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# Privilege and the Food Environment in Carlisle, Pennsylvania

Alexandra Gabrielle Raczka  
*Dickinson College*

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# Privilege and the Food Environment in Carlisle, Pennsylvania

Alexandra Raczka

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Honors Requirements  
for the Department of Environmental Studies

Dr. Meghan Reedy, Supervisor  
Dr. Thomas Arnold, Reader  
Dr. Heather Bedi, Reader

12 May 2015

The Department of Environmental Studies at Dickinson College hereby accepts this senior honors thesis by Alexandra Raczka, and awards departmental honors in Environmental Science.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Meghan Reedy (Advisor)

14 May 2015  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas Arnold (Committee Member & Department Chair)

5-14-15  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Heather Bedi (Committee Member)

5-15-15  
Date

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## **Abstract**

This study looks at the food environment of Carlisle, Pennsylvania. It is specifically focused on food access and food preferences, and the relationships between a person's educational background, household income, and geographic location and what they choose to eat based on what they have access to. Three different types of data were used: informational interviews; demographic questionnaires; and personal interviews. The questionnaires and personal interviews were answered by residents of Carlisle, and focused on their relationship to food and the role of food in their lives.

This study found that for most residents, geography had little impact on where people procured their food. Furthermore, only one of the neighborhoods included in the study showed signs of shared values and interests with regard to food, while people living in the other neighborhoods had widely varying views of food. Overall, there is a large interest in health, and a growing interest in the "alternative food movement," an awareness of the environmental, social, economic, and health implications of food production (e.g. local, organic, humanely raised). Because of a skewed subject pool in comparison to the population of those living in Carlisle, this research was not able to confidently determine whether or not privilege, especially racial privilege, is in existence in Carlisle. It is clear however, that those living slightly above the poverty level face the largest challenges in accessing healthy food.

## Introduction

This study highlights relationships between demographic factors – education, income, and geographic location – and the foods that people choose to eat based on what is physically and psychologically accessible.

People from a variety of demographic backgrounds live in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. As a result of these differences – educational background, race and ethnicity, income level, and employment – people have different views of food and different preferences regarding what they choose to eat. The presence of Dickinson College, Penn State University’s Dickinson School of Law, and the Army War College bring certain interests to the community, while local industries including warehouses and agriculture represent very different interests. Additionally, communities of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds represent varying cultural interests.

Educational Attainment	Less than High School	High School	Associate’s Degree	Bachelor’s Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
Percentage of Population over age 25	9.7%	33.8%	6.0%	17.5%	15.7%

*Table 1 Educational Attainment in Carlisle, PA based on the 2013 American Community Survey*

Household Income	Less than \$15,000	\$15,000-\$49,000	\$50,000-\$74,999	\$75,000-\$99,999	\$100,000-\$149,999	\$150,000 or more
Percentage of Population	14.8%	43.1%	13.9%	11.6%	10.2%	6.3%

*Table 2 Income in the Past 12 Months in (in 2013 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) in Carlisle, PA based on the 2013 American Community Survey*

Race and Origin	White	Black or African American	American Indian	Asian	Other	Multi-Racial	Hispanic or Latino Origin
Percentage of Population	84.3%	8.3%	0.2%	2.3%	1.3%	3.6%	4.5%

*Table 3 Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin in Carlisle, PA based on the 2010 Census Summary*

On a personal level, I have been involved with a number of different aspects of the current food environment in Carlisle, including working at the Dickinson College Farm, volunteering at other farms in the community and at the Farmers on the Square farmers’ market, organizing community events focused on food, and working with issues of food access within Dickinson’s Dining Services department. Although I had been involved in all these different sections of the local food movement, it was not until I separated myself from it that I began to critique and challenge Carlisle’s food environment. While I was studying food systems issues during my semester abroad in Copenhagen, Denmark, I read Julie Guthman’s essay “‘If they Only Knew’: The Unbearable Whiteness of Alternative Food”<sup>1</sup> and found myself actively questioning whether or not I was unknowingly endorsing privilege in Carlisle’s food system as a result of my personal interests or involvement. Throughout this paper, the term *privilege* will refer to the ability for people of a certain demographic background to access food outlets, both physically and being socially welcome. Alkon and Agyeman explain that food systems can sometime further the social divide that results from socioeconomic standing (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011, p.11). Additionally, they explain that institutional racism and

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all references to Guthman refer to her essay “‘If they Only Knew:’ The Unbearable Whiteness of Alternative Food”

economic inequality can both be present in the food system and create barriers that keep people of certain demographic backgrounds from accessing certain kinds of food (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011, p.12). Further questioning of this topic led me to wonder about the nature of the food environment in general, which has led me to explore this subject through a year of independent research. I now hope that this background information on the food environment can spur successful movements regarding food access in the future.

Through recent community endeavors, the Carlisle community has launched the Greater Carlisle Project (GCP), with the intention of revitalizing the community and improving residents' lives. One of the priority areas of the GCP is "food and farming." According to the GCP's website, "We [the Greater Carlisle community] champion our farmers' success as stewards of our agricultural landscape who feed our communities with healthy, nutritious local food." The project strives to connect farms with the community through improving the availability of local food for community members (GCP, 2015). To successfully evaluate and improve food and farming in the Carlisle area, it is necessary to have an understanding of the food system currently in place, including ways in which it is functioning successfully and how it can be improved. This study works to generate a baseline understanding of how people across different demographic backgrounds perceive food, both personally and with regard to the community at large.

This work in Carlisle aligns with the growing national interest in food. Food justice, alternative food movements, and overall health concerns have garnered attention from government agencies, non-profit organizations, activist groups, and

other entities. Alternative food movements describes food outlets and ideas that reflect an understanding of how food is produced, in addition to the environmental, social, economic, and health impacts of this production. These movements stem from the critique of industrial agriculture, which often heavily uses chemicals in food production, mistreats workers, and decreases variety in the food system (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011, p. 12). As discussed throughout the literature – by scholars, activists, community members, etc. – efforts are in place to improve people’s access to affordable, healthy food.<sup>2</sup> Efforts are also in place to make the food system more inclusive to people of different demographic backgrounds and identify the social structures that impact people’s relationships to food and how they access it.

The methodology used in this study is complex. Three different types of data were used: informational, background interviews; demographic questionnaires; and personal interviews. Through analysis of the data, different types of information were compared against each other to make sense of people’s similar and differing opinions.

## **Literature Review**

### **Local Food**

The modern local food movement has drawn the attention of people all over the United States, from cities to small towns. As a result of active proponents of the

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<sup>2</sup> In her book, *Weighing In*, Julie Guthman stated that “as an activist movement, the alternative food movement is one of the most successful of our day if you consider the numbers of people who identify with it by shopping at alternative-food institutions, attending events, contributing money, and providing countless hours to gardening projects, farm-to-school programs, and “hanging out” with food” (Guthman, 2012, p.143).

movement, such as Michael Pollan who share the belief that, “not everyone can afford to eat high-quality food in America, and that is shameful, however, those of us who can, should,” many have become attracted to the potential environmental and health benefits of eating locally, prioritize knowing exactly where their food comes from, or are interested in supporting their local economies (Guthman, 2011, p.264). However, not all people have met this movement with the same enthusiasm. In Guthman’s essay<sup>3</sup>, she describes that alternative food outlets, such as farmers markets “are coded as ‘white’ – or at least “not black” – not only through the bodies that tend to inhabit and participate in them but also the discourses that circulate through them (Guthman, 2011, p.266). Guthman gathers this view of alternative food outlets from extensive work and research throughout cities in the United States, namely across California and in New Orleans, Louisiana and Chicago, Illinois (Guthman, 2011, p.263-278).

Additionally, scholars contend that these venues are cast as spaces for those in the upper-middle class or upper class. In his essay “Realizing Rural Food Justice, Jesse McEntee calls these spaces: “a ‘new’ local alternative food network of increasing popularity, which appears to be associated primarily with middle- and upper-income customers” (McEntee, 2011, p.247). The prices of local food, types of food available, and time required to prepare these foods often limit the audience at farmers’ markets and similar establishments.

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<sup>3</sup> Guthman’s essay has had an extensive influence on this research. Her essay sheds light on different societal challenges and issues that stem from the alternative food movement. This research explores some of these issues with regard to their presence or lack of presence in Carlisle.

The local food movement can also create an “us versus them” situation built around the idea of universalism, which expects that “the values held primarily by whites are normal and widely shared” (Guthman, 2011, p.267). As a result, one group of people (typically white people) diminishes the food choices of another group that does not eat what is “right” or have an understanding of how food is produced nowadays. Many critics of the local food movement see the current movement as one that is wrongly perceived as a movement that everyone should follow, regardless of variations in ideals or priorities. Instead, they acknowledge cultural differences, variations in preferences, and differing priorities as factors that keep the movement from being universally applicable. According to Julian Agyeman, “one thing the local food movement has got to come to terms with is that it cannot be prescriptive. We can’t say we should only support, or not support, certain kinds of foods” (TuftsNow, 2012, p.3).

Regardless of the price levels of food available at Farmers on the Square or local food retailers in general, the question of “who should eat locally produced food?” always exists. In her essay Guthman extensively describes how the white privilege of local food venues creates an attitude that all people should be eating locally and organically because it is horrifying how other forms of food are produced. Guthman uses this essay to explain many common viewpoints of people who work at and attend farmers’ markets, including the idea that local food is affordable to people of all budgets, but those that say they cannot afford it do not have the proper priorities (Guthman, 2011, p.271). Throughout her piece it becomes clear that in the cities Guthman has studied, the existence of white privilege has gone undetected by many

people who are part of the local food movement so that they are unable to realize that the movement is not meant for everyone and that people who do not participate are not wrong.

Another aspect of the local food movement is actually growing food. Guthman's essay, *Food Justice* and *The Good Food Revolution* discuss the role of race, class, and cultural history in local food production, especially through agriculture-focused community organizations. While there are a number of reasons why local food venues and agricultural programs are viewed as "white", the history and current state of industrial agriculture play a significant role in how people of different cultures in the United States perceive agriculture.

Will Allen, the founder of Growing Power, an inner city agricultural operation in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, reflects on his African American heritage and its relationship to his current involvement: "I returned to a profession that she [his mother] and her family had tried so hard to leave behind" (Allen & Wilson, 2012, p.4). Unfortunately many people of African-American or Hispanic backgrounds often meet these programs and movements with resistance because they provide another opportunity for non-white people to provide menial labor under what is typically white leadership. Furthermore, many adults – parents, grandparents, etc. – in minority communities, especially those of African-American and Hispanic cultures who have most recently provided the majority of labor for agricultural production in the United States, have created a desire for future generations to work in a non-agricultural setting.

As a result of the history of agriculture in the United States, many people with this belief associate agricultural work with menial labor and consider it a step backwards. In her essay, Guthman includes the interaction that one of her students had with an African American student involved in a youth garden program: “she learned that they resented the expectation to work not only for free, but also for white farmers” (Guthman, 2011, p.273). Gardening and growing food often have a negative connotation for being dirty and something that people do not want to be a part of: “for African Americans, especially, putting your hands in the soil is more likely to invoke images of slave labor than nostalgia” (Guthman, 2011, p.276).

Like Allen’s organization, other minority communities have begun to embrace their agricultural history, especially communities of recent immigrants to the United States. Gottlieb and Joshi tell the story of Nuestras Raíces, an organization in Holyoke, Massachusetts that embraces the agricultural knowledge and culture shared by the large population of Puerto Rican immigrants: “growing food had been the passion of these new Holyoke residents, and they had the knowledge to turn what was otherwise a bleak and unutilized landscape into a place to grow food” (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2012, p.124). The ability to transform a minority community into one concerned with agriculture is not universal. As Guthman explains the concept of universalism with reference to white middle-class consumers of the alternative food movement, likewise the concept of universalism would be applied if it was assumed all minority communities could be successful in enacting farming programs (Guthman, 2011, p.267). With regard to integrating minorities into an alternative

food movement that is not “white,” Guthman emphasizes the importance of cultural identity and racial justice (Guthman, 2011, p.274).

Much of the modern-day local food movement is focused on more conventional forms of accessing food, namely purchasing it from a local farm or market, both of which are commonly associated with wealth (McEntee, 2011, p.247). Yet, there are other ways of eating locally, namely backyard gardening and hunting. In his essay, McEntee describes a small town in New Hampshire where the community was invested in the concept of “traditional localism.” He states, community members “preferred local when they could grow it (or shoot it), but not when they had to pay for it” (McEntee, 2011, p.247). Based on McEntee’s interactions, he discovered that there was not one clear reason behind this interest, but people were mainly interested in the enjoyment derived from partaking in these activities, continuing a tradition, as well as the fact that people view food production as a cheaper (and better-value) alternative to buying from a retailer” (McEntee, 2011, p.247).

### **Diet**

In the book *The Way We Eat: Why our Food Choices Matter*, Peter Singer and Jim Mason study three common diets in the United States and discuss people’s rationale for making the food decisions that they do, and how their decisions impact the larger society. Through their observations it becomes clear that the diet of people living in America varies dramatically and can be influenced by money, ethics, taste, health, and countless other factors. Singer and Mason’s research highlights many of the personal questions and challenges people face when trying to make decisions on

what foods to eat based on their priorities. This study does however place an emphasis on Americans living in at least the middle class, as it does not include families relying on food assistance or those that truly struggle to acquire food.

Singer and Mason's study also expresses an overall opinion that some foods are "better" than others with regard to the environmental, humane, and equitable concerns associated with their production. Near the end of the book they include a chapter entitled "What Should We Eat?" where they outline different ethical principals regarding the treatment of animals and workers. While these statements do not necessarily project that there are certain types of food that are "better" than others, they outline some of their opinions further in the chapter, especially with regard to animal products. As the authors discuss the ethics related to being an omnivore, vegetarian, and vegan, they discuss potential solutions to ethical issues, but also potential ethical problems associated with a diet containing meat, and other animal products, but do not mention any potential ethical issues associated with being vegan (Singer & Mason, 2006, p.278-280). This inclusion and exclusion of details suggests that the authors have an underlying opinion that veganism is the most ethical diet and is the "better" way to eat.

Guthman, like Singer and Mason, describes the concept of food consumption as one that is very complicated and far from universal amongst consumers of different backgrounds. However, she differs from Singer and Mason in her views that there is no "right way of eating" and her belief that people are not making uneducated food decisions as a result of being uneducated about food issues. Throughout her essay, she criticizes alternative food movements for being inconsiderate or unaware of how

people's race, culture, and other background information has an influence on what they choose to eat and where they feel comfortable acquiring food. Additionally, Guthman does not take a stance on the ethics of food production, aside from the social and cultural implications that the history of food production, especially agricultural labor, has on today's society.

Similar to Guthman's opposition to the idea that an unhealthy diet is the result of being uneducated, the high presence of fast food restaurants and convenience stores in some neighborhoods forces people to make unhealthy food decisions regardless of their knowledge of nutrition. "Inequality in Obesigenic Environments: Fast Food Density in New York City," a study by Kwate et al., looked at the prevalence of fast food restaurants in different parts of New York City, paying particular attention to the predominant race and average income of the area. The study looked at all of the census block groups in the five boroughs of New York City and calculated the number of fast food outlets in each block group. Researchers found that there was a positive relationship between block groups where the majority of people were black and the presence of fast food outlets. While there was a negative relationship between block groups where the majority of people were white and the presence of fast food outlets, while many of the factors that Guthman, Singer, and Mason discuss related to a person's diet choices are valid, the study by Kwate et al. highlights the idea that regardless of people's education on food and health or interest in eating specific diets, their surrounds can have a strong influence on their diet (Kwate et al., 2012). Mark Winnie echoes this idea in his book, *Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty*. Winnie states, "a person's ability to

achieve a healthy diet is influenced by the availability of food stores” (Winnie, 2008, p.92).

### **Priorities for Food Consumption**

Similar to the idea that not all people eat the same diet, people’s decisions on what to consume are influenced by a number of different factors including but not limited to health, cost, time and convenience. For many people, health plays a large role in deciding what foods to consume. Often times, society makes large-scale generalizations and assumptions about people of lower economic classes and their desire to eat healthy food or lack of understanding of health and nutrition. In Winnie’s book, he discusses interviews that he conducted with residents of one of the poorest neighborhoods in Hartford, Connecticut on the food that they purchased and consumed. Through these interviews he discovered that, “[...] there was an immediate consensus that fresh, inexpensive food – the food they generally preferred – was unavailable in their neighborhood” (Winnie, 2008, p.128). This notion not only dispels society’s assumptions of people of the lower class, but also highlights the fact that there can be a stark difference between the types of food that people prioritize and the types of food they are able to consume. Singer and Mason’s study of people’s diet and food choices also highlights an interest in healthy food. In particular, they discuss people’s weariness of sugars, salts, and fats, which are especially common in processed and packaged foods. Similarly, Singer and Mason discuss how people’s interest in health is often one of the motivating factors for purchasing organic food, as it typically contains fewer chemical residues and can contain higher nutrient levels (Singer & Mason, 2006, p.193).

Many people base their decisions regarding what foods to eat on issues of time and convenience. Singer and Mason discuss the “standard American diet,” a diet “high in meat, eggs, and dairy products” with refined carbohydrates and few fruits and vegetables (Singer & Mason, 2006, p.15). They discuss that one of the primary reasons behind the popularity of this diet is its convenience and affordability. The structure of the American food system, especially with regard to agricultural subsidies, creates an unevenness in which meat, eggs, and dairy are generally affordable in comparison to produce. As a result, the Standard American Diet is economically accessible for much of American society (Singer & Mason, 2006, p.15). Foods that fit into the main categories for the diet are easy to find, especially in fast food restaurants, and they are affordable and filling. Relatedly, in *Food Justice*, Gottlieb and Joshi describe the growing prevalence of processed foods that are both convenient and relatively cheap. *Lunchables*, for instance, were designed out of society’s growing desire for affordable food that requires little to no preparation (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010, p.51). The simultaneous growth of the fast food industry and an overall interest in convenience has reshaped how and where society, especially American society, consumes food: “in 1960, about one in every five food dollars was spent away from home [...] and with the ubiquitous presence of fast food restaurants, 40.1 percent in 1984-1985. Meanwhile, with McDonald’s leading the way, fast food sales began to outpace the sales of full-service restaurants” (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010, p.55). Unfortunately, the growing interest in processed, packaged foods has resulted in foods that are high in fat, sugar, and salt. It is nearly impossible to eat for convenience and health simultaneously.

As previously mentioned in the discussion on local food, a person's comfort level in food outlets can influence where they access food and their priorities for the types of food that they consume. Guthman notes that food outlets, especially those associated with alternative food movements, including local, organic, and humanely-raised, are often cast as "white spaces" where people of color do not feel that they belong. Regardless of the fact that people of a certain background may be interested in the health or origin of their food, they may face physical or psychological barriers that keep them from accessing those foods. For instance, Guthman describes the minimal presence of farmers' markets in African American neighborhoods, and how those that do exist are relatively small in size. Additionally, farmers' markets in minority communities face the challenge of maintaining identity as a venue catering to minority communities and cultures, which often requires excluding privileged white people who are interested in becoming involved (Guthman, 2011, p.274-275).

In attempts to understand the barriers that prevent certain populations from interacting with the alternative food movement, Guthman concludes, "even these more race-conscious projects tend to get coded as white. They are coded so not only because of the prevalence of white bodies, as salient as that is [...] it also appears that the association of food, the modes of educating people to its qualities, and the ways of delivering it lack appeal to the people such programs are designed to entice" (Guthman, 2011, p.275). As a result of these invisible social barriers, people may prioritize food outlets that they feel comfortable in, regardless of the quality of food that they provide.

Much of the literature that exists around the issue of privilege in the American food system is based in either rural or urban areas. As a result, the findings and issues may not directly relate to a small city such as Carlisle. However, there are a number of apparent similarities between the ideas discussed in the literature and the Carlisle community. Dickinson College's growing presence in the community, especially with regard to sustainability, suggests the idea of "if they only knew." Sustainable practices and sustainable and ethical decision making are priorities of the college. Campus programs and initiatives and community involvement, especially regarding local and sustainable agriculture are often seen as reflecting the "right thing to do" and suggesting ideals and priorities that the community at large should share. While in many situations, local food has many benefits to the environment, community, and individual, it is not always more ethical, sustainable, economical, "better" overall. For instance, depending on the region, certain culturally appropriate foods cannot be produced locally. As a result, a dependence on local food would force people to abandon the cuisines of their cultural heritage (TuftsNow, 2012, p.2). The walkability of Carlisle and diverse neighborhoods echo features common in urban settings, while the farmland surrounding Carlisle echoes a rural community. Because of these features of Carlisle, some issues surrounding the food environments in urban and rural settings may be applicable to Carlisle's food environment.

## **Methods**

Three different types of data were collected for this study: informational, background interviews with stakeholders in the Carlisle food environment; demographic information from a questionnaire answered by Carlisle residents; and personal interviews regarding an individual's relationship to food. The same subjects answered the questionnaires and gave personal interviews. People shopping at the local farmers' market, Farmers on the Square, were also surveyed on their demographic information and food habits.<sup>4</sup> The interviews with stakeholders place the study in context, through providing education and insight on what programs and initiatives are in place in Carlisle to improve people's access to food, while the other two forms of information provide data for evaluating people's access to food and consumption of food.

### **Contextualizing the Study: Interviews with Stakeholders**

A number of background interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of the stakeholders involved in the Carlisle food environment and what they see as their mission and purpose in the community. Interviews were conducted with Elaine Livas, the Executive Director of Project SHARE; Ann Light, the Manager of Farmers on the Square; and Heidi Witmer, the Executive Director of the LEAF Project.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> After this data was collected, these surveys were deemed irrelevant to the greater goals of the research and were not analyzed. Initially, the study's emphasis on local food deemed Farmers on the Square a good venue to study privilege in access and consumption, but as the research question broadened to all types of food access and food consumption it became insignificant.

<sup>5</sup> These three stakeholders were chosen because they interact with different populations and different aspects of the food environment. Ann Light is integrally involved with one of the community's main alternative food venues, Farmers on the Square, allowing her to speak on the role of local food in the community and how the

Project SHARE is a food distribution organization that provides food to over 1,000 families in the community each month, in addition to offering programming on nutrition and cooking. Farmers on the Square is a producer-only farmers market in downtown Carlisle. The LEAF Project focuses on connecting youth to food systems through creating opportunities for high school-aged students to help with growing food on farms, cooking in kitchens, and working with other community-based organizations and initiatives. While each organization is based in Carlisle and focuses on food-related issues, their missions and involvement with the community vary, and as a result they provide different perspectives on the area's food environment. During informational interviews, Elaine, Ann, and Heidi spoke about their organizations' involvement in the local food system, how issues of food have changed in the community over time, and goals that their organizations have for moving forward and improving the overall food environment. Since these interviews were solely based on the organizations in general rather than on personal information, IRB approval was not necessary. These interviews were used to help frame the methodology for interviewing and surveying Carlisle residents, which is how the data for this research was collected.

In addition to speaking with people involved in various aspects of the Carlisle food system, Census data for Carlisle was studied to provide context for various demographic characteristics that would relate to the study, but would not necessarily be provided through the interviews, surveys, and questionnaires.

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community interacts with it. Elaine Livas interacts with those in the community from lower-income backgrounds, and could speak on behalf of their priorities and interests. Heidi Witmer works with a population in between those that Ann and Elaine work with and could provide another insight, also revolving around local food.

## **Data Collection: Questionnaires and Interviews**

Data was collected through surveys of people shopping at Farmers on the Square and interviews with and demographic questionnaires of residents of Carlisle. These two forms of collection provide insight into who utilizes such a centralized alternative food outlet in Carlisle, and highlights common food outlets and food priorities amongst people living in Carlisle.

## **Study Design**

### *Farmers on the Square Survey*

Initially, this research was inspired by Guthman's essay on privilege in the alternative food movement. One of the main categories within the alternative food movement is local food, As a result, Farmers on the Square was an ideal venue to examine whether or not the movement was one of privilege. Farmers on the Square, is geographically a very accessible food outlet in the community as it is centrally located in Downtown Carlisle, and on the local bus route. However, issues of cost, familiarity with the foods available, time constraints, and overall comfort in such a venue can limit how accessible people find the farmers market.

A survey was developed (see Appendix I), to understand the demographic of people who shop at Farmers on the Square. This survey discussed a number of factors including demographic information, questions specific to the farmers market, and questions about subjects' food access in general. The first portion of the survey asked subjects for their geographic location, as described by their neighborhood, education,

income, and race. These questions help to identify general characteristics that may influence a person's decision to shop at the farmers market.

The second section of the survey asked people to identify where they commonly acquire food. This section listed a number of food outlets in the Carlisle area, ranging from grocery stores, to food banks, to local farms, and also provided space for people to write in other places they regularly get food from. Identifying places in addition to Farmers on the Square where people typically get food, creates the opportunity to draw connections between different food providers based on similarities in quality, cost, values, convenience, etc.

The last section of this survey asked questions specific to Farmers on the Square. These topics included how often subjects shop at the market, the types of food that they typically buy, and the amount of food in their diet that they typically get from the market. Each of these questions provided a number of potential responses and asked subjects to circle the options that they most identified with. The questions that asked subjects to quantify their answers, specifically how often they visit the market and what amount of food they get from the market provided options that were more generalized, such as visiting the market *weekly* or *once or twice a season*, or purchasing *less than half* or *nearly all* of their produce from the market.

### *Personal Interviews and Questionnaire*

Both a questionnaire and an interview question were developed (see Appendices II & III). The combination of these two methods of data collection allowed for quantitative and qualitative information to be collected from each

participant. The questionnaire was primarily focused on demographic information that would help place the interviewees into a societal context, while the interview question asked more about the influence that food has on the interviewee's life and likewise, what influences their food choices. This combination of information was collected because one of the primary goals in determining the environment on food in Carlisle was to look at how demographic factors such as race, education, income, and geographic location may influence the foods that people choose to consume. Both the questionnaire and interview question were designed for this study, but echoed ideas from previous studies, especially Peter Singer and Jim Mason's analysis and discussion of different diets and eating preference in American households. In their study, Singer and Mason ask families of different backgrounds to share their views on food and describe what they eat and how they make those decisions. They then go shopping for food with each family to truly understand their motivations behind purchasing what they eat (Singer & Mason, 2006). While this research did not include explicitly outlining a list of foods that people eat or travel to food outlets, subjects spoke at length about what they eat, how they navigate the grocery store or other food outlets.

The questionnaire was composed of two portions, the first of which consisted of general demographic information: education, income, race, and geographic location, as identified by a neighborhood. The second half of the questionnaire asked where subjects regularly procured their food. This section provided a list of common food outlets in the Carlisle area, and also had space for people to write sources that were not listed. For this section, the term 'regularly' was defined as a place that is in a

person's or household's routine when getting food. Places that are occasionally visited were not to be identified. This section allowed subjects to recognize food outlets of various kinds, including grocery stores, food banks, local farms or farm stands, farmers' markets, gardens, restaurants.

There was much consideration and debate about how to frame the interviews question, and how many questions to ask. Initial drafts included a number of directed interview questions which focused on what influenced peoples' decisions to eat certain foods, what a typical meal in their household looked like, their satisfaction with the foods that they had access to and chose to consume, and other related issues. Ultimately, one broad question replaced the multiple, more specific questions to allow for the interview subjects to share a broader range of information and not feel like there was one correct answer that they needed to say.

The interview question, "Could you please describe your relationship with food? Include information regarding where you get your food, what kinds of food you get, how this food is used and prepared, and how things like cost, health, taste, and cultural preferences influence what you get," asked subjects about their relationship with food and its role in their lives. The open-endedness of this question prompted subjects to share information about what influenced their decisions on what to eat, how childhood or other life experiences have influenced the role that food plays in their lives, how their, and the community's view of food has changed over time, in addition to a number of other subjects.

## **Survey and Interview Implementation and Process**

Once the surveys, questionnaires, and interview questions received IRB exemption data collection, in the form of interviewing subjects, began. Subjects who responded to the survey at Farmers on the Square, were asked if they would be willing to answer a few short questions about their food choices and consumption. These preliminary surveys were conducted twice during the fall market season, once at the outdoor location at the intersection of High and Hanover Streets, and once at the indoor location at Project SHARE. Not all people who were approached were interested in or willing to participate in the survey, and as a result the data collected does not necessarily represent a diverse mix of market goers. The population surveyed may also not be an accurate representation of the different people that go to the farmers market because the survey was administered during a small portion of the entire market season, rather than at various times throughout the entire year.

Interview subjects were contacted via a number of different avenues. Originally, interview subjects were constrained to specific neighborhoods of Carlisle; the Mooreland, West Side, and East Side neighborhoods. However, as the research progressed it was discovered that geography had little impact on people's access to food. The majority of the population in Carlisle owns a car. Many of those whose households do not have a car, have relatively easy access to a vehicle from neighbors, friends, or community members. The remaining population can utilize public transportation or travel via foot or bike to acquire groceries. As a result of the fact that most people have access to a vehicle, geography seems to have little impact on the food outlets that people go to for food. People do not necessarily go to whatever

venue is closest, but rather consider cost, value, quality, and other factors when deciding where to go for food. About half way through the interview process, interviews were extended to all residents of Carlisle. This change made it possible for more people to participate in interviews than was initially possible.

The project was advertised through a number of outlets in Carlisle, including visiting neighborhood and community meetings, talking to stakeholders in the community, sharing information over social media, and advertising in newsletters and websites such as the Dickinson Today, church newsletters, and other avenues focused on the Carlisle community. In order to attempt to get a sample of interview subjects that reflects the demographic of people in Carlisle, people were contacted from a wide range of areas and backgrounds. To aid in this, Project SHARE and the Carlisle YWCA offered support and assistance in sharing contacts for potential community groups, or specific interview subjects, who would not have otherwise learned about the project.

Once initial contacts were made, the snowballing method was utilized to find future subjects; interview subjects were asked to share the opportunity with their friends and neighbors and suggest other people to reach out to. Initially the snowballing technique started off slow, but after a number of interview subjects shared the information with their communities and even posted the information on social media or other advertising venues, many interested participants replied to the opportunity.

During the interview process, each conversation began in the same way, by stating the overall goals of the project and asking the interview subjects to complete

the questionnaire of background information. Because of the broad nature of the research question, the interviewees were the primary people speaking, unless they asked for guidance or explanation of the research question. This allowed the interview subjects to speak freely about their experiences with food and follow their natural thought process, connecting different events, ideals, etc. to one another and their overall relationship with food.

Interviews were not recorded, but key phrases and ideas were noted throughout the interview. Afterwards, the ideas discussed by the subjects, especially key words and phrases that were used, were transcribed. In addition, notes were made regarding the subjects' body language, tone of voice, level of comfort with the conversation, and other cues and gestures that alluded to their opinions and views on food. Following the interview, the demographic information and interview information were combined into an excel spreadsheet for further analysis.

### **Positionality**

In attempt to minimize my impact on those participating in the study, I refrained from sharing any information on my background, aside from being an environmental science major, with interview subjects until after the interview process was complete. This was done to prevent the interview subjects from assuming that there was a “right” or specific answer to the interview question, and to eliminate the risk that the interview subjects would feel judged depending on their views of food or the foods that they favored. While I refrained from sharing information on my background, some interview subjects were familiar with my interests prior to the interview. It is possible that this prior information may have caused these people to be

more cautious about what they shared, but that is something that is difficult to determine. Additionally, being a young, white, female, student at a small liberal arts college places me in a certain position, both in terms of how I am perceived by interview subjects and how I interpret the interviews.

There were a number of challenges in the early stages of interviewing, as a result of attempting to seek out interview subjects from a variety of backgrounds, seeking out interview subjects who came from backgrounds other than my own. This may be because initial contacts in the community did not reach a broad range of demographic groups, because people were too busy set up and participate in an interview, or possibly because people felt uncomfortable or intimidated interacting and sharing personal information with a person whom they saw as an ‘other.’ As the research progressed however, partnerships with community groups and churches led to a broader range of participants. My extensive background and involvement in local and sustainable agricultural endeavors placed a potential bias towards food relationships that support similar ideals. Since this research relied so heavily on interactions between me and interview subjects, I remained cognizant of the fact that my position was central to research, and may have had an impact on the overall results.

### **Analysis of Data**

Once the information from the interviews and questionnaires was entered into a spreadsheet it were categorized into different sheets based on the different demographic factors being considered: education, household income, and geographic location. Interviews conducted with people who did not live in Carlisle were

discarded, as the study was focusing on the Carlisle community, leaving information from 37 subjects. Each spreadsheet contained the same headings: demographic information for each subject, the food outlets they frequently get food from, and key words or phrases that were discussed in their interview.

Initial analysis was conducted to search for trends between demographic information and where people acquire food. The frequency with which food outlets were visited was tallied based on each demographic factor. Food outlets that had been listed on the initial survey but did not receive responses from any interview subjects were eliminated from the analysis. Since the number of subjects in each category was not constant, the number of interview subjects was changed to a percentage to better represent how common a food outlet was within different categories. This process resulted in three unique graphs depicting people's interest in frequenting certain food outlets. Each of these graphs had food outlets listed on the x-axis and the percentages of interview subjects frequenting the given food outlets on the y-axis.

The interview transcripts were then analyzed for key words and concepts both within and across specific demographic categories. The key words and phrases from each transcript were tallied three times, based on education, geographic location, and household income. Similarly to the analysis of food outlets, the number of subjects in each demographic category was not consistent and so the number of subjects was converted to a percentage. This process resulted in three graphs depicting people's use of certain words and phrases when describing their relationship to food. Each of these graphs had key words and phrases listed on the x-axis and the percentages of interview subjects noting those terms in their interview on the y-axis.

## Results

As mentioned in the methods section, data was collected via a number of different outlets. The informational interviews with individuals involved in the food environment of Carlisle have been left out of this section. These interviews provided important background information, but did not provide any results. Instead, the information gleaned from the information interviews will be included in the discussion section.

The results included in this section are those that can be graphed to show trends relating people's relationship to food to different demographic factors. These results stem from the interviews and questionnaires answered by subjects living in Carlisle, PA. *Figures 1-3* depict the educational background, geographic location, and household income for all of the interview subjects.

The 37 people who were interviewed for this study were divided up into a number of subcategories based on their geographic location, household income, and highest level of education. While race was initially a demographic factor that was of interest to the study, only 6 subjects, 16% of the total, were not white. Additionally, subjects representing races that are in the minority for the area did not share the same geographic area, income level, or education level, thus making the category of race statistically insignificant.

### **Food Outlets (questionnaires)**

The answers regarding food outlets, which had been collected from the questionnaire for interview subjects, were totaled by venue and then compared based on the education, geographic location, and household income of the respondents. Each category contained a different number of people, which depended on the demographic backgrounds of the subjects. To best compare the different categories within each demographic quality, each sum was translated to a percentage, which depicted how many members of a specific category frequent a given food outlet.

#### **Education and Food Outlets (Figure 4)**

The data collected highlights that people from all different levels of educational attainment, ranging from high school through a PhD, frequently visit the same places for food. Giant, for instance, was reported as a frequent food outlet by at least 50% of respondents from all educational backgrounds. In interviews subjects noted different aspects of Giant that appealed to their shopping needs, including low prices, one-stop shopping, a natural and organic section, selection of quality foods, and a number of other factors.

While Giant is a common food outlet across educational backgrounds, the vast majority of food outlets frequented by subjects show at least general trends relating education to food outlets. Many of the outlets offering local, natural, or other foods related to the alternative food movement are frequented more often by those with higher education levels, specifically Bachelor's Degrees, Master's Degrees, and PhDs. These outlets include Farmers on the Square, Appalachian Whole Foods, CSA shares from local farms, other farmers' markets, and personal or community gardens.

While not all of the people who frequent these outlets fall in the highest three educational categories, subjects from the three highest categories frequent the outlets in much higher percentages than those with other educational backgrounds.

Additional area farmers' markets stand as an outlier in the "alternative food outlets" in the area, as they are frequented by the same percentage of people with an Associate Degree and people with a PhD. It must be noted, however, that not all farmers' markets in Pennsylvania are producer-only and as a result, farmers' markets are not necessarily associated with the local or alternative food movement. That being said, this statistic is insignificant on the large scale because both categories only contained two interview subjects, which is not enough to determine a trend amongst people of similar educational backgrounds. Subjects with lower educational levels frequented other food outlets, such as Wal-Mart, much more often, while people with mid-range educational background commonly frequented food outlets such as BB's Grocery Outlet and Nell's Shurfine Market. However, looking at people's educational background and where they frequently acquire food cannot clearly depict a community's food environment, because education is just one factor at play in a much more complex system. *Figure 4* depicts the relationship between education and frequented food outlets, showing the common trend of food outlets either increasing or decreasing in the frequency that they are visited as education levels increase.

### Geography and Food Outlets (Figure 5)

While the high rates of car ownership<sup>6</sup>, walkability of Carlisle, and public transportation system make the role of geography on where people acquire food less significant, the communities where people live can have large social implications, which can then impact food choices. Overall, the relative location of food outlets in comparison to where people live did not have an impact on people's interest in where to acquire food. *Figure 5* compares where people live in Carlisle with where they frequently acquire food. As in the comparison between frequented food outlets and education levels, Giant is a food outlet that is frequented by people living within all areas of Carlisle. Aside from a few outliers, the vast majority of food outlets were not frequented in high percentages by people across all neighborhoods included in the study.

The Mooreland neighborhood, unlike the other neighborhoods included in the study, which do not share deep community ideals that relate to where they prefer to access food, fosters a community with a vested interest in food systems. Those living in the Mooreland neighborhood represented the highest percentages of people who regularly acquire food from a CSA share, Farmers on the Square, a local farm stand, a community or personal garden, or Wegmans. Although it is not clear where the underlying ideals, regarding food systems, in the Mooreland community stem from, it is evident that the presence of community in the neighborhood influences individuals'

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<sup>6</sup> According to the 2013 data available from the US Census Bureau, approximately 99.45% of the 18,694 people who either own or rent a home in Carlisle, have access to at least one vehicle in their household (US Census: Tenure by Vehicle, 2013).

food choices. The role of community or geographic location was not visible in any of the other areas included in the study.

#### Household Income and Food Outlets (Figure 6)

Household income has one of the largest influences on where people acquire food. As one may expect, people of lower income levels generally gravitate towards food outlets with more inexpensive food, while people of higher income levels have more money to spend at food outlets where food is of a higher price range. *Figure 6* shows that as household income increases the overall trend in frequented food outlets switches from places offering discounted products, such as Aldi, Deals, or Wal-Mart, to average or higher-end grocery stores, such as Nell's Shurfine Market or Wegmans, and ultimately to an emphasis on local and alternative food, such as CSA shares, Farmers on the Square, or personal gardens. As was the case with comparing geographic location and education levels with frequented food outlets, Giant is frequented by people across all economic levels, although the foods that individuals purchase within Giant may vary significantly.

### **Relationship to Food (interviews)**

The interview transcripts were compiled and key words and phrases were tallied based on the educational background, geographic location, and household income of the interviewees. Since interviews were not recorded, the complex process of listening to interview subjects and filtering their conversations into key words became extremely important to the outcome of the research. The key words that were present in these conversations have been analyzed in the graphs that follow.

Additionally, the nature of associating specific ideas to key terms and phrases did not provide an appropriate way to discuss certain issues and ideas. Larger concepts that are not necessarily tied down to a single word were not included in this analysis.

These ideas, however, will be included in the discussion. Different relationships can be discerned based on the frequency with which subjects mentioned specific terms related to food and their different demographics. Ultimately, this can highlight trends in what people prioritize about food and how it relates to their lives. *Figures 7-9* show the frequency with which certain words and phrases were mentioned throughout all of the interviews.

#### **Education (*Figure 7*)**

The number of interview subjects from each education category varied significantly, from one to 17 subjects. As a result, there is not equal representation amongst each of the categories. This inequality poses a few challenges. Namely, when individuals within their larger category are represented as a percent of the whole some people's views hold more value than others, depending on the number of people in a given category. Additionally, it is difficult to discern trends that may exist

as a result of educational background since the number of subjects in each category varies so significantly.

*Figure 7* shows the relationship between an interview subject's educational background and the role of food in their life and the priorities they associate with it. For subjects noting high school as their highest level of education, there were very few key words or phrases that were repeated amongst a number of interview subjects. Of the 36 key words or phrases analyzed, only four were mentioned by more than half of the subjects with a high school diploma as their highest level of education: taste (4 of 7), children (4 of 7), health (5 of 7), and an improved availability of healthy, local food (4 of 7). Although in the minority, it is worth mentioning that one of the subjects noted that food access has worsened and two did not comment. These views show that people's individual perceptions are that food access has not improved for all people.

Very few interview subjects noted either Technical School or an Associate Degree as their highest level of education (one subject noted technical school as the highest level of education and two subjects noted an Associate's Degree as the highest level of education). As a result, those two categories are statistically insignificant do not show views shared by a broad group of people. Since there are few participants in each category it is not possible to determine overall trends relating views of food to education.

Subjects noting a Bachelor's Degree or Master's Degree as the highest level of education had very diverse views of food, but people of both categories expressed some similar views. Only four phrases were mentioned by at least half of people with

a Bachelor's Degree: fresh food (4 of 7), health (4 of 7), food being fun and cooking being enjoyable (4 of 7), and an improved availability of healthy, local food (5 of 7). The category of Master's Degree as the highest level of education had the highest number of subjects, 17. Potentially as a result of the high number of participants and the diversity of views there were no key words that were mentioned by at least half of the participants.

Similar to the subjects with Technical School or an Associate's Degree as the highest level of education, very few subjects had a PhD as their highest level of education. As a result, it is not possible to determine overall trends connecting educational levels with food preferences. That being said, the two subjects with PhD's both discussed phrases suggesting previous contemplation about their relationship to food, beyond an interest in cost or health. Both subjects mentioned the social nature of food and how their relationship to food has changed over time, both personally and as a result of the Carlisle food environment. However, these two subjects may share similar beliefs, but differ from the majority of the other people with PhD's living in Carlisle, so it is not possible to discern overall trends connecting people of this education level with particular views of food.

Additionally, there is a visible trend that depicts as the highest level of education increases, subjects' interest in community, local food, gardening, and organic food. On the whole, the analysis of key terms from interviews show relationships between a person's views and their education, but the relationships are not as strong as they are when comparing a person's relationship to food with their household income.

### Geography (Figure 8)

*Figure 8* shows the relationship between where interview subjects live and the role of food in their life and the priorities they associate with it. Although individuals mentioned different priorities and views of food in their interviews, there were common key terms and phrases that were mentioned by the majority of interview subjects for a given part of Carlisle. Both the Mooreland neighborhood and West Side neighborhood showed equal interest in the health of food. Both communities also shared the opinion that the availability of food, especially healthy food, has increased over the time that individual subjects have lived in Carlisle, although those living in the West Side felt significantly more strong about this improvement than those living in the Mooreland neighborhood. Those living in the East Side neighborhood placed a priority on the time it takes to prepare food, in addition to being interested in the health of food. Subjects living in a part of Carlisle other than the Mooreland, West Side, or East Side neighborhoods noted interest in cost as an important consideration in making food choices, although not the deciding factor.

### Household Income (Figure 9)

*Figure 9* highlights the relationship between the subjects' household income and the role of food in their lives and the priorities they associate with it. The relationship between income and food varies based on the terms being discussed by the interview subjects. For a number of instances, the frequency with which certain terms were discussed was very similar between people of the lowest and highest income groups, but significantly lower among those living in the middle income categories. An interest in family, the enjoyment of cooking, and an interest in organic

or other third-party verified food is significantly less in subjects representing the middle income categories than those at the two ends of the spectrum. As income level increases the interest in cost, children, and time to prepare food decreases, while an interest in community increases. Those living in the middle income brackets seem to have the greatest interest in health. While subjects at the higher end of the income scale did not place the largest overall priority on health, they had a greater interest in health than those at the lowest end of the income scale.

### **Cross-Category Findings**

Giant supermarket was noted as a frequented food source amongst people of all income and education brackets, in addition to people living throughout different neighborhoods of Carlisle. The availability of food representing a number of different price brackets, cultural preferences, health interests, etc. seems to make it appeal to people with varying views of and relationships to food.

## Discussion

### Geography and Food Access

According to the 2013 data available from the US Census Bureau, approximately 99.45% of the 18,694 people who either own or rent a home in the borough of Carlisle, have access to at least one vehicle in their household (US Census: Tenure by Vehicle, 2013). While this information fails to include those who are homeless, it is a strong depiction of the fact that vehicle access is a very minimal problem for the community as a whole. In addition to the high availability of vehicles, Carlisle's circulator bus provides an additional means of transportation to area food outlets. Since the vast majority of Carlisle residents have access to a car, their geographic proximity to food outlets does not play a significant role in people's decisions on where to get groceries. Residents of Carlisle are more likely to acquire food from venues that meet their individual priorities, including categories such as cost, health, and the environment, rather than frequenting whichever food outlet is closest to where they live. As was mentioned in the *Results* section, the data did not show a strong relationship between where people live and where they acquire food, aside from shared community values in the Mooreland neighborhood.

While geography has little impact on the food outlets that people frequent, people from all neighborhoods noted the grocery store Giant as a frequented food outlet. Throughout the interviews, subjects discussed that Giant was a store where they could do "one stop shopping" and find food that suited their varying interests and preferences. People's liking for Giant differed greatly; some mentioned that it has very high quality products, while others explained that they do not believe the

products are the greatest, or most affordable, but it is conveniently located. Although nearly all residents of Carlisle have access to a vehicle, the time it takes to travel to a grocery store is factored into people's decisions on where to shop, and as a result some people frequent food outlets such as Giant out of convenience rather than in interest in their prices or products.

Although the percentage of people in Carlisle without access to a vehicle is very small, Elaine Livas, the Executive Director of Project SHARE, explained that many of the people who receive food from Project SHARE fall within this minority. While a lack of transportation does not necessarily keep people from attending Project SHARE's distributions, it does impact how much and which foods people can take, since they often have to carry it back to where they live. Even though from a community level there seems to be an overall weak relationship between people's ability to access food and where they live, a large percentage of the population that Elaine works with on a daily basis sees geography and food in a very different context.

### **The "Middle Class" and Food**

Although there is not standard definition of what constitutes the "Middle Class" in America, former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich defines it as those living 50% above and below the median income level (Williams, 2014). Based on this concept, those living in the middle class in Carlisle can be described as those with household incomes 50% above and below the median income of \$43,630, as defined by the 2009-2013 American Community Survey (US Census: Economic Characteristics 2013). In relating this information to the income categories included

in the questionnaire answered by interview subjects, those living in the middle class would fall within three household income categories: \$15,001-\$30,000; \$30,001-\$50,000; \$50,001-\$75,000. It must be noted, however, that those falling within the lowest category, \$15,001-\$30,000 may be living below the poverty level, which in 2013 was described as a family of four with a total income of \$23,550 or below (ASPE, 2013). While some people included in what is defined as the middle class for this study may actually live below the poverty line, this delineation of income categories provides the clearest separation between those significantly below the median income, those in the general median income range, and those significantly above the median income. Additionally, the middle class can be further divided into the lower-middle, middle, and upper-middle to more accurately portray people's relationship to Carlisle's median income.

Through evaluating the key words and phrases discussed during the interviews, there appear to be a number of trends amongst those in the middle class. One of the most significant trends is in the idea that people see food and eating as practical. This concept was only discussed by those in the middle class, and more specifically by those with households falling around the median income for households in Carlisle. Relatedly, very few subjects mentioned the importance of family in their relationship to food. Both of these ideas suggest that generally those living in the middle class in Carlisle see eating and preparing food as something that is necessary to survive, rather than a time of gathering or social enjoyment.

However, interest in community was first discussed by those in the upper middle class, household incomes between \$50,001-\$75,000. Though because this idea

is first discussed in the upper middle class it seems to be influenced by heightened income levels, rather than a general interest that is shared by the middle class. While the trends discussed highlight eating as something solely practical, the significance of time, with relation to food preparation, decreases throughout the middle class, and is lowest amongst those with a household income between \$50,001-\$75,000, in comparison to those living in the lower or upper classes. Although there are many potential reasons for why this might be, the structure of and number of people in households may significantly impact how much time people have to prepare food.

Those living in the middle class discussed the greatest interest in fresh food and health, but showed the least amount of interest in diet education. This contrast suggests that those living in the middle class may have already been exposed to diet education, which has influenced their interest in fresh, healthy food, and no longer see the need for it. Or, it may suggest that the people in this income bracket may not be aware of the diet education that they have been and are exposed to and how it is influencing their views of food.

### **Privilege and the Alternative Food Movement in Carlisle**

As explained by A. Breeze Harper, “white middle-class individuals dominate the alternative food movement in the United States” (Harper, 2010, p.221). Guthman shares this sentiment and explains how spaces associated with the alternative food movement are often times deemed “white” and related to “white privilege” (Guthman, 2011, p.265). While for many communities, the ideas shared by Harper and Guthman are valid, this research suggests that in Carlisle it appears that

educational and economic privileges are not existent in the alternative food movement.

In the interviews, subjects discussed local alternative food outlets, the farmers' market, gardens, CSA programs, etc., with positive connotations. Although not all residents of Carlisle are interested in these outlets, there is a growing movement around them that is supported by people across all demographics. Unlike the "white spaces" discussed by Harper and Guthman, Carlisle's Farmers on the Square is viewed as an asset to the community and something that has had a positive role in reshaping the food environment and food access in the area. While the cost of foods available at Farmers on the Square or through a local CSA program was mentioned fairly frequently throughout the interview process, the farmers' market's ability to accept nutrition coupons has made it possible for people of a lower income bracket to take advantage of the market, and feel welcome doing so. Other individuals who were interested in maximizing their savings expressed a personal interest in gardening, on a variety of scales, as a way to produce food in a more economical way. Additionally, subjects who noted that foods available through Farmers on the Square, or similar outlets, were inaccessible financially did not view them in a negative, elitist light, but rather showed an interest in being able to have financial access to them.

Contrastingly, in the informational interview with Elaine Livas, she explained that the majority of people who receive food from Project SHARE do not visit Farmers on the Square. According to Livas, people's lack of interest in Farmers on the Square stems from an inability to eat fresh food because of health reasons, a lack

of understanding of how to prepare certain food, or simply disinterest in what is available. While many recipients of Project SHARE may not frequent Farmers on the Square, Project SHARE's farm stand, which offers free fresh produce to anyone in need, has grown in popularity. In an effort to meet this demand, the facility has recently undergone significant renovations, including building a space for cooking and nutritional education classes. As people become more comfortable preparing fresh produce there is the potential that more Project SHARE recipients will shop at Farmers on the Square, as some of the current inhibiting factors may become obsolete.

Another concept often associated with alternative food movements is third-party verified food, such as organic, fair trade, free-range, etc. Of the people interviewed, a higher percentage of individuals with household incomes between \$15,001 and \$30,000 (50%) mentioned an interest or priority in various third party verifications, namely organic, than those in all of the other income brackets, aside from \$100,001-\$150,000 (57%). There is often a societal perception that third-party verified food is only of interest to those of the highest income levels. While it might differ in other communities, in Carlisle the interest in these foods exists across various income brackets, suggesting that food that are organic, fair trade, etc. are not viewed as elitist or reserved for those with certain privileges.

While interview subjects from across different backgrounds noted an interest in the alternative food movement, the sample of subjects who participated in this research is not a strong representation of Carlisle as a whole, as both income and educational attainment levels were significantly higher than those for the average

Carlisle resident. As a result of this skewed sample pool different demographic categories were not equally represented. It is not possible to conclude whether or not privilege exists in the food environment of Carlisle. However, none of the interview subjects suggested that they have experienced or are aware of the existence of privilege. It possible though that people of certain demographics experience the presence of privilege, they were simply not included in the study.

The misrepresentation of subjects suggests another form of privilege in existence. In order to participate in the study subjects had to dedicate at least 30 minutes of their schedule for the interview, a feat that is not possible for all people. Economic class plays a strong role in a person's ability to participate because those who for instance can afford childcare or do not have to work multiple jobs had the ability to participate while those who are of a lower economic background did not have the privilege to make the necessary accommodations to participate.

Additionally, this research failed to touch on the existence, or lack there of, of racial privilege in the Carlisle food environment. Very few people of races other than white participated in this research. The lack of participation by people from other racial backgrounds could stem from a number of different factors, including that outreach failed reach minority populations. As a result, it is impossible to determine if racial privilege is present in the Carlisle food environment. Furthermore, since numerous types of privilege – economic, educational, racial – cannot be evaluate with significant certainty it is not possible to determine if privilege exists in the food environment, though the results that this research did provide suggest that it is not present.

## **Education and Food**

Heidi Witmer, the Executive Director of the LEAF Project, explained that education is often seen as the first and easiest solution for improving challenges with the food systems, especially related to food consumption. Heidi shared that in many cases however, a lack of education is not the root cause of these issues. Many of the low-income subjects included in this study discussed their knowledge of and interest in healthy food, at length. The concept of guilt was very present throughout these interviews. The interviewees understand the health benefits of fresh produce and other wholesome foods and recognize what unhealthy foods are. Often, their families even enjoy eating healthy foods. The problem, however, is being able to afford foods that are healthy. When budgets are constrained, high-calorie, low-cost foods are often all that are accessible. An increase in education on health and nutrition will not necessarily change people's eating habits, nor will it make healthy food more accessible for the lower-income population in Carlisle.

Similarly, very few of the subjects (6 of 37) noted the importance of diet related or nutritional education programs in their view of food. While these six subjects discussed the value of education, they each explained an experience that they had had that changed the way they thought about what to eat. None of the subjects expressed a longing for more education. The interest in nutritional education from interviews seems to reflect an appreciation for existing educational programs, rather than a need for more education.

While education on the basics of nutrition is not necessary to improve food access and food consumption on the community level, education on how to prepare

foods, especially different kinds of produce, can have a significant role in changing food consumption patterns. As Elaine Livas explained, many fresh foods are intimidating to people with limited cooking knowledge because they may not be familiar with how to prepare certain kinds of produce. Additionally, people who struggle to afford food are less likely to experiment with new recipes or unfamiliar ingredients to prevent making food that will not be enjoyed, or even wasted.

Education classes on food preparation can help people not only learn how to utilize fresh produce, but also work to eliminate a stigma of privilege or elitism that may exist around certain foods. It is important to note, however, that cooking often requires significant amounts of time. As a result, not all people have the ability to cook a meal for themselves or their families, especially if they need to divide their time between multiple jobs, taking care of children, or other time-intensive obligations. For these people, increasing education on food preparation may have a slight impact on consumption patterns, but may not be able to drastically impact how they eat and view food.

### **Food Access in Carlisle and the Community's Perception of Food**

Although the majority of subjects discussed that they believe food access in Carlisle and the community's perception of food have improved while they have lived in Carlisle, a number of them noted that there is still substantial improvement that needs to occur, and that with many of the improvements there have been specific populations that have benefited more than others. Throughout many of the interviews, subjects noted that they perceive that food access and the community's view of food has improved most for people at the two opposite ends of the income spectrum, those

below or near the poverty line and those in the upper-middle or upper classes, but not for those in the middle, especially those living slightly above the poverty line.

Based on the perceptions of those interviewed, the presence of Project SHARE and other community organizations that work to make food accessible to those in need is felt and greatly appreciated by those in the community. In discussing how food access has improved in Carlisle, nearly all subjects, across income levels, made reference to programs or initiatives related to Project SHARE, including the monthly distributions and the farm stand.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, those interviewed seemed to believe that those with high-income levels have also been able to benefit from an improvement in food access. Subjects noted ideas including the presence of Farmers on the Square, local CSA programs, and *Wegmans* as resources for those who have an interest in a higher quality of food and also have the income to match. While the actual costs of these food outlets may not make them accessible solely to those with high income, there is an over-arching community perception that they are more expensive than other food retailers.

Community views seem to believe that those who are not a part of these two income categories are often left out from experiencing improvements in food access. Both interview subjects who fit in this income category and those who did not noticed and discussed unevenness in food access. One interview subject in particular explained that since becoming employed and surpassing the maximum income to receive government assistance it has been challenging to afford food for her family. She further explained that her family previously ate much healthier food, especially

produce, because they could purchase it with nutrition coupons or receive it from food distributions. Now, however, in battling the cost of rent and food her family has had to resort to unhealthy, inexpensive food, regardless of the fact that she knows and understands the value of eating healthy food. This challenge, however, is not one that applies not only to Carlisle, but to the nation. While community-scale projects and programs can have a role in address this issue, they must be matched by large-scale structural changes to the current national food system. Government support through funding and changes in national subsidies matched with policies that place value and interest in affordable healthy food can have significant influences on what is available to people, and ultimately on what people choose to eat.

### **Changes to the Food Environment**

As mentioned in the previous section, many of the subjects explained that they have witnessed an improvement in food availability in Carlisle, and an improvement in the community's views of food in general over the past decade. For a variety of reasons, Giant is frequented by consumers across demographic backgrounds. The store's central location, prices, selection, and array of goods appeal to consumers with different purchasing priorities. In the interviews, however, many subjects explained that the quality of food available at Giant has not always been as it is today, and that a shift in what is available has helped to transform the food environment of Carlisle. In attempting to explain this shift that Giant has undergone, interview subjects noted a number of different potential root causes. One being the simple fact that on a national scale consumers are becoming more aware of health, while also becoming more interested in cooking, especially preparing exotic or ethnic cuisines. Subjects

explained that over the past decade Giant has begun to sell “gourmet” ingredients and is now a store where people can partake in one stop shopping for nearly any recipe they desire. Additionally, the shifting demographic of people who live in and around Carlisle has also led to a change in the food that is available. For instance, one subject explained the growing presence of foods typically associated with Latin American diets as a larger Latino population has moved into the area.

However, the majority of interview subjects who noted a change in the foods that are sold at Giant discussed the influence that Wegmans has had on the local food environment. To many people living in Carlisle who are concerned with the quality of the food they eat, particularly fresh food, Wegmans is seen as a haven; a store whose corporate values align with those of the customer. Along with high quality products, Wegmans website emphasizes an interest in agriculture, organic food, sustainability, and communities (Wegmans). Along with these corporate values, the products that Wegmans offers align with these ideals. Many of the subjects connected the opening of Wegmans with the shift in the quality and variety of food available at Giant, suggesting that one of Giant’s large motivators in changing what it has to offer was the opening of a competitor. While the reasoning behind this shift is unknown to consumers, and may be a result of a number of different factors, because of it Giant now offers a large selection of organic and sustainable foods, which meet the Carlisle community’s growing interest in these types of food.

Another initiator of change to the food environment in Carlisle has been Dickinson College. Although many of the college’s initiatives have been directed towards the campus, they have had both direct and indirect implications on

perceptions of food and food availability in Carlisle. Both interview subjects who are affiliated with Dickinson and those who are not recognize the role that the college has had in the food environment of the greater community. One clear example of Dickinson's role can be seen through the College Farm. The farm's presence at and role with Farmers on the Square has helped to foster a strong relationship between the Carlisle community and those involved in agriculture. Additionally, the programs offered by the College Farm, including the CSA and education classes (Farm, Cook, Eat; Discover, Inquire, Grow!; Sustainable Earth Education; and the Sustainability School Workshops) create venues for community members of all backgrounds and interests to engage with agriculture and food systems in a variety of facets. These classes, which involve children through adults help to generate and foster an interest in food, which penetrates into deeper levels of the community.

Dickinson's overarching value in sustainability also has a role in influencing the community's interest in food, and helping to dictate food access. Concepts relating to justice and environmental sustainability are a common part of the dialogue both in and outside of the classroom. As a result, students who may live off campus, alumni in Carlisle, faculty, staff, and administrators have an awareness, and varied levels of interest, in eating "responsibly" with regard to social and environmental issues. This population of individuals who regularly think about issues of food has helped to stimulate a dialogue within the Carlisle community to shed more light on how food is produced, accessed, and consumed.

Similarly, the dialogue of sustainability, especially with regard to food, that exists around the Dickinson campus has infiltrated the Carlisle community through

the form of campus initiatives. For example, in 2014 Dickinson piloted a program called “Localtunity” which incentivized students, staff, faculty, etc. who shopped at Farmers on the Square together and cooking a shared meal with what was procured. Dickinson is now working with businesses within Carlisle to help establish the framework for similar incentive programs that will benefit community members who are not affiliated with the college. While in some cases Dickinson’s presence in Carlisle has had clear impacts on the food environment and in other instances its impacts have been less direct, many residents of Carlisle recognize Dickinson as having had a significant role in shaping the current food environment of Carlisle, particularly by increasing the community’s emphasis and interest in local food.

### **Role of Upbringing in Adult Relationship with Food**

In their book, *Food Justice*, Gottlieb and Joshi include a quote from the former president of Kids ‘R Us stating: “If you won the child at an early age, you can own the child for years to come” (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010, p.69). While in the context of the book, the authors are discussing the power of advertising and incentivizing unhealthy foods, this concept can also apply to diets and views of food at large. Throughout the interviews, subjects reflected on where their views of food initiated from, and how they may have changed throughout their lives. Not all of the subjects commented on their upbringings, but for those who did there were two distinct categories: those who grew up on meat and potatoes because that was the standard diet for the time, and those who grew up surrounded by small-scale farms or family gardens and with an emphasis on self-sufficiency and an awareness of how food is

produced.<sup>7</sup> Although not indicative of all families and upbringings, the interview subjects who reflected on eating meat and potatoes expressed less of an emphasis on family and the social nature of food, and placed more focus on the convenience of the meal. Contrastingly, those who were raised around agriculture, either backyard gardens or on or near a farm, expressed an emphasis on understanding where food comes from and all that is involved in the process, eating a diet that varies with the seasons, and an interest in family. Additionally, many of the subjects discussed the cost benefit of growing your own food, especially with regard to preserving food for later in the season.

In comparing these childhood diets to those that subjects currently keep, the majority of subjects who noted a meat and potatoes diet during their childhood discussed a shift to a diet that they consider to be more healthy, one that is high in fresh produce. The people who underwent this shift explained that they perceive their change in diet stemmed from a growing national interest and awareness in healthy food and an increased availability of it in their area. Those who described a childhood diet connected to agriculture still place a high value on self-sufficiency and local and fresh food. Each of the people who mentioned growing up around food production still either keep a garden or prefer buying food from local farms. Although not all subjects had the same relationship to food during their upbringing, those who were raised in an environment with particular values around food and food production continued to share those values into adulthood. Those who were raised in households

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<sup>7</sup> Not all people who commented on the diet they ate while growing up fell into these two categories, but these were the categories most commonly commented on. Others reflected on eating at restaurants most nights, eating soul food, and eating diverse ethnic foods.

where cost and convenience were the first priority were more open to changes in their relationship to food as their economic and social position in society changed their dependence on cost and convenience. The interviews seem to suggest that a child's relationship to food during his or her upbringing can play a pivotal role in his or her relationship to food during adulthood.

## **Conclusion**

### **Continuing to Improve Access**

The food environment, specifically regarding access to fresh, healthy foods, has improved quite significantly throughout the past decade. The presence of food outlets including Farmers on the Square, local CSA programs, community gardens, Project SHARE, and an expansion of the variety of food available at stores such as Giant have helped to make fresh and healthy food more accessible to people across a wide range of income levels. However, these improvements have not infiltrated all pockets of the Carlisle community. There are still a significant number of people who cannot afford to eat healthy food, which is often times what they would prefer to eat. The population of people living slightly above the poverty level, earning an income that is above that which people can receive government assistance, faces the largest challenge in providing healthy food for their households. This challenge is connected to the larger, national food system, and the structuring that results in unhealthy, highly processed food being significantly cheaper in the short-term than healthy food. On the whole, the alternative food environment – local, organic, etc. – is viewed as an

inclusive environment across all demographics and should be considered as a potential sector of the food system to continue to improve food access within.

### **Uses for the Findings**

This work to investigate privilege in Carlisle's food environment can be used at different levels within the community to continue to improve the food environment. Early in the research process various neighborhood groups throughout Carlisle expressed interest in the results of this study to better learn about their neighborhood's relationship to food. The Greater Carlisle Project and individual neighborhood organizations can utilize the information discussed in the study to become aware of how food is viewed and accessed by people of different backgrounds, and similarly, what people prioritize when deciding what foods to eat. Potential avenues to share these findings and make them accessible to the general public are currently being explored.

### **Future Research**

This study worked to start building a basic understanding of the food environment in Carlisle. The primary source of data was qualitative and quantitative information from 37 residents of Carlisle. Those who participated in the study represented various demographic backgrounds, however each demographic category was not represented equally. A future study could discuss similar issues, but focus on a population that is more representative of Carlisle as a whole. While this study contained participants from a variety of demographic backgrounds, the different income and education categories were not represented in the same proportion that they exist in the community. A study of a more representative sample could confirm

that the trends discussed in this study are still applicable. Additionally, future research could look at the role of age in food access and food consumption. While this study considered a number of different demographic factors, information on people's ages was not collected. It is possible that people of different age categories, especially people on both ends of the age spectrum have different views of and access to food.

Similarly, Dickinson students were excluded from this study, since the majority of them are not full-time residents of Carlisle. They are however a part of the community and a population that interacts with the food environment on a regular basis. To accommodate the views of Dickinson students, a future study could either include them in the larger community, or focus strictly on the Dickinson community, also allowing those who work at Dickinson but do not live in Carlisle to participate.

Finally, the connection between the food environment in Carlisle and the national food system could be evaluated to understand how the two are related, and likewise how they differ. Studying federal and local programming related to food would create a structure to compare the programs being offered and their impact on the community. This study focused on privilege in food access, which is seen as a phenomenon that exists throughout the nation. Future studies could look at the presence of other nationally recognized food system issues in Carlisle, such as obesity or food insecurity. Since this research applies to the community at large, future studies could be adopted by either Dickinson students and faculty, or by organizations in the community interested in the topic.

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**Appendix I**  
**Survey for People Shopping at Farmers on the Square**

**Neighborhood (circle one):**

West Side    Mooreland    North Side    Center of Carlisle    South of  
South Street    Pomfret Street    Dickinson College Staff/Faculty/Student  
College Park Apartments    Warf Rats Area (East North St)    Grand View Court  
Other (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

**Highest Level of Education (circle one):**

Less than High School    High School    Vocational Training  
Associate Degree    Bachelor Degree    Masters Degree    Doctorate

**Household Income Level (circle one):**

Under \$15,000    \$15,000-\$30,000    \$30,001-\$50,000    \$50,001-\$75,000  
\$75,001-\$100,000    \$100,001-\$150,000    Above \$150,000

**Race (circle one, if multiracial circle all that apply):**

White (non-Hispanic)    Hispanic/Latino    Black/African American  
Asian    American Indian    Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander    Other

**Please place a ★ next to the food outlets, aside from Farmers on the Square, which you regularly go to for food from and ~~cross-out~~ the places that you have never gotten food from.**

<b>Aldi</b>	<b>Other Minimart or Convenience</b>
<b>Appalachian Whole Foods Market</b>	<b>Store</b>
<b>CSA share at a Local Farm</b>	<b>Project SHARE</b>
<b>Dollar General</b>	<b>Proud to Serve Minimart and Deli</b>
<b>Giant</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Karns Food</b>	<b>Walmart</b>
<b>Local Farm Stand</b>	<b>Wegmans</b>
<b>Minute Stop</b>	<b>Weis</b>
<b>Nell's Shurfine Market</b>	<b>Wenger Meats &amp; Ice</b>
<b>Other Farmers Market</b>	

**If you regularly get food from food outlets not listed please list them below:**

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**What types of food do you typically purchase at Farmers on the Square?**

Bread & Grains      Dairy (cheese, eggs, milk, etc.)      Meat & Fish  
Non-Food Goods (flowers, art, etc.)      Produce (fruits, vegetables, & herbs)  
Premade Foods (cooked foods, sauces, spreads, baked goods, etc.)

**How often do you visit Farmers on the Square?**

Bimonthly (either on the Square or at Project SHARE)

Biweekly (either on the Square or at Project SHARE)

Every time it is held at Project SHARE

Every time it is happening at both the Square and Project SHARE

Every week when the market is held on the Square

Monthly (either on the Square or at Project SHARE)

Once or twice a year

**How much of your weekly shopping do you do at Farmer on the Square?**

Hardly Any      Some      About Half      Most      Nearly All      All

**Appendix II**  
**Questionnaire for Interview Subjects**

**Neighborhood (circle one):**

West Side      Mooreland      East Side      Other (please list): \_\_\_\_\_

**Highest Level of Education (circle one):**

Less than High School      High School      Vocational Training  
Associate Degree      Bachelor Degree      Masters Degree      Doctorate

**Household Income Level (circle one):**

Under \$15,000      \$15,000-\$30,000      \$30,001-\$50,000      \$50,001-\$75,000  
\$75,001-\$100,000      \$100,001-\$150,000      Above \$150,000

**Race (circle one, if multiracial circle all that apply):**

White (non-Hispanic)      Hispanic/Latino      Black/African American      Asian  
American Indian      Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander      Other

**Please circle the food outlets which you regularly go to for food**

<b>Aldi</b>	<b>Other Farmers Market</b>
<b>Appalachian Whole Foods Market</b>	<b>Other Minimart or Convenience Store</b>
<b>CSA share at a Local Farm</b>	<b>Project SHARE</b>
<b>Dollar General</b>	<b>Proud to Serve Minimart and Deli</b>
<b>Farmers on the Square</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Giant</b>	<b>Walmart</b>
<b>Karns Food</b>	<b>Wegmans</b>
<b>Local Farm Stand</b>	<b>Weis</b>
<b>Minute Stop</b>	<b>Wenger Meats &amp; Ice</b>
<b>Nell's Shurfine Market</b>	

**If you regularly get food from food outlets not listed please list them below:**

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**Appendix III**  
**Interview Question**

Could you please describe your relationship with food? Include information regarding where you get your food, what kinds of food you get, how this food is used and prepared, and how things like cost, health, taste, and cultural preferences influence what you get.

To: Alexandra Raczka  
From: J.A. Skelton, IRB Chair  
Subject: Protocol #200  
Date: 10/17/2014

The protocol **200. Food Access and Consumption in Carlisle, PA** has been verified by the Dickinson College Institutional Review Board as **Exempt** according to 45CFR46.101(b)(2): Anonymous Surveys - No Risk on 10/17/2014.

Please note that changes to your protocol may affect its exempt status. Please contact me directly to discuss any changes you may contemplate.

Best wishes for a successful project.

J.A. Skelton, IRB Chair  
[skelton@dickinson.edu](mailto:skelton@dickinson.edu)