

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

**Exploring empowerment in food security and food sovereignty programs**

by

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*This paper is dedicated to Kobe Bryant who gave me the blueprint  
and Anthony Bourdain who sparked my passion for food.*

**A note about style:**

This paper negates traditional grammar rules in capitalizing some proper nouns. Capital letters are used to signify importance, but there are some words and names that for me should never signify importance.

This paper does not capitalize the proper noun “reagan” in reference to the ex-president ronald reagan or proper noun “united states” because of the murderous policies and acts of colonization that should be synonymous with these two proper nouns. There is no importance with these words and names, they should not be capitalized.

## **Abstract**

This paper explores the relationship between empowerment as it relates to non-profit food security and non-profit food sovereignty programs. The main question this paper asks is if non-profit food security or non-profit food sovereignty programs do a better job at empowering their participants. The paper also takes a deep dive into the theoretical and practical applications of food security and food sovereignty. All together my findings conclude that food sovereignty is better designed to tackle larger systemic issues like hunger and is more capable of empowering than the model of food security. There are three research components to this paper: a literature review, five expert interviews, and a content analysis. The literature review is important to building the foundation of understanding that led to the above conclusions. In total, 25 different peer-reviewed journals (only 15 are cited here) on food security and food sovereignty were read to build a fuller picture of our food system. The content analysis tests empowerment of 12 food security and eight food sovereignty organizational mission statements. The three themes of power, transformative action, and capacity building are identified as indicators for empowerment in the content analysis. I speak more about this process in the “empowerment” section on page 10. Important conclusions of the content analysis are that zero of the 12 food security organizations analyzed meet all three levels for empowerment while five food sovereignty organizations meet all three levels of empowerment. Further, there are zero cases where there are more food security organizations that test higher in any level of empowerment. Finally, the five expert interviews conducted in this research are vital to the recommendations made. The expert interviews include one policy expert, two city employees working on food security, and one food media publisher, all of whom are based in the Bay Area. The complete body of research leads to the following recommendations: 1. For the city of San Francisco to implement a policy requiring an empowerment component to all organizations with a food security program. 2. Creation of a regional Bay Area food sovereignty group 3. Funding priorities in San Francisco to be shifted from food security based organizations to food sovereignty based organizations.

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## Section 1. Introduction

Currently, food security is the model in which hunger is addressed across the globe. The idea is that hunger will decrease as people get access to food (Swords, 2019). This idea is so engrained in the systemic approach to ending hunger that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) have adapted the model as the primary way to end hunger at the global level. SDG #2, *ending hunger* employs food security, or food access, as the way to alleviate global hunger: "... provide food and humanitarian relief to the most at-risk regions" the SDG website goes on to say "a profound change of the food and agriculture system is needed if we are to nourish the more than 690 million people who are hungry today" (UN, 2021). The second quote illustrates the SDG's desire to do more, but the first quote clearly outlines the problem with the methodology. The SDG hunger goal, like food security, makes no attempt of addressing our larger systemic issues like capitalism, corporate greed, or economic inequality that perpetuate problems like hunger. Further, the SDG hunger goal, like that of food security, makes no mention of power, capacity building, or transformative action which are all at the heart of the definition of empowerment. Food sovereignty, the rural peasant movement for peasant and land liberation, provides a more holistic approach to food and hunger that is place-based, prioritizes input of all people, and is not concerned not major corporations. This paper will show that food sovereignty models do a better job of empowering and are better designed to tackle systemic issues like hunger than food security is.

## Food security

The definition for food security this paper uses is based on the definition of food security used by the united states Department of Agriculture (Coleman-Jenson, 2020). The usDA definition for food security is: “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (Coleman, 2020).

Throughout the literature reviewed for this paper, and at the heart of the above definition, food security is commonly understood as “food access” which is the basis for the understanding of food security that is used in this paper.

*Subsidizing mainly processed, boxed, and canned commodity producers for their mistakes (mainly over-supply or mislabeled goods), the emergency food system benefits big industry and the poverty-industrial complex of non-profits... If we didn't have hunger, we'd have to invent it.*  
(Swords, 2019)

Because there is so much money in the emergency food security system it is not in the interest of corporations, the state, or faith-based organizations to end hunger. Large organizations depend on the grants, contracts, and charity they receive to feed people. To end hunger would leave employees jobless, and go against organizational mission statements and values, so there is no incentive for larger players in power to actually end hunger. Like the quote above says, it would have to be invented. Historically, food security is a relatively new concept that was created by reagan era austerity packages so it should come as no surprise that this system is not set up to benefit the people (Swords, 2019).

Worse than how food security functions to give power to corporations is how the model functions to disempower. We need no outside sources to prove this. When a model is set up that is run by the state for corporations there is no incentive to give people the resources to better their own lives. To give people incentives to better their own lives would go against the interests of the state who are paid off by the corporations and building empowerment would also go against the interests of corporations who are making money off of people's misery. Worse yet is that the majority of emergency food recipients are historically disenfranchised black and brown people: “Households with non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic reference persons face higher food insecurity rates” (Coleman). This quote shows the inherent racism in our food system, and that it is set up for people to fail, not empower.

## Food sovereignty

The definition for food sovereignty used in this paper is:

*Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.*

*(Food, 2007)*

Essentially, food sovereignty is the exact opposite of food security in that it places people not corporations first, is empowering because it gives voice to the people and isn't based in market principles. The Via Campesina website has this to say about food sovereignty:

*It develops a model of small-scale sustainable production benefiting communities and their environment...It includes the struggle for land and genuine agrarian reform that ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food and not of the corporate sector.*

*(Campesina, 1993)*

As this quote illustrates, food sovereignty places people first and not corporations. This is important to point out because this further evidence shows that food sovereignty is about empowering people and not rooted in systemic issues that are perpetuating hunger.

The term "food sovereignty" was originally coined in 1993 by Via Campesina, the global peasant movement for food sovereignty (Campesina, 1993). With roots in peasant-led movements, food sovereignty is designed for the people by the people. Food sovereignty is designed to give voice to the voiceless and in this process, empower. Moreover, food as access (food security) isn't lost within the concept of food sovereignty, as food access plays an important part in bringing people closer to our food systems, but unlike food security, food sovereignty isn't limited to food access. Food sovereignty is about cultural and linguistic retention (Cidro, 2015), is place-based (Naylor, 2019), and spiritual (Swords, 2019). About the role food sovereignty and spirituality hold together:

*in addition to nourishing the body, traditional food— as compared to commercial food—has the advantage of nourishing the mind and spirit, being an anchor to culture and personal well-being, and is an essential agent to promote holistic health*

(Cidro, 2015)

By practicing multiple forms of justices (spiritual, cultural, geographic, access and more) food sovereignty is able to empower and is better capable of addressing root issues like hunger.

While food sovereignty does so much to empower and address root issues, its real practice is in agrarian and cultural reform (Wach, 2019). Food sovereignty is about doing food differently. It places people in charge to make decisions about their food system. It gives people the agency to grow their own food and it does so on a place-to-place basis (Naylor, 2019). Imagine farmers being able to grow what they wanted to grow, and not what was being subsidized. Imagine communities and consumers making decisions about what to grow that is based on the health and well-being of their specific population. Imagine being able to save seeds from the previous year's crop. Imagine councils coming together in every community to decide the most culturally appropriate food to grow. Imagine people had a say in the outcomes of their own livelihood! Imagine people not going hungry. This is food sovereignty and it looks very different than what we have now.

### **Empowerment.**

Empowerment is an incredibly important component of this paper as it is the element that my content analysis is based on. In evaluating empowerment I use Dominique Coy's study "Rethinking community empowerment in the energy transformation: A critical review of the definitions, drivers and outcomes" as my basis for defining empowerment. Coy's research, which is based on a literature review of 38 definitions of empowerment, boils the definition of empowerment down to: *"the process of an individual, group or community increasing their capacity and contextual power to meet their own goals, leading to their transformative action."* The three indicators of power, capacity building, and transformative action are the most commonly found elements in the 38 studies. For my content analysis, I use power, capacity building, and transformative action as indicators of empowerment in food security and food sovereignty organization mission statements. If the mission statement has two out of three indicators (capacity building, transformative action, or power) then the mission statement is considered empowering.

To conduct the content analysis, I searched the terms “food security” and “food sovereignty” into the charity navigator Guidestar. I pulled what I thought to be ten food security and ten food sovereignty organizations from my search. Upon closer analysis, from my content analysis I learned I have eight food sovereignty and 12 food security organizations. Indicators for food security organizations are food access, hunger, and short term. Indicators for food sovereignty include community building, sustainability, and land stewardship. If the organization had two or more food security or food sovereignty indicators in its mission statement then they were labeled as such.

## **Section 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction:**

As illustrated above, the differences between food security and food sovereignty are vast. Generally, food security is the methodology used across the world to end hunger, but its implementation leaves people feeling disempowered and in constant need of food. Food sovereignty, the global peasant led movement to growing food, empowering people, and taking care of the planet has a lesser global application but where it is being applied is showing us the dire need to shift our focus from food security to food sovereignty. The literature review below details the complexity of our food system. Importantly it also articulates the ways a global shift away from food security and into food sovereignty can empower people, feed people, and simultaneously take care of our planet in a way that food security does not.

The literature review is divided into four themes. The first theme is “understanding food security and food sovereignty”, the second theme is “differences between food security and food sovereignty” the third theme is “growing food in urban settings” and the fourth theme is “capitalism, and how systems define food security and food sovereignty”.

### **Theme 1: Understanding food security and food sovereignty**

(Coleman- Jenson, 2020) In this article by Alisha Coleman-Jenson she gives an overview of how food security is defined in the united states, who experience food insecurity, and some populations that are generally overlooked as experiencing food insecurity. The article pulls its definition for food security from the USDA website and shows us how food insecurity is calculated using a USDA survey that includes 3 questions about the household overall, 7 questions about adults in the household and, if children are present, 8 questions about their food situation and overall 12 of the 18 questions involve money and income. The article shows that black and Latinx families experience higher rates of food insecurity than other populations but that people with disabilities and single mothers also experience extremely high rates of food insecurity.

I believe this article is missing a more in-depth analysis of food insecurity. There are missing definitions of food security, other diseases that are perpetuated by food insecurity, and why certain populations experience food insecurity more than others. This journal was interesting because it gives us a clear understanding of how food security is defined, understood, and surveyed. The survey to me is the

most interesting because it highlights some clear implications for food security work in the United States. When food security is calculated using economics as the main metric of measurement we are not able to fully understand food insecurity. A good survey on food insecurity should include questions about access to public transportation, disease, and disabilities.

(Heather A, 2020) In this article, Heather Miller provides an in-depth look at food security among food pantry clients. It found that “food pantry clients are 89% food insecure.” The literature reviewed 15 studies on food insecurity that were focused on a diverse group of people receiving pantry services in different locations. The article also cited pantry sites as places for intervention and outlined the adverse health impacts that food insecurity has on health. The interventions that were studied showed significant decreases in disease related to food insecurity. Importantly this study linked food insecurity in pantry clients to many different chronic diseases such as hypertension, obesity, diabetes, and others.

I thought this article was very interesting following the previous article. The previous article highlighted how food insecurity is calculated primarily using a metric of economics and this article found that 89% of food pantry clients are food insecure. If food insecurity was calculated so that it included other metrics other than economics (like transportation, and houselessness), I’m sure you would find that closer to 100% of clients at this pantry were food insecure, which in turn would direct more funding to food security efforts.

There were some significant gaps in this study for me. One major gap that was not explored was *why* food pantry recipients are food insecure. Is it because of the food they are receiving in their pantries? Is it because of their income status? The article itself acknowledges that there are gaps that didn’t explore the links between transportation, time constraint, and routines as factors that could contribute to food insecurity.

(Gundersen, 2017) In this article, C Gundersen focused on food bank recipients and had three conclusions. The first conclusion is that food-insecure households have difficulty paying off other expenditures such as bills, and often foreclose on their households. The second conclusion was that “there is a range of variables besides income that perpetuate food insecurity” and that these variables (trading off bill payments and/or using coping strategies) need to be considered along with income to determine food insecurity. The researchers believe a good place for intervention to determine causes of food insecurity is right at the pantry service line.

This article built up well from the previous two articles. Not only did it conclude that there is a range of variables other than income that perpetuate food insecurity, but they highlighted variables that were different from the ones that I mentioned above. It seems that there is a range of variables that are needed to determine food insecurity other than economics. The fact that the USDA doesn’t address these

other variables highlights a major problem with how we measure food insecurity, and consequently how much funding is given to fight food insecurity, which of course more people stay food insecure.

One interesting antidote that came up in this journal article was that the united states spends 100 Billion every year on food security interventions. I would have liked for the journal article to go more in-depth into this number and elaborate on how that money gets spent. 100 billion every year is an incredible amount of money that I would like to understand how is spent.

(Gundersen, 2015) This article is by C Gundersen is again a conversation about the definition of food insecurity and how it is calculated citing the USDA survey that primarily calculates income to determine food insecurity. Next, the article discusses food insecurity in the united states and the health impacts of united states citizens who are food insecure. Through a literature review, the article found that children under 4 in urban households are more likely to be in “fair or poor health” compared to children in the same age group who are in fully food-secure households. The article then looked at non-senior adults and concluded that mothers who are food insecure are twice as likely to have poor mental health compared to mothers who were food secure. The final group the researchers covered in their literature review was seniors. They concluded that seniors who are food insecure are more likely to be in fair or poor health, depressed, or have limitations in daily living compared to seniors who weren’t food insecure. Finally, the article proposed the recommendation that SNAP benefits be extended as SNAP is a proven method to reducing food insecurity.

This article again continued with the importance of the conversation about the USDA’s definition of food insecurity, which is interesting because it has carried into so much of the literature so far. Interestingly though, and worth noting is how much importance these researchers put into extending SNAP benefits and the connection between mental health and food insecurity. In the Tenderloin where I work there are massive mental health problems and it makes me wonder about the connection to food insecurity. I also didn’t realize how important SNAP was too limiting food insecurity.

My critique of this article is that its policy recommendations were limited. Throughout its analysis, obvious problems were highlighted with the way food security is calculated, and populations that need to have more attention paid to reduce food insecurity. This article points out that there is a much greater need for seniors than for adults, why wasn’t there a policy that directly targeted seniors? Finally, why were only seniors, children, and adults calculated and not a different subset of people like mothers, pregnant women, or teenagers, or students in college?

## Theme number 2: Differences between food security and food sovereignty:

(Cidro, 2015) This piece by Jamie Cidro about Indigenous Food Sovereignty (IFS) in Winnipeg Canada had a couple of different conclusions. It found that among indigenous populations in Winnipeg a disconnect from food related to a disconnect to culture and thereby poorer mental, physical and spiritual health. The article also recognized that it is difficult to operationalize cultural food systems in cities, but it is not impossible. This research also greatly expanded upon the importance of food sovereignty as a tool to retain culture, creating and maintain a spiritual connection to food, and decrease violence against women. The four pillars of food sovereignty as determined by this study are: access, availability, utilization, and stability of supply. Through community-based CBO's and the utilization of wildlife in urban areas, IFS can be practiced in city centers.

This article was important for me in understanding the different connections that food and food sovereignty have to the greater spiritual and mental health aspects of being a human being. Having a connection to your food is imperative for so many reasons, including mental health, which was outlined as a problem among food insecure populations. Also, this article reminded me again of the USDA survey because here food and food sovereignty are being talked about in a way that has absolutely nothing to do with income and money and everything to do with the connections to food, and culture. If the citizens in Winnipeg were to write up a survey trying to determine food insecurity I would have to imagine they would come up with something very different than the USDA survey.

This article was great but I wish it went more in-depth into what the differences are between food indigenous food sovereignty and food sovereignty that is not indigenous. It would have been extremely beneficial to have the definitions laid out. My other critique is that I would have loved to learn more about the difference between urban food sovereignty and rural food sovereignty. This article talked about the difference but it would have been beneficial if it went more in-depth into the discussion.

(Samantha, 2015) In this journal article Samantha N discusses the differences between food security and food sovereignty. It largely talked about how food security is based on market principles and is only concerned with food access, so, therefore, cannot encompass spiritual, place, cultural, and identity concepts that come with food. It also found that the limited justice concepts of food security can be placed within food sovereignty which not only addresses access but also issues relating to environmental justice, indigenous justice, and community participation.

The articles continue to build! I think this article solidifies the worldview difference between food security and food sovereignty. Food security, being concerned with market principles, access, and creating identifying questions that are based in economics, VS food sovereignty which is concerned with more holistic approaches to understanding food that includes spirituality, culture, and place, are two very different world views. This is an important distinction to make and something to notice as the world faces a growing climate crisis that demands a change in our systems.

I don't have many critiques of this article other than its research methods could have been a little more comprehensive. Overall this article provided an in-depth review of the differences between food security and food sovereignty. It did a good job of highlighting the limitations of food security and how food sovereignty can be used to address a more holistic scope of justice.

(Thierman, 2019) Here we see L Thierman explore the relationship between fast food and food sovereignty. The purpose of the article was to identify ways that fast food can be incorporated into the food sovereignty landscape given the reliance on fast food in urban settings. The authors concluded that for fast food to be integrated into the food sovereignty movement it needs to be de corporatized, but that fast food can and should be understood within the context of food sovereignty.

I thought this article was important because it highlighted some challenges with the implementation of food sovereignty. A common argument against food sovereignty is that it would be hard to implement in an urban setting, and this article correctly pointed out one of those challenges. Some other thoughts that come up for me after reading this article are what kind of other challenges are there in the implementation of food sovereignty in urban settings?

I like this article but it did not provide recommendations about how food security could be incorporated into food sovereignty principles, or how food sovereignty principles could be worked to include fast food. In an article that was about the two concepts, I found it interesting that no conclusions about how the two could come together were presented. Further, I feel that a misunderstanding of food sovereignty was presented because a big part of the concept is in the adaptability of the term from location to location. Of course, fast food is incorporated within food sovereignty.

(Naylor, 2019) In this article Lindsay Naylor examines food sovereignty as it relates to place. The author concludes that food sovereignty cannot be understood as one set of identifiable factors in one place at one time and that food sovereignty is not easily recognized from one location to the next. He comes to these conclusions through his study on participants who took food sovereignty place-based trips to Spain's Basque country and Cuba's countryside.

For me, this article highlights the complexity of food sovereignty. Human beings want to group and categorize everything, but the conclusions of this article affirm that food sovereignty is not something that can be grouped and categorized. I think this is important because he is right! Every community has a different set of needs and therefore a different set of solutions should be developed to prioritize these needs. This article also points to the troubles I had with the previous article. The previous article grappled with the implementation of fast food in an urban setting in the context of food sovereignty. They were wrong to grapple with this though because as this article points out, food sovereignty is place-based and for that reason is adaptable, even in urban settings.

What this article was lacking was more analysis of food sovereignty in each of the places he visited. The analysis he did give, as it related to the tours he was given in Cuba and Spain were very relevant to critiques of the tours, and their participants, but they could have been more relevant to food sovereignty. The authors own understanding of food sovereignty and his knowledge about the issues in the area helped to balance out the issue of the paper being focused on issues of the tours and participants. (Swords, 2019) Here we see Alicia Swords explore the relationships food banks have in perpetuating poverty and highlighted a case study of a food bank in New York state that had redefined its relationship to poverty. The case study found that food banks that work with an anti-poverty lens can reduce the systemic perpetuation of poverty that is created by a corporate dominant food system. Food banks can reduce poverty. This article gave a great history of the creation of the emergency food system, showing that reagan era policies that designed austerity programs are the basis for our emergency food system in place today. This paper also showed how food banks are a major player in disempowerment, are poverty pimps in their ability to take money and not solve issues, and keep people drained of energy and constantly hungry.

Again, this article provides a great juxtaposition in the differences between food security and food sovereignty. The last article (and previous articles before it) were focused on how complex food sovereignty is. It is spiritual, cultural, holistic, not based on one set of ideas or solutions, and works to bring people up. This article couldn't have described food security to be more different. According to this article, food security perpetuates poverty, is disempowering, and has reagan era austerity measures as the roots.

Something that this article could have done that it didn't do was give an example of how food systems could be done better. There was no "here is an alternative system" or provide suggestions on how food systems can have an approach that wasn't disempowering, or perpetuating hunger and oppression. It gave great critiques, but it didn't provide any information about ways that the issues presented could be addressed.

### **Theme number 3: Growing food in urban settings**

(Grewal 2012) Now we see Grewal examine the potential for a city to be self-reliant in food production. What this article concluded was that using three different scenarios for growing the city of Cleveland has enough space to produce 22-100% of Cleveland's fresh produce needs, 25-94% of poultry and eggs needs, and 100% of honey needs. Importantly this article concluded that with the lowest calculated yields the implementation of a self-reliant food system would save the city 30M annually, on the high end 114m annually. This study calculated three different scenarios in which food could be produced in Cleveland. It analyzed the amount of food that could be produced by farming in vacant lots, vacant lots and residential lots, and commercial and residential rooftop spaces in combination with the aforementioned vacant lots. The study also analyzed the amounts of food consumed in Cleveland, annual yields, acreage in Cleveland lots and rooftop spaces, and production in hydroponic, conventional, and greenhouse spaces.

A major critique of food sovereignty is that it can't be done in urban settings, so what was fascinating about this article was that the whole thing provided a rebuttal to this argument. The article lays out the possibility of growing food in urban areas, which is important. It wasn't perfect in its research, and I will talk about that in the next paragraph, but it did provide important insight into how food can be grown in urban areas.

This study, while fascinating, had many flaws. For example, its information was reliant on rooftop spaces, but most rooftops cannot support a garden, aquaponics set up, or greenhouse. Many rooftops just aren't built to hold that amount of weight. Also, it should have spoken more about how most cities don't have quite as much open space as Cleveland and thereby this study can't and shouldn't be representative of other major cities across the united states. Finally, it's likely that there aren't as many abandoned buildings in other major cities as there are in Cleveland.

(Vitiello, 2014) Vitiello D does a case study on six different postindustrial cities and the impact of urban agriculture on economic development. The article concluded that strategic local consumption leads to job growth and sustainability. The article also included that urban agriculture promotes mutual aid, increases social ties in communities, and are good generators of income. It also examined the possibility of urban agriculture helping to meet the economic development goals that were created by the united nations. The article was also instrumental in pointing out how urban agriculture fosters social support systems and generates income for cities in that they don't need to pay for as much food if they are growing it.

I thought this article was a perfect follow-up from the previous article. Not only can we grow food in urban areas, but the simple act of growing food creates jobs, builds community, and fosters mutual aid. Incredible! With a better understanding of what types of buildings can support different growing operations, these two articles alone could be the basis for arguing that you can indeed grow food and support local economies in urban areas. I also think that the arguments presented here about how much money could be saved growing food in urban areas, the amounts of jobs this could create, and how this idea supports the SDGs are important bits of information that could be used to argue for food sovereignty.

One omission by the authors of this paper is that they did not go in-depth enough about if urban farming can produce jobs at scale. If urban ag can produce enough jobs should be a very important point to consider in thinking about growing economic power.

#### **Theme number 4: Capitalism, and how systems define food security and food sovereignty**

(Wach, 2019) Wach concludes that Capitalism understood as market dependency, cannot be the medium in which food sovereignty and agroecology movements are based. The article goes on to conclude that orientating production to food needs and not market needs is vital in the movement towards food sovereignty and agroecology and that capitalism as market dependency does not fall in line with the values of food sovereignty. This paper also talked about the need to address larger systemic issues such as racism, and climate change alongside food production. Larger system issues are not separate from food issues because they all fall within the capitalist framework. Finally, the article found that a move to capitalism was what ended agroecological practices in the Scottish Highlands.

This article presented food sovereignty within the context of capitalism, which was helpful in a structural analysis of our food system. Previous articles have outlined the current food system within the context of market dependency, and how food policies have been created to keep people disempowered. This article expanded upon that analysis with capitalism as the framework. I thought this was fascinating.

Understanding the whole system and how things work together is critically important in coming up with solutions that work to address root problems.

(McMichael, 2021) The main conclusions from McMichael's article are that there is a current food regime that begins during the Regan era 1980's structural adjustment period and that food regimes take form and have changed. The paper also found that food regimes are the creation of the state, social movements, and profit-seeking corporations. Within this structure, there is room for change and manipulation for something that could benefit the health of the planet and the people on it. Another major takeaway from this article was that the time in between food regimes are key moments for larger-scale system change. As food production systems change, our societies change.

Again, the focus on larger systems is critical to evaluating and changing the current food system and this article did just that! The history of how societies have changed as their food regimes have changed was an incredible parallel. It makes me think more about how our current systems are killing the planet and how critical change is for survival. Does a change in our food system coincide with a new system that doesn't perpetuate ecological death as this one does? Are we currently at that point in time where we are in-between and are ripe for social movements that could result in a food regime change?

Something that this paper missed out on was a more elaborate look at social movements and how they correspond with the change in food production systems. It would have been great if there was a more in-depth historical analysis between food production system change and social movements. We were given history, but it was far too brief for the claim that is presented.

(Boris, 2017) Boris finds that global “solutions” to food security, and definitions of food security, have created a system that perpetuates hunger and food insecurity. The paper also concludes that food sovereignty is better equipped to tackle global hunger as food sovereignty rejects the corporate dominant neoliberal theories that perpetuate hunger. In all this paper outlines the larger system issues of food security and proposes food sovereignty as the method in which to address hunger. Pointedly, this paper also is a sharp critique of food security as it illustrates the connection the food security systems have to the market and how it is the market that has continued the perpetuation of some of our larger social issues, including hunger. Finally, there were important points made about the differences between food security and food sovereignty. It examined statistical figures on food security, global hunger and analyzed them against the neoliberal principles and institutional “solutions” that are proposed to end global hunger. The paper also dives deeply into food sovereignty as a solution to the global food systems and examines documents from La Via Campesina, and other food sovereignty groups to complete its analysis. Right along forward with the trend of global food systems being dominated by market policies that perpetuate our hardest pressing issues! It seems that the literature being reviewed here so far has shown us that there are some deep-seated flaws in the way food is produced and how the production corresponds with our larger economic systems and social issues.

(LaForge, 2021) LaForge concludes that the expansion of agroecology requires the embraces of the more radical dimensions of food sovereignty and will require addressing three key dimensions: 1) Engagement in food system governance; 2) Building networks of solidarity between food producers/harvesters, activists, and academics; and, 3) Realizing and enacting Indigenous food sovereignty.” The paper also highlighted how “tinkering” with the capitalist system won’t get us anywhere and that the more radical approaches to systems need to be enlisted to get us to a place of equity within the food system. Another important position this paper took was that policy at the regional, federal, and city level will need to be developed for a successful implementation of food sovereignty but that it cannot be housed within the dominant capitalist forms and systems that perpetuate inequality. The paper also concluded that this approach brings together feminist perspectives and approaches of gender and economic equity as well as linking key dimensions of agroecology that are stated above to the movement for food sovereignty.

It sounds to me like a move to a people based, people influenced and people led food system will bring ease to some of our hardest problems. But of course it will! It’s not radical to value and put into action the voice of the people. I was told recently that a definition of crazy is doing the same thing over and over and to expect different results. If this literature has taught me anything its that we’re doing the

looking to solve our most pressing issues with solutions that we have tried over and over, and that what we need to do is try new solutions. We don't want to be crazy!

Conclusion:

This literature review has clearly shown the dramatic problems with food security and how a model of food sovereignty is best set up to take its place. It is true that there are important applications of food security, getting people access to food is very important, but you can see the food access application being applied within the confines of food sovereignty. Unlike food security food sovereignty is not limited to one type of justice. If we are to move forward as a species we will need to create new models that aren't based in the destructive and murdering mechanisms of capitalism, market dependency and corporate dominance. We must look for new ways like food sovereignty, to replace the old destructive mechanisms like food security before it's too late.

### **Section 3: Methods and Approaches**

I use a mixed-method approach for this paper that includes a literature review, five expert interviews, and a content analysis. My work as the manager of the Healthy Corner Store Coalition, and my daily interaction with food banks in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood greatly contribute to the qualitative research and findings that are part of this research.

The literature review in this project greatly contributed to my overall understanding of food security and food sovereignty. Much of my understanding of food security before the literature review was based on what I see and experience working in the Tenderloin, (which I review below) and my understanding of food sovereignty was abstract and not grounded. The literature review provided an important historical perspective of both systems and painted a clear picture of the inequities and inadequacies of food security as a model for reducing hunger and empowering. The result of the literature review is an understanding of food sovereignty as a model, movement, and approach to heal a food system, empower people and create a sustainable future for the people and the planet.

To conduct my literature review I sought the basics. What is food security? What is food sovereignty? These questions led me to answers that further perpetuated my curiosity and soon I was learning about the different applied methods of food security and food sovereignty. Finally, I sought the theoretical systems perspectives that perpetuate our current food regime and what can be done to overcome them. Over many months I spent Saturdays and Sundays reading study after study after study to come to the analysis presented in this project.

The other method I use to complete this project is content analysis. For my content analysis, I examine the mission statements of eight food sovereignty organizations and 12 food security organizations. Specifically, the content analysis looks at the elements that define empowerment (transformative action, power, and capacity building) according to Dominique Coy's study. Questions for the content analysis include but are not limited to: Does the mission statement address capacity building? Does the mission statement address transformative action? Does the mission statement address power? The codebook indicators for capacity building, transformative action, and capacity building come from important indicators from definitions from dictionary.com and again what is identified in Coy's research as important indicators.

Finally, my understanding of the content as it relates to my profession, and the expert interviews that were conducted are major contributing factors in the methods of the research. Having close ties to food security and food sovereignty experts in the Bay Area through my profession helped me tremendously in accessing expert interviews. My own experience working multiple food banks and seeing the long lines

for free meal giveaways gives me a unique insight into the disempowering elements of food security that are confirmed in the literature review. A report of the expert interviews is included below:

### **Interview report**

Interview #1: Ryan Thayer, City of Marin

Ryan is the co-founder of the Healthy Corner Store Coalition, which I am now the manager of. My conversation with Ryan served as a way for us to catch up, but it also was a great interview. Ryan wanted to know about my definitions for “food security” and “food sovereignty” before he answered any questions. Ryan answered my interview questions with a much larger scope and spoke about the need for a larger Bay Area Food Sovereignty movement. Ryan was my first interview, and as such, I realized I should add two new questions about what a Bay Area food Sovereignty movement would look like. They’ve been great additional questions! Ryan also put me in touch with 10(!) other people to interview.

Interview #2: Paula Jones, City of San Francisco.

Paula is someone I look up to and admire. Anything food security-related in San Francisco she has roots in and is run through her. Paula also had questions about my definitions of food security and food sovereignty, my research methods and wanted to know more about how I’m coming up with my conclusions. My big takeaway from my conversation with Paula, which was reinforced in my third interview with Tiffany, is that many food security programs are “non-traditional” meaning they provide extra services that go beyond traditional food security. Seeing this hybrid model was great and eye-opening.

Interview #3: Tiffany Patton, Co-Director of Real foods Media in Oakland California

Tiffany is a friend of mine and I consider her to be one of the brightest people I have ever met. We talked again about definitions of food security and food sovereignty and largely about what a bay area movement for food sovereignty might look like. Like Paula, Tiffany pointed out that there are non-traditional food security programs that are providing extra resources. Tiffany also pointed out how the bay area is uniquely set up for food sovereignty with its access to close by farmland, which I thought was extremely interesting. It was a great conversation!

#### Interview #4: Kattie Ettman, Policy Director, SPUR

My interview with Katie was very easygoing but enlightening. I know Katie from my food security work in the Bay Area. She brings her policy perspectives to the forefront of all the conversations we've ever had, and I knew that this conversation would be no different. Katie emphasized income as being the basis for having any sort of freedom to make choices and participate in the way food sovereignty requires of people. "What is the mechanism to get people more money so they can make more choices," Katie said. Another insight from Katie that was reflected in my conversation with Tiffany was that the Bay Area is uniquely set up to provide food for all of its residents. Where Katie's unique policy perspective came in was in her emphasis on making Bay Area cities denser to eliminate the urban sprawl that is encroaching on outlying farm-land. So interesting!! This is policy advocacy work that SPUR is currently working on.

#### **Interview conclusions:**

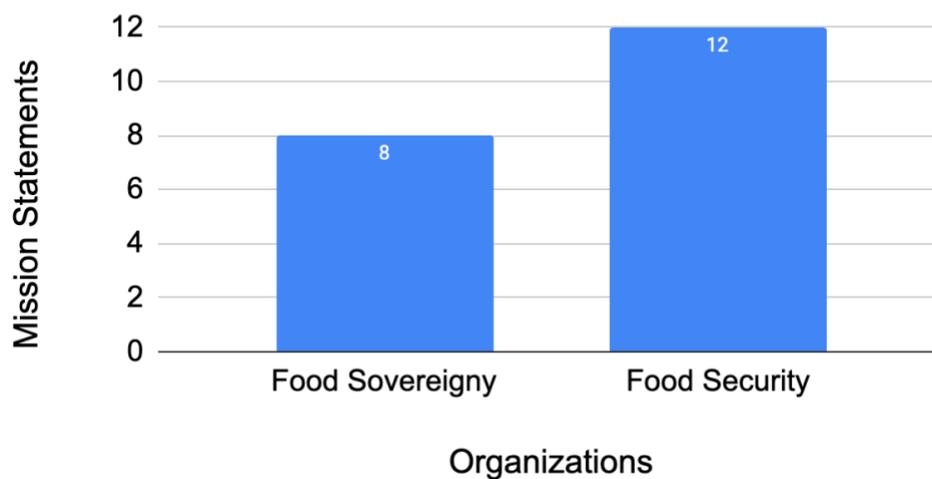
There were some common questions, comments, and insights that were present throughout the interviews. For example, everyone wanted to know what my definitions for food security and food sovereignty are. For some of the interviews, I provided the definitions ahead of time and in some of the interviews, I provided the definition as we sat down to speak. Another common thread throughout the interviews was the idea that food security as a program is something that is actively changing and that food security is no longer the traditional food security as food access as the literature review described. Most food security programs now include other resource components that participants can access. This is a very important insight!

One of the major highlights of the interviews is Katie Ettman's perspective on eliminating urban sprawl to preserve the farmland. We essentially cannot have a Bay Area food sovereignty movement if we don't have farmland to work from. The other major takeaway from my interviews, and where I see this project moving after this project, was the idea of a Bay Area food Sovereignty movement. My interview with Ryan Thayer sparked this idea and led me to make sure to include the question at the end of the project, and I am happy I did.

## Section 4. Data Analysis

The data collected from my content analysis is presented below. Altogether I have included five charts that lay out my findings from my content analysis. The charts show the three indicators of empowerment and if the indicators were found in the mission statements of the eight food sovereignty organizations and 12 food security organizations

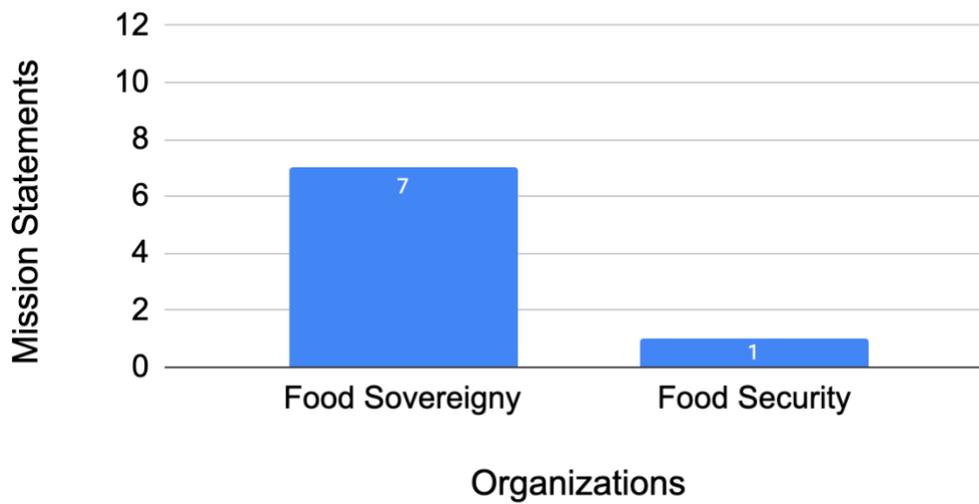
Figure 5: Total numbers of Food Sovereignty and Food Security organizations



*Source: Author's creation. Elaborated from John McCormick, 2021.*

The graph above shows the total number of organizations analyzed for the content analysis of this project. This graph is a good starting point for understanding the graphs below.

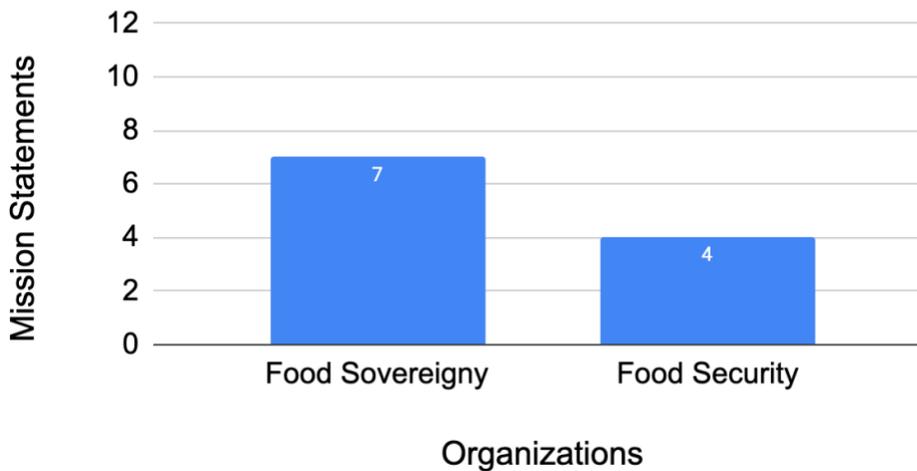
Figure 2: Organizational Mission Statements that Include Power



Source: Author's creation. Elaborated from John McCormick, 2021.

The graph above shows the number of food security and food sovereignty organizations whose mission statement has an indicator for power. Of the 12 food security organizations analyzed one organization's mission statement had an indicator for power while seven of the eight food sovereignty organizations had an indicator for empowerment.

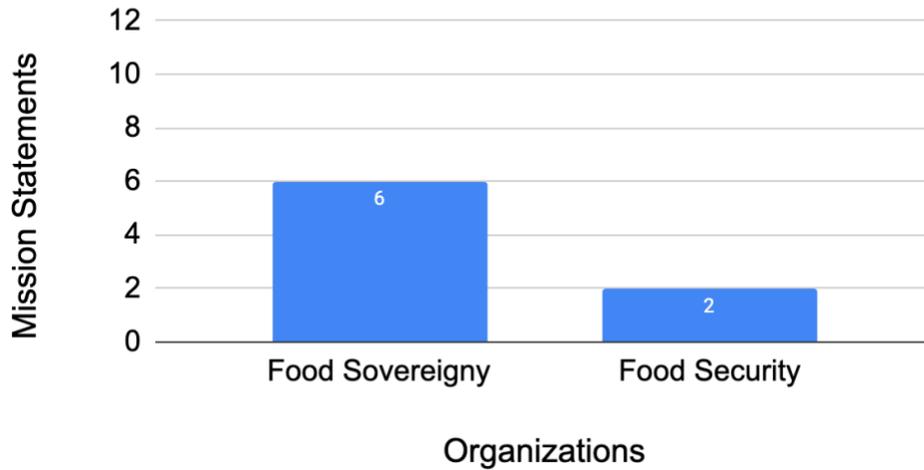
Figure 3: Organizational Mission Statements that Include Capacity Building



Source: Author's creation. Elaborated from John McCormick, 2021.

The graph above shows the number of food security and food sovereignty organizations whose mission statement included an indicator for capacity building. Of the twelve food security organizations, four had an indicator for capacity building and of the eight food sovereignty organizations, seven had an indicator for capacity building.

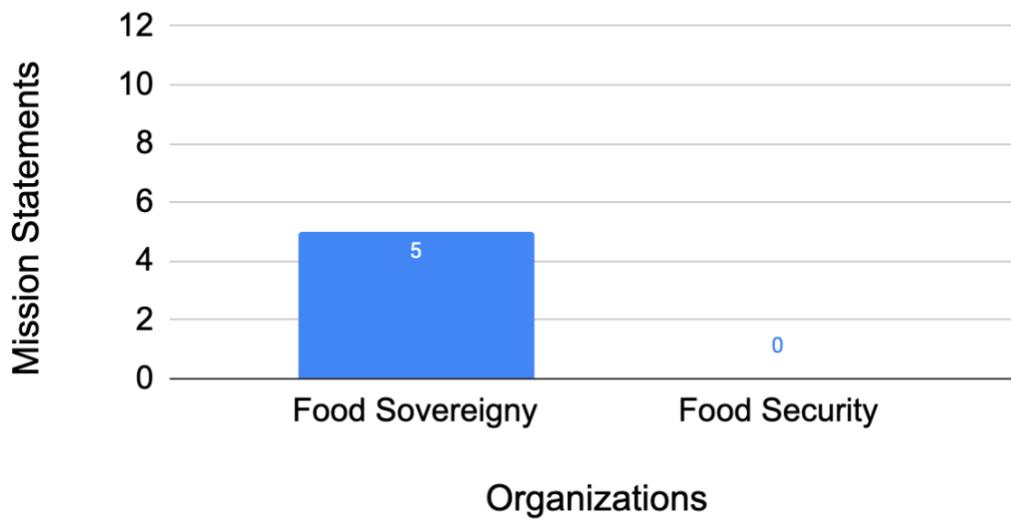
**Figure 4: Organizational Mission Statements that Include Transformative action**



Source: Author's creation. Elaborated from John McCormick, 2021

The graph above shows the number of food security and food sovereignty organizations whose mission statement includes an indicator for transformative action. Of the twelve food security organizations, two had indicators for transformative action and six food sovereignty organizations had indicators for transformative action.

Figure 1: Organizational mission statements that Include Transformative Action, Capacity Building, and Power



Source: Author's creation. Elaborated from John McCormick, 2021.

The graph above shows the organizations whose mission statement addresses all three elements of empowerment. Noticeably no food security organizations and only five of the eight (62%) of the food sovereignty organizations had indicators in their mission statements for all three elements of power.

### **Findings**

There are some interesting findings in the content analysis. The first finding that should be highlighted is that only one food security organization mission statement had an indicator of power. It's interesting that even one food security organization had an indicator for power because in the food security organizations analyzed, most had indicators for capacity building (which includes an indicator for access).

The other interesting finding is that there weren't any food security organizations whose mission statements included all three elements of empowerment. On one hand, this isn't completely surprising because food security organizations are traditionally focused on food access and not community building, power, and action. On the other hand, all of the expert interviews indicated that food security is changing and that most organizations that had food security programs also had programs that provided other resources. I am surprised there wasn't at least one food security organization that had all three indicators for empowerment.

### **Section 5: Implications and Recommendations**

1. For the city of San Francisco to implement a policy requiring an empowerment component to all organizations with a food security program.
2. Funding priorities in San Francisco to be shifted from food security-based organizations to food sovereignty-based organizations.
3. Creation of a regional Bay Area food sovereignty group.

## **Section 6: Conclusion**

To conclude, we need a food regime change. We need to move from a model of food security to a model of food sovereignty. Not only does the current food system disempower people, but it is actively perpetuating racism and climate change and hunger. We must begin re-examining our food systems at a time when there is heavy introspection into language, body language, hiring practices and so much more that hold up systems of inequality and oppression. Food security is one of these models. Food sovereignty is a model that can be followed, built out, and built upon to ease the burden on people and the planet, we just have to decide to implement it.

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## Appendix A: Expert interview survey questions

Survey questions:

1. Do you believe food security programs build up participants personal abilities, grow community power, or lead to action that is transformative? Please feel free to respond to parts or all of the question.
2. Do you believe food sovereignty programs build up participants personal abilities, grow community power, or lead to action that is transformative? Please feel free to respond to parts or all of the question.
3. What do you believe are the necessary steps for a transition to food sovereignty in an urban setting?
4. What policies would you recommend for food sovereignty to be institutionalized at the city level? I am thinking specifically about San Francisco here but if another city is your point of reference, please feel free to use that city.
5. To you, what would a Bay Area regional food sovereignty movement look like?
6. Would you be interested in following up about a regional food sovereignty movement?

**Appendix B: Content analysis codebook:**

Which Research Question Does this Content Analysis Question Answer?	Content Analysis Question to Analyze Unit of Analysis	Answers to the Content Analysis Question	Explanation and Definitions of Answers needed to Clearly Understand How the Unit of Analysis should be Coded
Q1	1A. Does the mission statement address capacity building?	1A: Yes No	1A. Capacity building is met with having one of the following three mentions: ~Willingness ~Access to resources ~ Mobilization
Q2	2A Does the mission statement address power?	2A: Yes No	2A: Power is met with having one of the following three mentions: ~Autonomy ~Agency ~Influence
Q3	3A. Does the mission statement address transformative action?	3A: Yes No	3A: Transformative action is met with having one of the three following mentions: ~Improvement ~Change ~ Enhancement
Q4	4A. If capacity building is identified, does it address willingness?	4A: Yes No	A: Willingness is met with having one of the

			<p>following three mentions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Doing</li> <li>~ Inclination</li> <li>~ Readiness</li> </ul>
Q5	If capacity building is identified, does it address access?	<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	<p>Access is met with having one of the three mentions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Being near</li> <li>~ To get or get inside</li> <li>~ To use</li> </ul>
Q6	If capacity building is identified, does it address mobilization?	<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	<p>Mobilization is met with having one of the three mentions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Organizing</li> <li>~Preparing</li> <li>~Group of people</li> </ul>
Q7	5A. If power is identified, does it address autonomy?	<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	<p>Autonomy is met with having one of the three mentions:</p> <p>the right of a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Right of a group to govern themselves.</li> <li>~Right of a group to organize.</li> <li>~ Initiative</li> </ul>
Q8	If power is identified, does it address Agency?	<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	<p>Agency is met with having one of the three mentions: the ~capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~independent acting</li> <li>~Making free choices</li> </ul>

Q9	If power is identified, does it address Influence?	Yes No	Influence is met with having one of the three mentions: ~Power ~Capacity ~ Causing an effect
Q10	6A. If transformative action is identified, does it identify improvement?	Yes No	Improvement is met with having one of the three mentions: ~ Making better ~ Getting better ~ Doing better
Q11	If transformative action is identified, does it identify Change?	Yes No	Change is met with having one of the three mentions: ~ Make different ~ To replace ~ To alter
Q12	If transformative action is identified, does it identify enhancement?	Yes No	Enhancement is met with having one of the three mentions: ~ Improve quality ~ Improve amount ~ Improve strength
Q13	7A. Does the mission statement address all three elements of empowerment?	8A: Yes No	A. Identifiers for empowerment include: ~Power ~Transformative action ~Capacity building

<p>Q14</p>	<p>6B. Is the organization a food sovereignty organization or a food security organization?</p>	<p>Food Sovereignty Food Security</p>	<p>Needs to meet two of the three qualifiers below</p> <p>Identifiers for food sovereignty organizations are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Community building</li> <li>~ Sustainability</li> <li>~Land stewardship</li> </ul> <p>Identifiers for food security are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Food access</li> <li>~Hunger</li> <li>~Short term</li> </ul>
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### **Author's Bio**

John McCormick began his work with food when he was 16 years old when he was hired as a dishwasher at a restaurant. From dishwashing, John worked his way up to line cook and so began his journey with food. Sparked in the restaurants and endless reels of Anthony Bourdain's *No Reservations* John's passion for food sparked a ten-year restaurant career, a desire to travel to learn about how food is cooked and consumed, and an eagerness to learn the best ways for food to be grown. At the time of writing, John is the program manager of the San Francisco-based Healthy Corner Store Coalition.