeconomic classes in the US have restricted choice and access in food procurement is a lack of sufficient monetary means with which to exchange. This is because 1) food is a commodity exchanged in a capitalist market through the medium of money

and 2) access to food is not considered a basic human right in the United States (Holt-Giménez 2017; Anderson 2013). To anticipate a common argument, the reason whole swaths of people in the US struggle to access sufficiently nutritious food is *not* because individuals are not working hard enough to accrue the wealth necessary to enjoy choice in food procurement. The root cause is a society structured in such a way that the maintenance of the condition of poverty is essential to continued profit growth for the owner classes (Holt-Giménez 2017; Piketty 2018). If we are to move toward being a society that no longer produces this condition, we must look to systemic causes, and identify those problematic aspects of the system that must be reformed or transformed (Holt-Giménez and Wang 2011).

Within the food justice and food sovereignty literature, scholars and movement advocates consistently identify problems of access to sufficiently healthy food with neoliberalism, or the perspective that capitalist markets should be regulated as little as possible, facilitating unfettered growth and expansion (Otero 2018; Broad 2016; Guthman 2011b; Clapp and Scrinis 2017; Allen 2004). Meanwhile, as Anderson (2013) discusses, the refusal of the US to officially affirm the right to food reveals a federal policy position that aligns with the neoliberal perspective, prioritizing the exchange value of food over the overall wellbeing of the nation's citizens. The neoliberal capitalist food economy and the federal government's prioritization of food as a commodity over food as a right are structural constraints that serve as barriers to the food procurement capabilities of the lower socioeconomic classes.

The next two items on the capability list (items 3 and 4) can also be grouped together for the purposes of this discussion. While the first two items are concerned with capability with regard to food procurement, 3 and 4 are related to education. Item 3—being able to access education regarding food—refers to what is commonly described as food literacy. This has to do

with how an individual interacts with food itself throughout various food system processes. Item 4—being able to access education regarding the food system—takes a meta perspective, and is concerned with an individual’s capability to learn about the food system and its various mechanisms. It is important to note once again that because agency and structural constraint have a dialectical relationship, identifying these constraints in the literature begins with a look at inhibited capability. For example, if an author expresses a need for increased education or discusses the merits of progressive educational programs, we can assume that there is some social structure, or set of structures, that has previously constrained individuals’ capability to access learning.

Food usage (both preparation and consumption) among children is one topic that we can see arising frequently in the food justice literature. Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) discuss this in the context of food justice efforts in Philadelphia. The authors highlight The Food Trust, a nonprofit organization that, among other things, focuses on school foodscapes, seeking to contest the pervasiveness of unhealthy food in schools and their surrounding communities through various educational programs (147). This organization has made significant change within this particular community—but by amplifying the educational message of The Food Trust, Gottlieb and Joshi are also referring to a previously-identified social structure that acts to inhibit students’ capability to access and engage with this education: namely, aggressive junk food advertising. They point out that food and beverage advertisers spend \$10-\$15 billion a year on ads specifically targeted to youth, and 98% of these ads are for food products that are high in sugar, fat, or sodium (74). Importantly, the authors discuss the intersectional nature of the harm done by such marketing, asserting that its harmful effects are compounded in the low-income communities and people of color—precisely those social groups who find it most difficult to

exercise social mobility. Thus, by looking at what food justice efforts are championed in the literature, we can identify constrictive structures; in this case, socially deleterious food industry marketing that dampens awareness of and interest in food education. However, calls for increased food literacy through educational programs also frequently connect to another structural constriction of capability: a problematic public education system.

Much of the literature that champions food education programs are concerned with marginalized communities that have historically been excluded from social benefits and experience the most acute and prolonged harm from an underfunded and archaic public education system. Within these geographical areas and demographic groups, populations are much more vulnerable to the institution of advertising discussed above as a result of restricted access to quality education (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010; Vogel et al. 2017; Raley 2006). First, there is the problem of distributive inequity in marginalized communities (made visible through such interventions as the Black Panthers' survival programs in the 1960s discussed above) (Hassberg 2020a). The Panthers are one among many groups who have recognized the intersecting damages visited upon their communities by structural inequality, not least of which being substandard education for their youth. Second, there is the fact that the US public curriculum obscures colonial and oppressive histories, essentially cutting off the avenues for the youth in marginalized areas to understand the historical explanations for why their community faces undue obstacles to equity and social mobility (Broad 2016; Bradley and Herrera 2016; Tursunova et al. 2020). Thus, in addition to the social institution of food advertising, we can point to a substandard education system as a significant structural constraint on food literacy. However, based on studies linking higher levels of education with lower levels of food insecurity, we can conclude that, rather than a question of education about food in particular, the

important correlation is between access to quality education and social mobility in general (Vogel et al. 2017; Ball, Crawford, and Mishra 2006; Barker et al. 2009). This point is underscored by criticisms put forward by food systems scholars and progressive advocates who assert that the most important form of education for significant change comes from building more comprehensive awareness of food *systems*, as opposed to food itself.

The distinction between the two is a question of conceptual scale. Food education deals with visceral interactions between humans and food (e.g., individual production, preparation, and consumption). Meanwhile, the conceptual framework of food systems includes “all elements and activities related to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, the market and institutional networks for their governance, and the socio-economic and environmental outcomes of these activities” (Brouwer, McDermott, and Ruben 2020, 2). In other words, thinking about food systems involves considering the entire ecology of the food system domain, while situating it within a socio-historical context. This is recognized throughout the food justice and sovereignty literature as many progressive organizations orient their work around comprehensive projects meant to develop critical awareness of the interlocking mechanisms of the food system, while scholars call for more comprehensive approaches (Broad 2016; Gottlieb and Joshi 2010; Brouwer, McDermott, and Ruben 2020). All this is to say that we can still confidently identify advertising and a substandard education system as constrictive structures for educational capability within the food system, while noting that if our goal is significant social change, conscious programming that builds awareness of food systems rather than food itself is crucial. The emphasis here on education regarding the food system facilitates greater critical awareness in society, which is key to the fifth capability on the essential list.

The fifth item on the essential capability list regards whether an individual is able to equitably and democratically participate in food movements and food system design. This capability is connected to a host of structural constraints, including the educational obstacles discussed above. For that reason, I wish to reemphasize that this discussion is illustrative—future work will continue to shed light on the relationships between the inhibitive structures and capabilities at play here³. However, in the interest of compiling a list of corresponding structures to the outlined seven capabilities on the list, we might focus on the “food system design” aspect of this capability—specifically, the domain of food policy. Muller and Wallinga (2015) define policy generally as “institutional rules;” and food policy refers to whenever these rules pertain to an aspect of the food system (186). Policy is a good place to begin this discussion because this is the primary mechanism for setting social structure. These authors, along with others in the sample literature, highlight two characteristics of food policy that serve to hamper democratic access to the policy development process: siloing and obscurity.

Siloing refers to the fact that the creation of food policy tends to occur in piecemeal, isolated approaches to specific components of the food system, which in turn has the effect of obscuring the policy development process, making it less visible to actors outside political institutions. Instead of considering how policies might interact and reverberate throughout the system, “policies [have been] traditionally siloed into sectors such as agriculture, health, food safety, transportation, environment, and business” (Muller and Wallinga 2015, 186). This produces an unnecessarily complex network of food policies that impact each other in reality

³ In particular, there is significant work being done and that should continue to be done regarding accessibility issues in progressive food movements, much of which revolves around racial and class-based systemic barriers. See Slocum (2006), Slocum and Cadieux (2015), Alkon and McCullen (2011), and Bradley and Herrera (2016).

without being designed to interweave. As a result, it is often prohibitively difficult for food movement advocates who wish to participate in food system design to parse through sets of relevant policy, and even more difficult to identify where to aim policy-oriented interventions.

Food sovereignty movements often deal with this directly, in that they aim to achieve structural change. For instance, the Klamath Tribes' struggle for sovereignty in their traditional food system in western Oregon and northern California is a process that is played out in part across economic, land management, and law enforcement contexts (Sowerwine et al. 2019). The complexity and disjointed nature of the US food policy landscape is also why many scholars laud the potential for food policy councils (FPCs) to democratize food system design (Hassanein 2003; Welsh and MacRae 1998; Clancy, Hammer, and Lippoldt 2007; Horst 2017). However, like any social construction, FPCs also have the potential to reflect the baked-in social power imbalances that they ostensibly seek to oppose (Cadieux and Slocum 2015; McCullagh and Raychel 2014). Regardless, the widespread discussion of FPCs in the literature highlights the structural constraints that exist to social actors who wish to engage food policy design, as they explicitly aim to “foster better communications among all actors in the food system, including policy makers and the public” and to “assist residents in understanding the food system and food policy” (Clancy, Hammer, and Lippoldt 2007, 126). We can thus identify policy siloing and the resultant obscurity of the policy development process as a significant structural constraint on the capability of food system actors to participate.

The sixth item on the essential capability list (being able to be free from social stigma regarding food procurement and/or preparation methods) often faces structural obstacles in the form of dominant ideologies and discursive practices. Narratives of health and food have long played a role in establishing social and moral hierarchies in the US. Among other visible

markers, the food that an individual chooses to purchase and prepare—or is forced to procure and prepare, as is the case with many in poverty who depend on charity—can situate them along a social spectrum that has historically favored wealthy white people over communities of color and those with little means (Bradley and Herrera 2016; du Puis 2007). This social process is enacted through the persistence of dominant ideologies of class and morality, filtered through generations from overtly—and state-backed—racist and classist policies to simmering undercurrents that nevertheless negatively impact marginalized social groups. One prominent example of this is the discourse in the US surrounding obesity, which purports to be in the interest of public health but results in the depoliticization of social problems like unequally distributed nutritional disparities and places responsibility on poor individual choices (Guthman 2011b, 2011a; Shannon 2014). The conflation between various instances of food system action and morality (e.g., “voting with your fork,” “correct” nutritional decisions) makes it so that it is difficult for a person with already restricted food system capability to procure food *without* experiencing some form of stigma. Even among alternative food movements whose stated goals include increasing equity and supporting disadvantaged groups, insidious dynamics of paternalism often rear their heads, perpetuating the very structural power imbalances such movements seek to remedy (Bedore 2014; Alkon and McCullen 2011; Guthman 2014; Miewald and McCann 2014). In order for food systems actors at all socioeconomic levels to be free of stigma, dominant discourses in the US must shed their assumptions about food and morality—particularly in the organizations and groups that wish to advance social justice in the food system. However, there is an aspect of the US food system whose discourse would likely benefit from a dose of morality—and that is the hugely problematic condition of food labor.

The seventh and final item on the essential capability list refers to the capability of individuals to labor within the food system free from unnecessary pain. If the US is ever to develop avenues within the food system for those at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy to achieve a basic level of social mobility, fostering this capability is crucial. There is a long tradition of abuse and inhumane conditions in food system labor, from the historical evolution of farm labor abuse (Graddy-Lovelace 2017; Holmes 2013; Estabrook 2018) to food processing facilities (Alliance 2012; Dalla, Ellis, and Cramer 2005; Lo and Koenig 2017), from restaurant kitchens (Jayaraman 2013) to grocery stores (McNicholas et al. 2020; Kane and Tomer 2020; Pottenger 2021). One of the most significant structural constraints on this capability is the fact that the US government has essentially condoned these labor abuses (especially regarding farm labor) by excepting these domains from worker protection regulations. The unspoken policy of looking the other way ensures that the system encourages labor exploitation, which is the most direct way to continually produce cheap food (Bales and Soodalter 2009; Minkoff-Zern 2017; Guthman 2011a). Looking the other way is not restricted to regulatory policy—it is easy for consumers to ignore the conditions of exploitative food system labor when this is precisely the mechanism that keeps food prices down⁴. So, if we are to develop social mobility in the lower classes through better working conditions, we must first tackle an entrenched neoliberal political-economic system that favors corporate profits over human welfare.

Based on this analysis, we can assemble a complete capability-structural constraint table that appears as follows:

Food System Capabilities	Structural Constraints on Capabilities

⁴ However, we are facing increasing food price volatility connected to the emergence of financialization in the food system.

Being able to access healthy, nourishing food.	The neoliberal capitalist food economy; the US government's prioritization of food as a commodity over food as a right
Being able to exercise some degree of choice in food procurement.	
Being able to access education regarding food; i.e., how to grow, process, and/or prepare nutritional food.	A substandard and inequitable public education system; insufficiently regulated advertising
Being able to access education regarding the food system; to critically reflect upon the design and implementation of food system structures.	
Being able to equitably and democratically participate in food movements and food system design.	Food policy siloing and the resultant obscurity of the policy development process
Being able to be free from social stigma regarding food procurement and/or preparation methods.	Dominant, paternalistic discourses conflating food system actions and morality
Being able to labor within the food system free from unnecessary pain.	The neoliberal capitalist food economy

Table 5. A List of Essential Capabilities for Developing Social Mobility and Their Corresponding Structural Constraints

Economic inequality is a vast and ubiquitous social problem. Even within the particular domain of the food system, it can be difficult to grapple with the scope of the problem. The capability framework constructed above, which situates individual agency and structural constraints within the food system, facilitates analysis of food movement efforts in the context of their relationship to developing social mobility. How can particular social justice-oriented food movement interventions gauge their progress against universal socioeconomic problems and assess the compatibility of their work with other interventions? This is the question that I hope this food system capability framework can begin to answer in the future. As a first step, the

following section outlines a preliminary exploration of what a social movement analysis using this framework might look like, and what it might contribute to these questions.

CRQ 3: Food Justice and Food Sovereignty's Engagements with Capability

The third constitutive question asks: how does the capability framework make visible the efforts of food movements in increasing social mobility by addressing both capabilities and the structures that impede them? It was very important to me that this research process produce something that might be of practical benefit to social movements and social justice work. In order to feel confident that the capability framework might have something important to say about questions of economic inequality in the food system, I apply it here as analytical criteria in a brief social movement analysis. This is intended to be preliminary and illustrative; to that end, I singled out an illustrative case from my sample literature to serve as the basis for such an analysis. This case had to include in its focus characteristics common in both food justice and food sovereignty efforts in the US, so that the application of the capability framework might show its cohesive potential between disparate elements of the overall food movement. For this reason, I selected an analysis of collective-minded food hubs in Chicago and Oakland, authored by Meleiza Figueroa and Alison Hope Alkon (2017). Figueroa and Alkon discuss alternative food networks in the form of food hubs (The Healthy Food Hub in Chicago and the Mandela Marketplace in Oakland) that have been developed among and for marginalized social groups in order to increase access to nutritious food as well as to build awareness and empower the community. These food hubs are representative of common food justice and food sovereignty initiatives in the US, with their focus on access and addressing immediate nutritional needs (aims and strategies associated with food justice), as well as their inherent understandings of structural

oppression and the need for resistance and increased control over their food system (aims and strategies associated with food sovereignty). The authors also express an explicit focus on the social dynamics at play within the food hubs, rather than a focus on food itself—an approach supported by the systems focus described in previous sections. In the following discussion, I begin by outlining the items on the essential capability list addressed by the authors in their analysis, followed by attention to the structural constraints they identified.

Figueroa and Alkon’s descriptions and analysis of the food hubs touched on all seven items in the essential capability list. As community food hubs, increasing community access to fresh and healthy foods is a fundamental aspect of both the Healthy Food Hub and the Mandela Marketplace’s missions. Thus, capabilities 1 and 2 (regarding access and choice in food procurement) are directly addressed by these alternative food networks. Both hubs also work to include some educational programming in their social enterprise models, addressing capabilities 3 and 4. The Healthy Food Hub, in particular, organizes educational seminars in their African American operated source farms, in which “African American youth participate in and learn from Black agricultural traditions while providing food for their communities, linking their sustenance to racial identity” (Figueroa and Alkon 2017, 216). Such programming addresses the necessity for systems awareness in education in addition to knowledge about food, a need elaborated upon in the previous section. Figueroa and Alkon’s piece was published as part of a volume that extolls the benefits of collective action, so naturally their discussion frequently alluded to the 5th capability on the list: being able to equitable and democratically participate in food movements and food system design. The authors also discussed the often-fraught dynamics of traditional alternative food networks working for food justice in marginalized communities. They point out that these efforts are commonly associated with whiteness, highlighting the

importance of visible Black bodies in the space to encourage community participation. In providing such a space, these food hubs address the 6th capability—being able to be free from social stigma regarding food procurement. Finally, as both hubs were developed collectively within the community and continue to function as collectives in both operational principles as well as ownership, they also tackle the 7th essential capability: being able to labor within the food system free from unnecessary pain. Because their primary priority is to empower their own community, these organizations do not perpetuate the neoliberal compulsion to boost profits and cut costs that so often results in labor abuses. Though these alternative food networks are rightfully celebrated for addressing so many of the capabilities that are essential to reducing economic inequality, the point of the capability framework is to analyze how movement efforts relate to *both* individual capabilities and their structural constraints.

Applying the framework developed in CRQs 1 and 2 as analytical criteria reveals why Figueroa and Alkon highlight these two specific community food hubs. They not only work toward common food justice goals by supporting individual capability, but also simultaneously offer critiques on the social structures that created widespread inequity in the first place. As the authors repeatedly point out, the fact that these two organizations have grown out of marginalized communities affords them an inherent critical awareness (Figueroa and Alkon 2017, 207). This reference to capacities for critical awareness relates to the concept of a cultural opportunity structure, utilized in social movement scholarship to identify the cultural features of particular moments in time and space that facilitate or constrain the development of a movement (Noonan 1995; Hallgrimsdottir and Benoit 2007). Figueroa and Alkon argue that the historical marginalization of the social groups in question position them to be the ideal source of food justice in their communities. In seeking and constructing alternatives to a system that has

traditionally afforded them little opportunities, those who develop programs such as the Healthy Food Hub and the Mandela marketplace are addressing the social constraints discussed in CRQ 2. As Figueroa and Alkon argue, “these projects are exemplary because their collective structures allow them to contest aspects of neoliberalism commonly embodied by many alternative food organizations even as they simultaneously reproduce others” (208). This rootedness in the affected community also skirts the constraint of dominant, paternalistic discourses imposing utopian ideals of outsiders—what Figueroa and Alkon identify as “deficit thinking” (207). However, these inherent, or “natural,” critiques on structural constraints may fall short of what is needed for systemic change.

The capability framework helps us to see that although these food hubs certainly have a familiarity with the power dynamics that have marginalized their communities, more explicit messaging and non-market based engagements may be necessary to instigate significant social change. The authors themselves acknowledge as much:

“activists in the food hubs depicted [here], and in alternative food systems more generally, participate primarily as buyers and sellers of local organic food, and seek to create social change through shifting market demand. This implicitly lends support to the notion that social change can best be pursued through market exchange relations, relieving the state of its regulatory role” (ibid., 209).

Figueroa and Alkon observe this in anticipation of critiques of market-based intervention efficacy, and go on to laud the ways in which the collective structures of the food hubs “resist both the individualizing focus of neoliberalism and a continued dependence on the corporate food regime” (ibid., 209). In the context of how these efforts contribute to shrinking economic inequality and increasing social mobility on a grander scale, however, it is significant that the goals of these hubs are at the community scale. Though they might resist the structural constraints by providing alternatives that work well for the community, their efforts in

themselves will likely bear little impact on larger scales of engagement (e.g., state or national food-related politics and policy). This is where scale once again arises as an important factor as we work with the capability framework. The Healthy Food Hub and the Mandela Marketplace are exemplary of vibrant smaller-scale efforts that provide viable local alternatives to an inequitable food system—but these are very particular social environments, with particular cultural opportunity structures that inform their efficacy. To forge paths toward truly significant systemic change, isolated food movements such as these must find ways to build alliances across particular contexts in order to build momentum in the overall effort to shrink economic inequality and foster social mobility in the lower classes.

In this section, I have explained the process of developing a capability-based framework for social movement analysis in the food system. I developed seven essential capabilities for increasing social mobility in the food system domain and identified illustrative structural constraints that correspond to each capability (see Table 5). I followed this discussion with a preliminary application of the full framework developed through the research process for CRQs 1 and 2. I examined a brief analysis of alternative food systems rooted in marginalized communities, looking closely at how the food movement efforts and the analysis addressed the essential capabilities and constrictive social structures. This application illustrated the potential that the capability framework has for revealing opportunities for connection and synthesis among food movement efforts in order to further universal social justice goals. In the following section, I submit what I believe to be the important contributions of this research, and possible future directions.

Contribution

To explain the contribution of this research, I first briefly review its guiding structure. The general social problem that sparked this inquiry is the troubling economic inequality on display in the US, both at large and more specifically within the context of the US food system. Building from this, the research problem I chose to address is the existence of structural barriers to upward social mobility in the lower classes. In order to address this problem, I posed the following overall research question: how can agency and structure be conceptualized in the food system in order to increase social mobility for the lower classes? Together, the first two constitutive questions constructed a capability framework that can be applied to social movement analysis in the food system. With these tools, we have a specific lens with which to examine the productive and energetic work of existing food movements and situate their efforts with regard to lower-class agency and social mobility. The third constitutive question of these research showed the potential utility of this framework. By understanding these concepts and developing tools to direct future work in a more focused way, the cumulative energy of ongoing food movements has the potential to take significant steps toward decreasing inequality in the United States.

I must also note once again that the research findings above are illustrative; they are not comprehensive, nor are they intended to be. I hope that the research proves to be useful in future social justice-oriented food movements as well as scholarship on the subject. That being said, I am confident that this research provides a foundation for future work, especially in the interest of developing master frames that might cohere disparate social movement efforts. One such master frame may be what I established as the basis of this research: economic inequality. Specifically, the overall goal of shrinking the vast disparities in economic station by fostering social mobility

among the lower classes can serve to unite the vibrant energies of smaller-scale and differently focused movements.

I believe the framework constructed through this research has such a potential. By examining which instances of capability within the food system domain are necessary for increasing social mobility, and identifying the structural constraints that correspond to these inhibited capabilities, I have provided specific targets and criteria for individuals and organizations in the food movement and in food system scholarship to evaluate progress against larger-scale goals. Using this framework allows social justice advocates to conceive of social mobility as an aspect of evaluating just progress normatively, i.e., the presence of increased social mobility indicates a certain level of social well-being rather than individual achievement. Applying the framework to particular examples illustrated the potential benefit of using a capability lens in food system analysis. Such a lens allows us to capture the energy of micro-scale food movement efforts, as well as the body of critical food system scholarship that helps to position information in such a way that it contributes to macro-scale change. By locating which aspects of ongoing work correspond to which macro social problems, we can conduct the particular-universal translation necessary to shrink disparity while building connections between apparently disparate efforts. Such coalition can in turn mount considerable pressure on high-level policy developers, with sufficient information to both build awareness and support calls for change.

As a brief corollary to this section, it is important to note the impact that scale bears on analysis of structural constraints. Social structures themselves exist at all levels of society. We can see this in the relatively straightforward example of government, which ranges in scale in the US from the federal government down to the municipal level. The scaling of social structures

further applies to non-governmental organizations, social movements, or private enterprise—essentially, any form of structure emerging from society can and will reflect the varying echelons of social organization. When we specifically consider structural constraints on food system agency, it quickly becomes apparent that scale is a crucial factor. Take as an example the fourth essential food system capability on the list: being able to access education regarding the food system. I have identified a substandard and inequitable public education system as a structural constraint on this capability. Within this single structure-agency dynamic, there is a wealth of work to be done unpacking and describing the variety of manners and scales in which the relationship operates. On a macro level, we might critique federal education standards, which could steer curriculum toward meeting certain benchmarks while discouraging critical reflection. On a meso level, we might examine how to further democratize the process of education funding distribution. On a micro level, analysis could focus on a particular school, uncovering how inequitable distribution prohibits the school from including any curriculum outside core subjects. These are hypothetical examples but serve as an illustration as to how this framework can function as analytical scope is scaled up or down—and in fact must do so in order to be viable.

If there is but one lesson to take from this research, it is that there is much hope to be found in the abundance of social justice efforts seeking progressive change in the food system. This is in large part due to the wide variety of particular, localized justice work. However, as many authors before me have persuasively argued, this abundance of particularity presents a difficulty when it comes to facing the juggernaut of capitalism—a system built to thrive on inequality. As we have seen, the capability approach to food system analysis has the potential to align a wide variety of ongoing efforts in food movements. The question of “what are we capable of doing” applies to all manner of specific problems in the food system, and hopefully, without

reorienting the strong work being done at multiple levels, can help to cohere the alternative food movement as a united front against neoliberalism and rampant inequality. By identifying the specific capabilities that must be supported and the structural constraints that must be dismantled, food movements can be positioned along the spectrum of their work, maintaining their particular strengths while aligning in the overall fight for more equality. In this vein, I wish to take some time to submit recommendations for future work in this area.

First, I reiterate that the third constitutive question of my research, in which I applied the capability framework to social movement analysis, was a preliminary example. If the alternative food movement as a whole is to utilize a capability framework as a master frame for their efforts, such analysis will need to be conducted on efforts in particular contexts, locales, and scales. Second (and on the subject of scale), future research might focus on identifying the connections between structural constraints on agency in the food system at varying levels of scale. As discussed previously, something like “the capitalist economic system” can be identified as an overall structural constraint that acts as an inhibitor of navigational capability in the food system. This is clearly a universal constraint—at the broadest level of scale. Research might be conducted, for example, on how this constraint is manifested at varying levels of scale (e.g., federal, state, municipal).

This chapter explained how the philosophical and methodological foundations discussed in Chapters Two and Three have been applied in this research to address each research question. I outlined the capabilities that I see as absolutely necessary to the development of social mobility through food system intervention. I then provided examples of structural constraints that act as inhibitors on those necessary capabilities. Then, taking the capabilities and structural constraints

identified in CRQs 1 and 2, I conducted an illustrative analysis that showed what the framework might make visible when analyzing food movements. Finally, I discussed what I see as the important contributions of this research, and possible future directions for work in this vein. Bearing these future directions in mind, I will now review the overall content of this work, and how the research process and findings might prove useful for future applications of social justice.

Five—Conclusion: Capability and the Social Justice Process

This chapter serves as a brief discussion of how this research contributes to social justice at a more universal level. This capstone has shaped my own relationship with social justice concepts, and it is my hope that it has the potential to do that same for future researchers who seek to advance social justice.

For all of the contributions that I hope this particular path of research offers, the most significant lessons that I will personally take away from the process have to do with approaching social justice practice in general. One of my aims in interrogating capability was to use a specific framework to illuminate broad social problems whose effects are felt far afield from the dynamics of the US food system. I also viewed this research as a way to set myself up for future practical work; as I stated in Chapter 3, the research process was oriented around the notion of praxis, and I insisted on always keeping a connection to real applications. These goals have been fulfilled to an extent that I could not have foreseen at the outset.

For a start, the need for more nuanced awareness and understanding of social problems was a theme that arose frequently throughout the research process. Just as I realized that social mobility requires certain capabilities with regard to awareness and education, this research process has shown me that an emphasis on developing knowledge is crucial to the advancement of social justice. Foremost, people need to be capable of recognizing that problems exist—to be harmed by a social problem does not mean that one is aware of it, not to mention its underlying causes. This highlights the need to bridge the efforts of micro-scale social justice work—only by expanding the frame can we truly see the intricate ways in which social problems are connected, and the root causes that they might share.

As I delved further and further into the capability framework and began applying its concepts to the domain of food systems and society, I was increasingly assured of its broad applicability. In early forays into analysis of social problems and social justice intervention efforts, I noticed a trend: much analysis and subsequent practical work tends to be hyper-focused. There are legitimate reasons that this is the case. For one thing, the root causes of many of the social problems in question are so systemic, so thoroughly intertwined with established social structures that to confront the problem in its entirety would be a doomed effort. Focusing on particular locales or problematic cogs in the system also allows individuals and groups to utilize specific skills and knowledges that might not be most effective at a universal level. At the same time, as focused efforts to improve society continue, they run the risk of losing the common threads that they share. The fact that their identified smaller-scale problems connect at a larger systemic level and that their cohesive efforts might actually challenge major social institutions gets lost—not seeing the forest for the trees, as it were. One of the reasons I hitched my research to the capability approach was the fact that it seeks to more comprehensively describe social problems, including within its framework the multitude of intersecting causes and effects that characterize a social system. The social problems plaguing the food system and society as a whole are exceedingly complex—it is useful to employ a conceptual framework that recognizes and is capable of grappling with nuance and particularity.

This complexity also complicates any attempt to describe social justice. What does it mean, and how do we *do* it? In addition to its broad applicability, the framework of the capability approach includes the development of criteria for justice. Given how nebulous the concept of justice can be, it is extremely useful for any kind of practical application to develop a guide.

As I have described at length, I interpret social justice to be a process, as opposed to a specifically articulated end state. At the universal level, the coordination and cohesion of powerful, but localized and disparate social change efforts is vital. Cohesion between such efforts is a massive undertaking in itself, as Stevenson et al. (2007) emphasize in their discussion of “weaver work,” or Harvey (2000) in his explanation of the necessity of “translation.” The process of social justice is defined by its opposition to *in*justice. In terms of economic inequality—in the US, and around the world—the array of relevant injustices is often rightly attributed to a hegemonic capitalist political economy. With a singular source of so many injustices that is wound all throughout our society, the oppositional process of justice must be mounted at the confluence of many localized and particular efforts. My hope is that this research has the potential to contribute to the mounting of such a cumulative effort, in providing a “master frame” (Stevenson et al. 2007) within which the various justice-oriented food movement efforts might convene. In order to enact this process, advocates for social justice need to have a way to establish a set of benchmarks that can be used to both identify problems and gauge the progress of justice in a given context. Analyzing social problems through the lens of capability allows us to compile concise lists of such criteria so that once we have begun work on these problems, we can ask ourselves: “do people harmed by the social problem have access to a wider swathe of essential capabilities?”

The need for more nuanced awareness and understanding of social problems was also a theme that arose frequently throughout the research process. Just as I realized that social mobility requires certain capabilities with regard to awareness and education, this research process has shown me that an emphasis on developing knowledge is crucial to the advancement of social

justice. Foremost, people need to be capable of recognizing that problems exist—to be harmed by a social problem does not mean that one is aware of it, not to mention its underlying causes.

In sum, there is much work to do. But, I believe it is extremely important that we not only recognize the work that is already being done by passionate and knowledgeable justice advocates, but capture and channel it through strategic coalition development in order to mount a formidable opposition to the likes of neoliberalism and our societies' constricting and oppressive structures. To do so, actors within social justice-oriented food movements and critical food system scholarship must position their work within universal frames so that effort logically aligns. For the most part, this does not require strategic reorientation, but a simple adjustment of our lenses.

References

- Alessio, J. C. 2011. *Social Problems and Inequality: Social Responsibility through Progressive Sociology*. Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Alkon, A. H., and C. G. McCullen. 2011. "Whiteness and Farmers Markets: Performances, Perpetuations...Contestations?" *Antipode* 43 (4): 937-959. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00818.x>.
- Alkon, A. H., and K. M. Norgaard. 2009. "Breaking the Food Chains: An Investigation of Food Justice Activism." *Sociological Inquiry* 79 (3): 289-305.
- Allen, P. 2004. *Together at the Table: Sustainability and Sustenance in the American Agrifood System*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- . 2008. "Mining for Justice in the Food System: Perceptions, Practices, and Possibilities." *Agriculture and Human Values* 25 (2): 157-161.
- Alliance, Food Chain Workers. 2012. *The Hands that Feed Us: Challenges and Opportunities for Workers Along the Food Chain*. Food Chain Workers Alliance (Los Angeles, CA).
- Anderson, M. D. 2013. "Beyond Food Security to Realizing Food Rights in the US." *Journal of Rural Studies* 29: 113-122. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2012.09.004>.
- Assari, S. 2018. "Diminished Economic Return of Socioeconomic Status for Black Families." *Social Sciences (Basel)* 7 (5): 74. <https://doi.org/10.3390/SOCSCI7050074>.
- Bageant, J. 2007. *Deer Hunting with Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War*. First paperback edition. ed. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Bales, K., and R. Soodalter. 2009. *The Slave Next Door: Human Trafficking and Slavery in America Today*. Edited by R. Soodalter. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ball, K., D. Crawford, and G. Mishra. 2006. "Socio-Economic Inequalities in Women's Fruit and Vegetable Intakes: A Multilevel Study of Individual, Social and Environmental Mediators." *Public Health Nutrition* 9 (5): 623-630. <https://doi.org/10.1079/PHN2005897>.
- Barber, D. 2014. *The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food*. East Rutherford: Penguin Publishing Group.
- Barker, M., W. Lawrence, S. Crozier, S. Robinson, J. Baird, B. Margetts, and C. Cooper. 2009. "Educational Attainment, Perceived Control and the Quality of Women's Diets." *Appetite* 52 (3): 631-636. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2009.02.011>.

- Bedore, M. 2014. "Food Desertification: Situating Choice and Class Relations within an Urban Political Economy of Declining Food Access." *Studies in Social Justice* 8 (2): 207-228. <https://doi.org/10.26522/ssj.v8i2.1034>.
- Béné, C., P. Oosterveer, L. Lamotte, I. D. Brouwer, S. de Haan, S. D. Prager, E. F. Talsma, and C. K. Khoury. 2019. "When Food Systems Meet Sustainability: Current Narratives and Implications for Actions." *World Development* 113: 116-130. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.08.011>. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X18303115>.
- Boréus, K., and G. Bergström. 2017. *Analyzing Text and Discourse: Eight Approaches for the Social Sciences*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bourdieu, P. 1986. "Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J. G. Richardson. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Inc.
- Bradley, K., and H. Herrera. 2016. "Decolonizing Food Justice: Naming, Resisting, and Researching Colonizing Forces in the Movement." *Antipode* 48 (1): 97-114. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12165>.
- Broad, G. M. 2016. *More than Just Food: Food Justice and Community Change*. 1st ed. Vol. 60. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Brooks, A. W., J. Hammons, J. Nolan, S. Dufek, and M. Wynn. 2019. "The Purpose of Research: What Undergraduate Students Say." *Scholarship and Practice of Undergraduate Research* 3 (1): 39-47.
- Brouwer, I. D., J. McDermott, and R. Ruben. 2020. "Food Systems Everywhere: Improving Relevance in Practice." *Global Food Security* 26: 100398. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2020.100398>. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211912420300523>.
- Brown, B., C. Noonan, and M. Nord. 2007. "Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Health-Associated Outcomes and Food Characteristics of Northern Plains Indian Households." *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition* 1 (4): 37-53. https://doi.org/10.1300/J477v01n04_04. https://doi.org/10.1300/J477v01n04_04.
- Cadieux, K., and R. Slocum. 2015. "What Does it Mean to do Food Justice?" *Journal of Political Ecology* 22 (1): 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.2458/v22i1.21076>.
- Campešina, La Via. 2007. "Nyéléni Declaration." World Forum on Food Sovereignty: Reorienting Local and Global Food Systems, Sélingué, Mali.
- Chackal, T. . 2016. "Autonomy and the Politics of Food Choice: From Individuals to Communities." *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 29 (2): 123-141. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10806-015-9585-4>.

- Chung, C., and S. L. Myers. 1999. "Do the Poor Pay More for Food? An Analysis of Grocery Store Availability and Food Price Disparities." *Journal of Consumer Affairs* 33: 276-296.
- Claassen, R. J. G. 2011. "Making Capability Lists: Philosophy versus Democracy." *Political Studies* 59 (3): 491-508. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2010.00862.x>.
- . 2017. "An Agency-Based Capability Theory of Justice." *European Journal of Philosophy* 25 (4): 1279-1304. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12195>.
- Clancy, K., J. Hammer, and D. Lippoldt. 2007. "Food Policy Councils: Past, Present, and Future." In *Remaking the North American Food System: Strategies for Sustainability*, edited by C. Clare Hinrichs and T. A. Lyson, 121-143. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Clapp, J. 2015. "Distant Agricultural Landscapes." *Sustainability Science* 10 (2): 305-316. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-014-0278-0>.
- Clapp, J., and D. A. Fuchs. 2009. "Agrifood Corporations, Global Governance, and Sustainability: A Framework for Analysis." In *Corporate power in global agrifood governance*, 1-26. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Clapp, J., and S. R. Isakson. 2018. "Risky Returns: The Implications of Financialization in the Food System." *Development and Change* 49 (2): 437-460. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12376>.
- Clapp, J., and G. Scrinis. 2017. "Big Food, Nutritionism, and Corporate Power." *Globalizations* 14 (4): 578-595. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2016.1239806>.
- Clark-Barol, M., J. E. Gaddis, and C. K. Barrett. 2021. "Food Agency in Low-income Households: A Qualitative Study of the Structural and Individual Factors Impacting Participants in a Community-based Nutrition Program." *Appetite* 158: 105013-105013. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2020.105013>.
- Clendenning, J., W. H. Dressler, and C. Richards. 2016. "Food Justice or Food Sovereignty? Understanding the Rise of Urban Food Movements in the USA." *Agriculture and Human Values* 33 (1): 165-177. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-015-9625-8>.
- Cloke, P., J. May, and A. Williams. 2017. "The Geographies of Food Banks in the Meantime." *Progress in Human Geography* 41 (6): 703-726. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132516655881>.
- Crenshaw, K. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6): 1241-1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>.
- Crossley, N. 2005. *Key Concepts in Critical Social Theory*. London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*. 2011. edited by A. H. Alkon and J. Agyeman. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Cummins, S., and S. Macintyre. 2006. "Food Environments and Obesity—Neighbourhood or Nation?" *International Journal of Epidemiology* 35 (1): 100-104. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyi276>.
- Dalla, R.L., A. Ellis, and S.C. Cramer. 2005. "Immigration and Rural America: Latinos' Perceptions of Work and Residence in Three Meatpacking Communities." *Community, Work and Family* 8 (2): 163-185.
- Dover, R. V. H., and E. V. Lambert. 2016. "'Choice Set' for Health Behavior in Choice-constrained Settings to Frame Research and Inform Policy: Examples of Food Consumption, Obesity and Food Security." *International Journal for Equity in Health* 15 (1): 48-48. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-016-0336-6>.
- Drewnowski, A., and N. Darmon. 2005. "Food Choices and Diet Costs: an Economic Analysis." *The Journal of Nutrition* 135 (4): 900-904. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jn/135.4.900>.
- du Puis, E. M. 2007. "Angels and Vegetables: A Brief History of Food Advice in America." *Gastronomica* 7 (3): 34-44. <https://doi.org/10.1525/gfc.2007.7.3.34>.
- Earnshaw, V. A., and A. Karpyn. 2020. "Understanding Stigma and Food Inequity: A Conceptual Framework to Inform Research, Intervention, and Policy." *Translational Behavioral Medicine* 10 (6): 1350-1357.
- Estabrook, B. 2018. *Tomatoland: From Harvest of Shame to Harvest of Hope*. Edited by E. Schlosser. Third edition. ed. Kansas City, Missouri: Andrews McMeel Publishing.
- Fairbairn, M. 2012. "Framing Transformation: The Counter-hegemonic Potential of Food Sovereignty in the US Context." *Agriculture and Human Values* 29 (2): 217-230.
- FCWA. November 2016. *No Piece of the Pie: U.S. Food Workers in 2016*. Food Chain Workers Alliance (Los Angeles, CA).
- Figuroa, M., and A. H. Alkon. 2017. "Cooperative Social Practices, Self-Determination, and the Struggle for Food Justice in Oakland and Chicago." In *The New Food Activism: Opposition, Cooperation, and Collective Action*, edited by A. H. Alkon and J. Guthman, 206-231. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Freeman, A. 2007. "Fast Food: Oppression Through Poor Nutrition." *California Law Review* 95 (2221).
- Garth, H. 2020. "Blackness and "Justice" in the Los Angeles Food Justice Movement." In *Black Food Matters: Racial Justice in the Wake of Food Justice*, edited by H. Garth and A. M. Reese, 107-130. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.

- Gottlieb, R., and A Joshi. 2010. *Food Justice*. Edited by R. Gottlieb. *Food, Health, and the Environment*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Graddy-Lovelace, G. 2017. "The Coloniality of US Agricultural Policy: Articulating Agrarian (In)justice." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44 (1): 78-99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2016.1192133>.
- Grey, S., and R. Patel. 2015. "Food Sovereignty as Decolonization: Some Contributions from Indigenous Movements to Food System and Development Politics." *Agriculture and Human Values* 32 (3): 431-444. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-014-9548-9>.
- Gundersen, C., and J. P. Ziliak. 2015. "Food Insecurity And Health Outcomes." *Health Affairs* 34 (11): 1830-1839. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2015.0645>.
<https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2015.0645>.
- Gupta, D. 2017. *Protest Politics Today*. Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity.
- Guthman, J. 2011a. "Excess Consumption or Over-Production?: US Farm Policy, Global Warming, and the Bizarre Attribution of Obesity." In *Global Political Ecology*, edited by R. Peet, P. Robbins and M. Watts, 51-66. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- . 2011b. *Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2014. "Doing Justice to Bodies? Reflections on Food Justice, Race, and Biology." *Antipode* 46 (5): 1153-1171.
- Hallgrimsdottir, H. K., and C. Benoit. 2007. "From Wage Slaves to Wage Workers: Cultural Opportunity Structures and the Evolution of the Wage Demands of the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor, 1880–1900." *Social Forces* 85 (3): 1393-1411. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2007.0037>.
- Harvey, D. 2000. *Spaces of Hope*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hassanein, N. 2003. "Practicing Food Democracy: A Pragmatic Politics of Transformation." *Journal of Rural Studies* 19 (1): 77-86. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0743-0167\(02\)00041-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0743-0167(02)00041-4).
- Hassberg, A. H. 2020a. "Citified Sovereignty: Cultivating Autonomy in South Los Angeles." In *A Recipe for Gentrification: Food, Power, and Resistance in the City*, edited by A. H. Alkon, Y. Kato and J. Sbicca, 305-324. New York: New York University Press.
- . 2020b. "Nurturing the Revolution: The Black Panther Party and the Early Seeds of the Food Justice Movement." In *Black Food Matters: Racial Justice in the Wake of Food Justice*, edited by H. Garth and A. M. Reese, 82-106. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Hodgson, K. 2012. "Planning for Food Access and Community-based Food Systems: A National Scan and Evaluation of Local Comprehensive and Sustainability Plans." *American Planning Association*.
- Holmes, S. 2013. *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. Vol. 27. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Holt-Giménez, E. 2017. *A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat*. New York: Monthly Review Press: Food First Books.
- Holt-Giménez, E., and Y. Wang. 2011. "Reform or Transformation? The Pivotal Role of Food Justice in the US Food Movement." *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts* 5 (1): 83-102.
- Horst, M. 2017. "Food Justice and Municipal Government in the USA." *Planning Theory & Practice* 18 (1): 51-70.
- Jayaraman, S. 2013. *Behind the Kitchen Door*. Edited by E. Schlosser. Ithaca: ILR Press.
- Jensen, K. B., and A. K. Glasmeier. 2010. "Policy, Research Design, and the Socially Situated Researcher." In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography*, edited by D. DeLyser, S. Herbert, S. Aitken, M. Crang and L. McDowell, 82-92. London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kane, J. W., and A. Tomer. 2020. "Valuing Human Infrastructure: Protecting and Investing in Essential Workers during the COVID-19 Era." *Public Works Management and Policy*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1087724X20969181>.
<https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85095807428&doi=10.1177%2f1087724X20969181&partnerID=40&md5=927d97c76210d9c9da3dac2bf02ceffc>.
- Kearney, M. S. 2006. "Intergenerational Mobility for Women and Minorities in the United States." *The Future of Children* 16 (2): 37-53. <https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2006.0016>.
- Kern, D. M., A. H. Auchincloss, L. F. Robinson, M. F. Stehr, and G. Pham-Kanter. 2017. "Healthy and Unhealthy Food Prices across Neighborhoods and Their Association with Neighborhood Socioeconomic Status and Proportion Black/Hispanic." *Journal of Urban Health* 94 (4): 494-505. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-017-0168-8>.
- Kilty, K. M. 2015. "Poverty and Class Inequality." In *Investigating Social Problems*, edited by A. J. Trevino. Sage.
- Kraus, M. W., and J. J. X. Tan. 2015. "Americans Overestimate Social Class Mobility." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 58: 101-111.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2015.01.005>.

- Kurtz, H., A. Borron, J. Shannon, and A. Weaver. 2019. "Community Food Assistance, Informal Social Networks, and the Labor of Care." *Agriculture and Human Values* 36 (3): 495-505. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-019-09943-0>.
- Lincoln, Y. S., S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba. 2017. "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences, Revisited." In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 108-150. London: Sage Publications.
- Lo, J., and B. Koenig. 2017. "Food Workers and Consumers Organizing Together for Food Justice." In *The New Food Activism*, edited by A. H. Alkon and J. Guthman, 133-156. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Loo, C. 2014. "Towards a More Participative Definition of Food Justice." *Journal of Agricultural & Environmental Ethics* 27 (5): 787-809. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10806-014-9490-2>.
- Lozano-Cabedo, C., and C. Gómez-Benito. 2017. "A Theoretical Model of Food Citizenship for the Analysis of Social Praxis." *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 30 (1): 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10806-016-9649-0>.
- MacDonald, J. M., and P. E. Nelson. 1991. "Do the Poor Still Pay More? Food Price Variations in Large Metropolitan Areas." *Journal of Urban Economics* 30: 344-359.
- Mares, T. M., and D. G. Peña. 2011. "Environmental and Food Justice: Toward Local, Slow, and Deep Food Systems." In *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*, edited by A. H. Alkon and J. Agyeman, 197-219. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.
- McCullagh, M., and S. Raychel. 2014. *Food Policy For All: Inclusion of Diverse Community Residents on Food Policy Councils*. Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (Academic Research Center).
- McNicholas, C., L. Rhinehart, M. Poydock, H. Shierholz, and D. Perez. 2020. *Why Unions Are Good for Workers—Especially in a Crisis like COVID-19*. (Washington, D. C.).
- Miewald, C., and E. McCann. 2014. "Foodscapes and the Geographies of Poverty: Sustenance, Strategy, and Politics in an Urban Neighborhood." *Antipode* 46 (2): 537-556. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12057>.
- Minkoff-Zern, L. 2017. "Farmworker-Led Food Movements Then and Now: United Farm Workers, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, and the Potential for Farm Labor Justice." In *The New Food Activism: Opposition, Cooperation, and Collective Action*, edited by A. H. Alkon and J. Guthman, 157-178. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Morland, K., S. Wing, A. Diez-Roux, and C. Poole. 2002. "Neighbourhood Characteristics Associated with the Location of Food Stores and Food Service Places." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 22: 23-29.

- Muller, M., and D. Wallinga. 2015. "Policies That Shape the US Food System." In *Introduction to the US food system: public health, environment, and equity*, edited by R. Neff, 185-213. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Brand.
- Musolf, G. R. 2017. "Oppression and Resistance: A Structure-and-Agency Perspective." In *Oppression and Resistance: Structure, Agency, Transformation*, edited by G. R. Musolf, 1-18. Bingley: Emerald Publishing.
- Neff, R. A., and R. S. Lawrence. 2014. "Food Systems." In *Introduction to the US Food System: Public Health, Environment, and Equity*, edited by R. Neff, 1-22. Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Nisbett, N. 2019. "Understanding the Nourishment of Bodies at the Centre of Food and Health Systems – Systemic, Bodily and New Materialist Perspectives on Nutritional Inequity." *Social Science & Medicine* 228: 9-16. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.02.041>.
- Noonan, R. K. 1995. "Women against the State: Political Opportunities and Collective Action Frames in Chile's Transition to Democracy." *Sociological Forum (Randolph, N.J.)* 10 (1): 81-111. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02098565>.
- Nussbaum, M. 1992. "Human Functioning and Social Justice: In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism." *Political Theory* 20 (2): 202-246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591792020002002>.
- Odoms-Young, A. 2018. "Examining the Impact of Structural Racism on Food Insecurity: Implications for Addressing Racial/Ethnic Disparities." *Family & Community Health* 41 (2): S3-S6. <https://doi.org/10.1097/FCH.000000000000183>.
- OECD. 2021. "Income Inequality." Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Accessed June 12. <https://data.oecd.org/inequality/income-inequality.htm>.
- Otero, G. 2018. *The Neoliberal Diet: Healthy Profits, Unhealthy People*. First edition. ed. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Petrini, C. 2001. *Slow Food: The Case for Taste*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Piketty, T. 2018. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Originally published 2017 ed. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press.
- Pollan, M. 2008. *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*. East Rutherford: Penguin Publishing Group.
- Poppendieck, J. 1998. "Want Amid Plenty: From Hunger to Inequality." *Monthly Review* 121 (7): 125-136.
- Pottenger, K. 2021. "Always Essential: Grocery Store Work in a Pandemic." *New labor Forum* 30 (3): 99-103. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10957960211035084>.

- Raley, Y. 2006. "Food Advertising, Education, and the Erosion of Autonomy." *The International Journal of Applied Philosophy* 20 (1): 67-79. <https://doi.org/10.5840/ijap20062019>.
- Ramírez, M. M. 2015. "The Elusive Inclusive: Black Food Geographies and Racialized Food Spaces." *Antipode* 47 (3): 748-769.
- Reinhardt, S., R. Boehm, and R. Salvador. 2021. "The Real Cost of Unhealthy Diets." In *True Cost Accounting for Food: Balancing the Scale*, edited by B. Gemmill-Herren, L. E. Baker and P. A. Daniels, 149-165. London
New York: Routledge.
- Robeyns, I. 2017. *Wellbeing, Freedom, and Social Justice: The Capability Approach Re-Examined*. Cambridge, U.K.: Open Book.
- Rocha, C., E. Frison, and N. Jacobs. 2021. "Health Impacts: The Hidden Costs of Industrial Food Systems." In *True Cost Accounting for Food: Balancing the Scale*, edited by B. Gemmill-Herren, L. E. Baker and P. A. Daniels, 68-82. London; New York: Routledge.
- Sbicca, J. 2017. "Resetting the "Good Food" Table: Labor and Food Justice Alliances in Los Angeles." In *The New Food Activism: Opposition, Cooperation, and Collective Action*, edited by A. H. Alkon and J. Guthman, 107-132. Oakland, California: University of California Press.
- Schlusser, E. 2012. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Trade & Reference Publishers.
- Sen, A. 1999. *Commodities and Capabilities*. Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Shannon, J. 2014. "Food Deserts: Governing Obesity in the Neoliberal City." *Progress in Human Geography* 38 (2): 248-266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132513484378>.
- Slocum, R. 2006. "Anti-Racist Practice and the Work of Community Food Organizations." *Antipode* 38 (2): 327-349.
- Slocum, R., and K. V. Cadieux. 2015. "Notes on the Practice of Food Justice in the U.S.: Understanding and Confronting Trauma and Inequity." *Journal of Political Ecology* 22 (1): 27-52. <https://doi.org/10.2458/v22i1.21077>.
- Snow, D. A., S. A. Soule, H. Kriesi, and H. J. McCammon. 2019. "Introduction: Mapping and Opening Up the Terrain." In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, edited by D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, H. Kriesi and H. J. McCammon, 1-16. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Sowerwine, J., M. Mucioki, D. Sarna-Wojcicki, and L. Hillman. 2019. "Reframing Food Security By and For Native American Communities: A Case Study Among Tribes in the Klamath River Basin of Oregon and California." *Food Security* 11 (3): 579-607. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-019-00925-y>.

- Spencer, R., J. M. Pryce, and J. Walsh. 2014. "Philosophical Approaches to Qualitative Research." In *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by P. Leavy, 81-98. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Stevenson, G. W., K. Ruhf, S. Lezberg, and K. Clancy. 2007. "Warrior, Builder, and Weaver Work: Strategies for Changing the Food System." In *Remaking the North American Food System: Strategies for Sustainability*, edited by C. Clare Hinrichs and T. A. Lyson, 33-62. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Thirlaway, K., and D. Upton. 2009. *The Psychology of Lifestyle: Promoting Healthy Behaviour*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Thorbecke, E., and C. Charumilind. 2002. "Economic Inequality and its Socioeconomic Impact." *World Development* 30 (9): 1477-1495.
- Trubek, A. B., M. Carabello, C. Morgan, and J. Lahne. 2017. "Empowered to Cook: The Crucial Role of 'Food Agency' in Making Meals." *Appetite* 116: 297-305.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2017.05.017>.
- Tursunova, Z., C. Ramraj, M. Cyr, and S. Fulford. 2020. "Pathways towards Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting Individuals, Food, Nature and Community in the Inner City in Winnipeg, Manitoba." *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 29 (2): 102-116.
- USDA. 2021. "Food Security - Key Statistics & Graphics." USDA Economic Research Service. Last Modified Sept. 8, 2021. Accessed Nov. 10. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx#foodsecure>.
- Vogel, C., D. Lewis, G. Ntani, S. Cummins, C. Cooper, G. Moon, and J. Baird. 2017. "The Relationship Between Dietary Quality and the Local Food Environment Differs According to Level of Educational Attainment: A Cross-Sectional Study." *PloS one* 12 (8): e0183700. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0183700>.
- Welsh, J., and R. MacRae. 1998. "Food Citizenship and Community Food Security: Lessons from Toronto, Canada." *Revue canadienne d'études du développement* 19 (4): 237-255.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.1998.9669786>.
- Young, I. M. 2011. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Edited by D. S. Allen. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.