UNDERSTANDING PERSPECTIVES OF COMMUNITY GARDENS IN THE DALLAS AREA

Raja Ayyad

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APPROVED:

Beverly Davenport, Committee Chair
Murray Rice, Committee Member
Lisa Henry, Committee Member and Chair of the Department of Anthropology
David Holdeman, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
Victor Prybutok, Dean of the Toulouse Graduate School

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This exploratory research focuses on identifying the roles and perspectives of community gardens in the Dallas area. Results from semi-structured interviews reveal the social and political makeup of the neighborhoods where the garden projects in this study are located. While these findings highlight the benefits of gardening in the city, they can also be contested spaces. In advocating for the proliferation of garden projects in the city, community organizations would benefit from understanding the nuances of garden initiatives and the way in which they are perceived by members of the garden, nearby residents, and policy makers.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Community Garden Movement

Community gardens are broadly defined as spaces to grow food and other plants, while connecting members of a neighborhood or socially constructed community to each other *and* to their urban environment (Pudup 2008). They have demonstrated effectiveness as places of social engagement where people share knowledge, acquire skills, and provide community cohesion and connectedness. Recently, community gardens have been implemented as localized urban interventions with the goal of increasing the availability of healthy foods, improving physical activity among participants, and contributing to other needs of the communities involved. In this way, they have also been sites for collective action and civic responsibility (Ghose and Pettgrove 2014).

Community gardens[1] have also contributed to the enhancement of other facets of urban life. It serves to not only revitalize community networks and provide access to fresh, healthy foods, but also to foster an ethic compatible with the goals of sustainability and support for local economic development. Despite these benefits, community garden organizers are often faced with several challenges that impede their implementation and longevity, which could be overcome through more effective public and political support. To achieve this, Lawson (2005) suggests that perceptions of urban gardens must be challenged by way of more rigorously documenting the goals and outcomes of urban garden projects. To date, relatively few scholars

[1] I use urban garden and community garden interchangeably. However, my references to urban agriculture encompasses a broader scope of food production.

have contributed to the critical understanding of how community gardens are perceived in the broader cityscape.

With the increase of urban garden activities in the Dallas area, followed by zoning and ordinance changes in support of these efforts, organizations, like my client, Citizen D have a vested interest in understanding how these activities are perceived among practitioners and residents alike. To develop and maintain local networks and meet the needs of differing communities, organizations interested in the success of urban gardens must improve upon their understanding of local social conditions, which can vary greatly across relatively small geographical spaces.

1.2 Research Objective

The purpose of this project was to provide Citizen D with research-based web content, which shares research findings and recommendations with similar organizations. The site includes a web-based forum to publicly discuss and disseminate their findings. Their goals have been to support the development and maintenance of urban garden initiatives in Dallas and abroad. This report includes methods, data analysis, and recommendations for further studies and urban garden initiatives specific to the region. The questions that inform this research are:

1. What are the perceptions among residents, gardeners, and policymakers regarding community gardens?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of organizing, developing, and maintaining community gardens?
3. What are some of the barriers to organizing and managing community gardens?

1.3 Research Client: Citizen D

This research was conducted on behalf of Citizen D, a non-profit organization dedicated to encouraging the revitalization of under-resourced areas of Dallas through the implementation of urban agriculture projects. This organization seeks to inspire citizens to become more involved in strengthening their local food networks and building a more sustainable food system both locally and globally (dallasfoundation.org). To manage the difficulty of land acquisition for urban greening in Dallas, Citizen D has partnered with other community organizations and landowners in the Dallas area to transform unused green spaces and vacant lots into ideal centers for cultivation (citizend.org).

Acquiring green space for urban gardens in Dallas has become a challenge as a result of unprecedented growth within the past decade, especially occurring in the four core Dallas-Fort Worth counties (Collin, Dallas, Denton, and Tarrant). The growth has reduced agricultural land and greenfield, which are typically converted to urban development (visionnorthtexas.org). Citizen D initiatives are hinged upon increasing local awareness of mixed-use public spaces to promote healthy communities and neighborhoods. Local small-scale urban agriculture not only nourishes city-dwellers, but also creates a sense of place and belonging. To expand its work, Citizen D has initiated this research project with the goal of better understanding the role of gardens in the city among gardeners and the non-engaged residents living nearby.

In an effort to advance the development of community gardens and solidify its role in the city as a viable public resource, Citizen D launched a website to document its achievements and share their locally focused mission. In her documentation of the evolution of community garden projects, Lawson argues that improved assessment and documentation of goals and

outcomes of community garden projects, which coincides with the importance of accountability and transparency in the nonprofit sector (2005). Additionally, Saxton and Guo (2011) examine the importance of website use as a tool to generate public support and boost stakeholder responsiveness which benefits organizations in a way that validates their efforts to making positive community change. According to Citizen D, the website falls in line with the concept of performance disclosure, which characterizes the content as mission oriented by making available the mission statement, vision, goals and achievements including research collaboration (ibid 2011: 273). Citizen D's website also serves as a forum to share research and facilitate collaboration in a way that may encourage broader public awareness and dialogue regarding urban greening initiatives. It also shares the positive impacts that established gardens are making among the community groups involved.

Ultimately, the website is also intended to garner support for urban garden initiatives among city officials and landowners to ease the difficulty of acquiring land. Public outreach in the form of "concrete proof of outcomes" as opposed to "anecdotal accounts," should be made available to more effectively shape public perception in favor of garden projects as a viable recreational and open space (Lawson 2005: 300). Citizen D has worked closely with other garden developers to forge partnerships with those who have extensive gardening experience and formal training. These alliances have successfully informed garden managers and growers about the various ways to improve seasonal growing and make the most of limited growing space. Their partnerships have been crucial to educating gardeners on the different technologies available to improve sustainable growing practices.

Citizen D supports and encourages research agendas that may be shared with community organizations working towards a stronger local food network. In advocating for the proliferation of community gardens, organizations like Citizen D need to clearly understand its own role in the city. This project identifies how these spaces are perceived by active members of the gardens, the nearby residents, and policy makers. My own interest in this endeavor coincided with Citizen D's desire to gain a better understanding of some of the nuances of urban gardens in the city of Dallas.

In partnership with Citizen D, I conducted exploratory research to identify the distinct roles and perspectives of community gardens in the Dallas area. This work was done to help inform and support community organizations like Citizen D to continue its work with future initiatives of sustainable community garden development. Due to the nature of this study and my own limited time and resources, I focused on two of the many community gardens located in Dallas: Vickery Meadow Community Garden and Temple Emanu-el Community Gardens.

1.4 Understanding Perspectives of Urban Gardens in the Dallas Area

Historically, urban agriculture was recognized for its benefits during the lean years of the two World Wars (Lawson, 2005). Yet, the current food movement has broader purposes related to the social, political, economic, public health and environmental aspects of communities. Urban residents who choose to grow and manage their food do so for several reasons. Generally, they are related to an environmental ethic compatible with the goals of sustainability, localization, and self-sufficiency. Due to the physical activity of gardening and

the social interactions shared with other community members, other social benefits arise from revitalization efforts related to urban gardens.

For instance, when implemented in marginalized communities, urban gardens have proven to establish inclusion, facilitate an avenue for social connection, and increase social capital of participants in the form of community networks (Firth et al. 2011, Kingsley and Townsend 2006, Kurtz 2001). This is especially effective among immigrant communities where participants are struggling with the transition to a new homeland (Harris et al. 2014). Community gardens help ethnic minorities by providing a place to grow culturally appropriate foods not commonly found in grocery stores and offer an avenue to express their cultural identity and heritage. In addition to allowing gardeners to engage in intentional cultural practices, community gardens also serve as communal spaces offering opportunities for participants to engage in positive social action.

Scholars who study urban political ecology also have identified ways in which the urban agriculture movement has partially ameliorated uneven development in low-income areas (Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003). The city of Dallas is a great example. A study conducted by the Dallas Community Health Needs Assessment (2012) described Dallas as one of the fastest developing metropolitan areas with the fewest supermarkets per capita. In addition, low-income communities are at a considerable disadvantage because of the uneven geographical distribution of supermarkets. Approximately 700,000 Dallas residents are left with restricted or nonexistent access to affordable nutritious food. Accordingly, this is a definitive characteristic of what the USDA has termed as food deserts, which result in unhealthy food choices often leading to diet-related diseases (Food Trust Report, 2014). Under these circumstances, urban

gardens are well known to encourage positive food choices for community members by enhancing knowledge and self-sufficiency of production and preparation of fruits and vegetables (Lawson 2015).

Community gardens are usually managed by community-based organizations that have the experience and knowledge of local social conditions. Like Citizen D, other non-profit organizations, volunteer groups, schools, and faith-based organizations have proven to be valuable assets for urban garden initiatives in their capacity to facilitate collaboration to meet the needs of urban garden projects (Amin 2010; Lawson 2005). In recent years, there have been several initiatives created by these community organizers contributing to the growing trend of urban agriculture. These organizations are dedicated to sharing the knowledge and technology necessary to improve the sustainability of urban gardens.

1.5 Further Defining Community Gardens

Currently, American Community Gardening Association broadly defines community gardens as “any piece of land gardened by a group of people” (Communitygarden.org). Community gardens are diverse in operation, often related to the needs of the community groups it serves (Firth et al, 2011). These gardens typically operate by individually leased plots or collective gardening, which requires the group to share in gardening that piece of land (Lawson 2005). Community gardens have also been associated to neighborhood gardening with individual plots under common management by community groups, however more often they have been managed by outside nonprofit and faith-based organizations on private or public

land. Community gardens are also common spaces that bring people together, especially those that typically reside in urban areas with no access to land for private gardening (Linn 2007).

Community gardens have enjoyed a long history. Coming into use during the World Wars and the Great depression to provide locally available sustenance, these gardens have been an avenue for grassroots activism in the 1970's spurred by the growing awareness of ecological issues and environmental awareness (Lawson, 2005). This period was the first time that community gardens became more of a practice of community social action at the level of grassroots activism aimed at neighborhood revitalization and community empowerment (Nettle, 2016). As I will demonstrate in this research, these types of community programs have the ability to transcend their early development to become locales for social movements that encompass broader purposes related to local socio-political, economic, environmental, public health. Urban residents choose to grow and manage their food for many reasons, often related to environmental ethics compatible with the goals of sustainability, localization, self-sufficiency, as well as place-making strategies. Growing food also correlates to social benefits in terms of addressing access to healthy fresh produce, in addition to the economic benefits seen in the subsidy of grocery expenses.

1.6 Defining the *Community* in Community Gardens

Several scholars have drawn attention to the term *community* in reference to community gardening. As defined in the previous section, community gardens are run by a number of individuals in a given public space. In some cases, proximity to these spaces is not a requirement. Drawing attention to the way in which the term "community" has recently

become problematized, Firth et al. argue that community gardens cannot always be assumed to be "place-based" (2011). The term *community garden* has been rendered as an "idealized space of coming together among people and between people and nature" (Pudup, 2008: 1231). Similarly, Pudup notes the arbitrary definition of "community" in community garden, making it difficult to assess the motivations and goals of individual participants in these cultivated spaces.

It is important to determine whether the *community* in community garden is used to describe that they are 1) *providing* for a certain community, 2) *developed* by a certain community, or 3) simply *located* in certain communities. Scholars (Kinsley and Townsend 2006, Moseley 2003) borrowing from rural community studies, have suggested that the term "community" can no longer be defined as individuals living within close geographic proximity to one another. The implication is that communities are *socially constructed* where members engage, share, and interact with a common purpose without relying solely on geography. At times, community gardens can be contested when the community it serves is different from the neighborhood in which it is located. While community gardens can provide space for social inclusion, the way in which these spaces are restricted often raises issues of exclusion and difference among the neighboring area.

With the aim of identifying, comparing, and contrasting perceptions of community gardens, this research focuses on three groups of stakeholders: Garden participants, nearby residents of the gardens, and policymakers. My purpose for consulting with these groups is to gain a more nuanced understanding of the way in which gardens are understood and experienced in order to envision the prospects for cultivating sustainable urban gardens in the Dallas area.

1.7 Initiating Research

One of the ways in which Citizen D has initiated and supported research is through the university-community model based on voluntary work, providing the educational advantage on the graduate level. CitizenD supports academic work that relates to the organization's mission relative to the community group it serves, and to gain a better geographical knowledge of their garden operations. My client supervisor, Carrie Perkins, had attended the same Applied Anthropology Master's Program at the University of North Texas (UNT) and maintained contact with faculty as she continued on to the PhD Cultural Anthropology program at Southern Methodist University. She had initiated contact with the chair of the UNT Department of Anthropology looking for a Master's candidate whose field of interest aligned with food and agriculture studies.

Since this was my topic of interest, I reached out to her and initiated a meeting to discuss more of the project details. This turned out to be a serendipitous in the way ideals and interests were closely aligned. I was made aware that the actual project was to take place during the summer months at the height of growing season, which was several months away. Ultimately, Citizen D was looking to launch a website to serve as an educational outreach tool to encourage dialogue and document the goals and outcomes of their urban greening projects. My research is but a small portion of this platform to be included among other studies in the research section of the website.

There were several meetings where Carrie and I collaborated on developing a research topic that would benefit Citizen D and other organizations like them. We began by discussing some of the challenges the organization had endured in the process of initiating and developing

garden projects, primarily focusing on the difficult task of land acquisition and dealing with misperceptions of community gardens. We discussed the emails that the organization had received from disgruntled neighbors near one of the sites where Citizen D was in the initial stages of building a community garden. A few residents were against turning the greenspace near their homes into a garden project.

I inquired as to whether the neighbors were made aware that this project would take place on church property and my supervisor assured me that this was discussed during a town hall meeting. Despite their efforts, the organization faced some challenges in gaining support from those residents that contested the project. The question of why those residents opposed the garden project gave way the topic of this study. It was evident that those two obstacles that garden developers encounter both go hand in hand.

Along with the exhaustive research necessary to locate and lease a site for garden development, community organizations must also work to gain the support of the neighboring area in order to ensure a sustainable outcome for these projects. With the understanding that Dallas is in the early stages of the urban agriculture and local foods movement, garden projects must acquire and maintain public support to be acknowledged by city officials as a legitimate use of land. We agreed that my research project should focus on gathering the perceptions of community gardens among the residents living nearby to determine the most effective strategies to gain their acceptance. We additionally wanted to include the perceptions of the garden participants to contrast the experiences of the engaged and non-engaged participants in the study. The third group of participants were the city officials which were included as part of the perception check to understand how ideals and experiences of urban gardens affect policy.

The emphasis of this research was to understand how residents in the neighborhood where community gardens are located perceived them. To do this, it was necessary to interview apartment managers, tenants, and homeowners residing near the garden sites selected for this study, as well as the managers and gardeners participating in the gardens. The change in the focus is a result of the client's experience with negative feedback from neighbors residing near the community gardens during the initial developing stage and the reorganization stages of operating gardens where the organization took over management.

The task of negotiating which community gardens to study was a crucial part of the decision-making process for launching the study. I had done some preliminary research to compile a list of garden sites. There was no prior discussion regarding the type of garden operation required to be considered an ideal candidate. However, during one of our meetings it was apparent that the appropriate garden site would need to share a similar model of operation to the gardens that Citizen D manages and that the study should include three garden sites. This made the deciding factor much easier and my client and I selected the two candidates during that meeting. After launching the study, it was agreed that two case studies were sufficient due to time constraints.

The next process was to put together a draft of research questions that would guide the semi-structured interviews for three stakeholders in this study. The initial submission was accepted by Carrie but prior to launching the investigation it was reviewed once again with her colleague, Lisa, who became an alternate contact person for a short period. Several revisions were made via email correspondence between me, Carrie and her colleague. One example of the ways that the research plans were refined is my effort to be more thoughtful about the

language to be used in the interview questions. We agreed that the language needed to be modified based on the English skills of the research participants, e.g. the Vickery Meadow site is gardened by Bhutanese refugees, most of whom were not proficient English speakers, aside from my translator and key informant. Ultimately I reviewed my questions with him prior to the garden participant interviews and continued to adjust my questions as needed for the other participants over the course of the research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This chapter covers the literature that informed my research from its inception through data analysis. For the sake of convenience, I have named and discussed topic areas as follows: space and place, 'right to the city', production of space as a political act, embodied place and social capital, and collective-action framing. It is important for the reader to understand that though apparently bounded, these concepts actually overlap.

Community gardening is the most familiar manifestation of urban agriculture, which consists of broadly defined initiatives that have been advocated for by proponents of the alternative food movement, a phenomenon encompassing a range of food production activities. The overarching concerns and discourse among activists of this movement emphasize the localization of food resources by 1) minimizing the distance between producer and consumer, 2) the promotion of environmental sustainability and social justice, as well as 3) the provisioning of space (DuPuis and Goodman 2005).

2.1 Space and Place

To date, anthropological research interested in the study of community gardens has been primarily focused on the social-cultural meaning, functional purposes, and benefits relative to garden participants. However, in the interest of gaining a more holistic understanding of the perspectives and role of community gardens in the city, I incorporate a spatial perspective as well. Understanding the desirability of urban garden projects requires that we look at the role of space in which these activities take place, which requires a critical

spatial perspective. Such a viewpoint is uncommon in anthropological research on community gardens and those anthropologists who have adopted it have been influenced by the critical works of human geographers, who initiated what has been described as the *spatial turn* in the 1990's, which offered a new perspective to urban anthropology.

Anthropologists have carried it forward in their studies to understand the relationship between social and cultural life as it takes place in urban space (Jaffe and Koning 2016). Low demonstrates how the critical spatial perspective helped her theorize space through the study of the human experiences that are situated in urban environments (1996). Low attempts to mediate spatial practices and their symbolic meaning through the application of social production theories as explicated by de Certeau, Giroux, and Lefebvre whose work I rely on in this research.

The production and construction of space are two concepts that enrich an understanding of the way in which social actors make sense of their lived environment in terms of urban gardens. The social **production** of space takes shape through the historical (food production activities), political (resolving issues of food justice), economic influences (cost efficiency), and ideologies (cultural identification). The social **construction** of space is the actual transformation of space influenced by social interactions (cultural activities), memories (past agrarian lifestyle), images, and the utilization of space, in this case the production of food. These concepts can accommodate ethnographic illustrations of the role of community gardens in the city by mediating processes of social interaction and symbolic meaning in the way that different community groups interpret these green spaces.

2.2 Right to the City

In line with the articulation of spatial practices, Purcell and Tyman (2015) view the issues of cultivating food in the urban environment through Henri Lefebvre's 'right to the city' framework. This concept meshes with the alternative food movement's search for alternatives to capitalism. The implication is that citizens of the city engage in reclaiming the right to space in order to grow their own food. The reclamation of space encourages the idea that people, not only gather in space but also negotiate how they want to live and manage space in the city. Purcell and Tyman bring attention to Lefebvre's call for spatial *autogestion* or self-management in reference to the ability of persons to manage urban space and take control of food production. The ramifications of these actions are material, political, and cultural. In the process, the gardeners begin to perceive themselves as agents. This is perhaps the most important transformation (Harvey 2008).

In line with this, Marcuse (2009) interprets Lefebvre's right to the city as staking a claim for marginalized groups who have otherwise been excluded from the city's cultural and economic life. It promotes a "restructuring of power relations" (Purcell 2002: 101), whereby the "users of space" must reclaim it from the "elite managers" and make it their own (Purcell and Tyman 2015:1135). This spatial conceptualization is in fact a collective endeavor, which operates outside of capitalist aspirations. It requires a community in solidarity deciding to make use of urban space according to their needs. My work draws from this concept to demonstrate the collective efforts of community garden projects as a means to cultivate food through self-management.

Urban gardens are also spaces where gardening ideas and practices are preserved, exchanged, and even modified. This process entails their transformation to spaces of culture. I discuss this further in Chapter 5 as I recall my observations and conversations with the Bhutanese gardeners who rely on each other's past experiences in order to maximize their chances for a successful growing season. These spaces of culture are interpreted, according to Gregory, as imagined geographies through the performance of space (2003). Drawing from Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Gregory conceptualizes imagined geographies beyond "accumulations of time, sediments of successive histories" in that they are also performances of space (2003: 308). In the case of urban gardens, the performance of space is the act of participating in garden activities, where at times versions of past activities are carried out into the present allowing the present to become more familiar.

2.3 Production of Space as a Political Act

Linked to Henri Lefebvre's concept of "right to the city" as a right to produce and control places where we live, Soja calls for social activism that is more democratic (2010: 6). He theorizes space through practical engagement in justice struggles as seen from a 'critical spatial perspective' by discussing the concept of justice as it is connected to space (2010: 2). The approach reinforces the idea of spatial justice in the city as having multiple forces that contribute to shaping geography through social and historical processes.

Soja's analytical framework helped me to understand how gardeners become active participants in cultivating space, and in the process become active agents in city politics and social concern. Gardens offer communities with social concerns the opportunity to mobilize and

become participants of urban politics. Through food production they support their own underserved communities and thus make a step towards ameliorating social injustice. No longer passive consumers, gardeners take on a role in political life by addressing the issue of food insecurity. Garden spaces empower economically and culturally marginalized participants to take control of their ability to produce culturally relevant foods, providing an avenue for improving food sovereignty.

2.4 Embodied Place and Social Capital

Turner argues that local food systems develop “embodied and embedded relationships to place," and therefore food cultivation and consumption practices enable the body to act physiologically and socio-culturally (2011: 513). These practices occur through bodies creating the notion of place-making as a form of belonging. The performance of gardening activities ultimately links the body to place in the way of physical investments through labor and time. Place-making is also a form of cultural activity in that it constitutes rituals and practices, a condition of the human experience which is analogous to the intimacy between people and place. In turn they become socially constructed realities that are “continuously created and recreated through social interactions and practices” (Williams 2002: 123). Urban gardens represent a spatial strategy which permits garden participants to construct and reconstruct space to articulate their identities and offer direct, place-based experiences that link with culture and physical engagement (Ardoin 2006).

Case study findings presented by Firth et al. demonstrate that such activities can provide individuals the opportunity to generate social capital. These authors define social

capital as “a concept used to refer to the social structures, institutions, and shared values making up community” (Firth et al. 2011: 557 see also Putnam 2000). Central to this concept is the idea that individuals who belong to a strong social network benefit from membership norms with value relating to reciprocity and trust (Firth et al. 2011). Urban gardens provide a “gathering space” where people come together and interact; this gathering space is an environment that contributes to the creation of community and the development of social capital. They also argue that social capital can take multiple forms depending on the garden community.

I found that *bonding* and *bridging* social capitals were most relevant in this study as opposed to the more overarching definition. This is because of the diversity in the way that community gardens operate, which inspires varying degrees of “community-building capacity” (Firth et al. 2011). Bonding is related to individuals who have strong ties with one another due to shared circumstances, experiences, or socio-demographic similarities. It is most often associated with neighborhood or “place-based” gardens, which characterizes strong ties with neighbors and family members who are also members of the garden. Examining the case for bridging reveals its link to “interest-based” gardens where people, often with distant ties, interact with a common purpose. Gardeners are essentially brought together for a common purpose through external organizations and networks that support and provide resources to support the goals initiated by these urban garden projects (Purcell and Tyman 2015: 1144).

The authors identify two categories of community gardens in this study: 1) “place-based," which are gardens embedded within and operated by residents of a neighborhood that identifies as a community, in relation to place and 2) “interest-based” gardens, where

participating members reside in the city but not necessarily in the neighborhood of the garden location. While authors of alternative food networks literature tend to situate their work in terms of neighborhood operated community gardens others have exposed the fact that some gardens just happen to be 'placed' where vacant lots are available (Pudup 2008).

As the language of critical political ecology and geography gets deployed by other disciplines, terms multiply and morph. The most important point for the reader to understand is that the concepts of space and place, 'right to the city', production of space as a political act, and embodied place and social capital are tied together through their attempts to express ideas of agency in relation to social actors. This then brings me to the final theoretical concept that I introduce here, *collective-action framing*.

2.5 Collective-Action Framing

Martin uses this term in her analysis to address how people organize to create change in a way that "place provides an important mobilizing discourse and identity for collective action" (2008: 730). While the author concentrates on neighborhood-based organizations, I use the framework to analyze 'place-making' under different circumstances that could lead to possibilities for collective action. In this case I look at place-making that is situated among institutions that enable individuals to organize their experiences relative to their ideals and social identity. Focusing on place-identity, this framework can be constituted through cultural values that embrace specific areas of resistance and social movements that are based in the experience of that environment or constitute the identity of that place. This concept helps legitimate the activism in which the Temple gardeners are engaged, which represents and is

defined by their religious identity that situates their work in areas of interest to the Temple, in this case Vickery Meadow, which I discuss in the next chapter. The motivation for gardeners to act as a community is defined by their shared values and the way in which that is articulated through their religious beliefs, in this case social justice is being transmitted through food justice.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH SETTING

This sections presents the two community gardens of this study in more detail. I discuss the location, demographic, and model of operation for each garden.

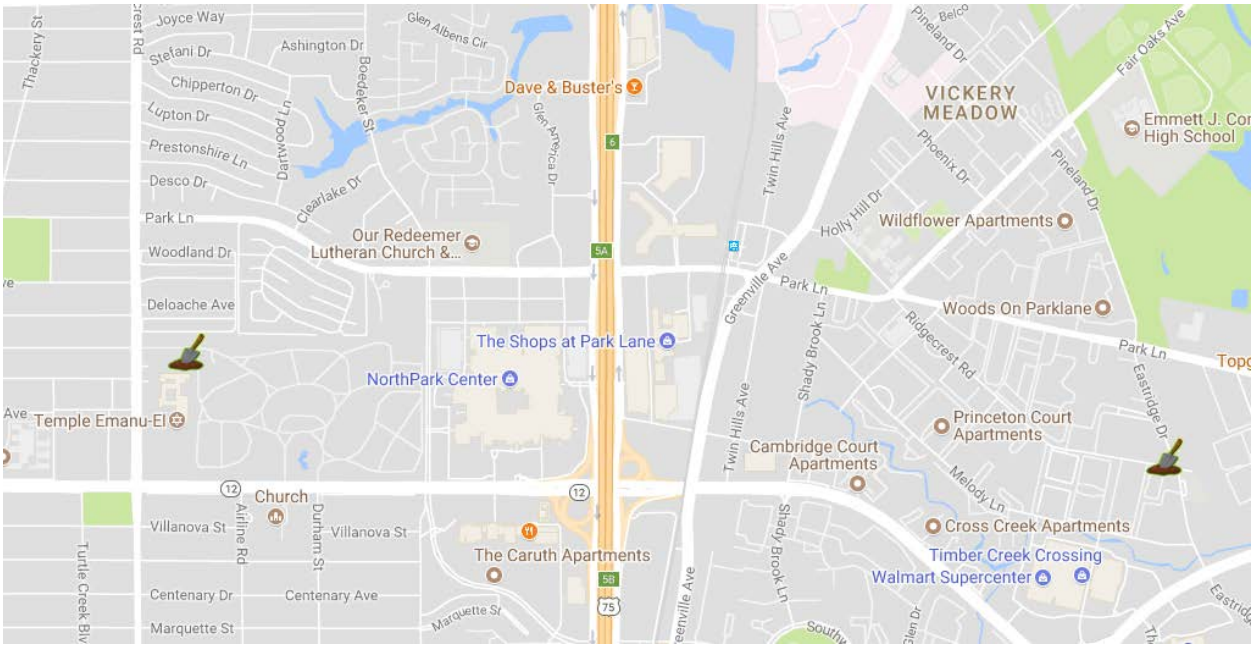

Figure 1: Community Garden Locations

3.1 Vickery Meadow Community Gardens: Location and Demographic

Established in 2012, Vickery Meadows Community Garden is a blooming manifestation of the work by a dedicated group of community volunteers who aspired to garden among neighborhood residents. Vickery Meadows is a densely populated, ethnically heterogeneous Northeast Dallas neighborhood not far from North Park Center. Characterized by its cluster of apartment complexes, the annual median income is $22,000, and residents generally work several jobs. Vickery Meadow was originally developed in the mid-1970's for the influx of upper-income, young adults with no children.

The passing of the Fair Housing Act in 1988 prohibited policies that excluded families with children from residing in apartment complexes. Although the apartment infrastructure in Vickery Meadow was not designed for families, these complexes were forced none the less to admit families with children. The change in policy shifted the demographics with the subsequent decrease in rent to a mostly low-income immigrant population. Ultimately, this 3 mile enclave was designated for refugee settlement due to the cluster of apartment complexes, cheap rent, access to public transportation, and healthcare facilities (revolvy.com).

Located at the Ridgecrest and Eastridge intersection, Vickery Meadow Community Garden was developed on a vacant lot owned by the Dallas Independent School District (DISD). Catholic Charities, which led the development of the garden, is a faith-based non-profit organization that provides various services to the refugee community. In the summer of 2016, a week after launching this study, Citizen D assumed responsibility for managing the garden. They have provided resources to add landscaping features in order to aesthetically enhance the exposed garden space, in addition to planning for education and community outreach development (citizend.org).

The gardeners are predominantly Bhutanese, while others come from Burma, and South Sudan. There are 53 beds that are leased to each family per household for an annual fee of $30. It is a highly sought after garden among the refugee community in the area with a waiting list of up to 2 years for membership. The gardeners grow plants that are native to their countries for home use and that are sometimes shared with their friends and neighbors. Most of the gardeners come from farming backgrounds and so have previous agricultural experiences. Most of the gardeners walk from their apartment complexes, located two blocks away from the

garden. Others use public transportation or drive but still live in the area. There is a bus stop located near the front entrance of the gardens and another located directly across the street making it easily accessible.

3.2 Temple Emanu-el Community Garden

Temple Emanu-el is located on the corner of Northwest Highway and Hillcrest in the Preston Hollow area of Dallas, just a mile away from Vickery Meadow, where the annual median income is $140,000 (keranews.org). The Temple Emanu-el Community Garden is tucked away in the far corner of the Temple's parking lot, where a portion of the green space adjacent to the cemetery was converted to a garden. The development of the garden was initiated by the garden's director in 2012, who sought to combine her love of gardening along with the biblical traditions. Under the tutelage of the Social Justice Council, the garden thrives as an educational resource by providing Temple members interested in gardening the opportunity to engage in learning environmental responsibility, techniques for organic gardening, and healthy living. It was also established as a means to fulfill the *Mitzvah*, a biblical teaching that encourages food offerings to those who are food insecure. The Temple garden operating model is volunteer based, compared by its garden volunteers as a *Kibbutz* style of working together to grow and harvest food as a community for distribution to the Vickery Meadow Pantry. Everyone works on all nineteen garden boxes, where each person picks up a task that was assigned on the garden work list. The director oversees the work and is there to educate or provide assistance to those unfamiliar with certain garden activities.

Serving as a social justice initiative, the garden offers 100% of its harvest each week to the Vickery Meadows Food Pantry. The garden grows culturally appropriate foods to accommodate the diverse populations of refugees and immigrants who rely on pantry goods to supplement their needs. Joined by a coalition of agencies and community organizations, Temple Emanu-El has a history of providing services to the Vickery Meadows neighborhood, located 3 miles from the Temple. As an area with one of the largest concentrations of economically disadvantaged residents in Dallas, it has been a cause for social concern among committee members who encourage initiatives like the garden to provide a community service. As a volunteer based operation, it also provides opportunities for Temple members to get involved in a shared activity aligned with social justice initiatives in areas of concern.

The garden operates by top-down management practices, where the director composes an organized weekly list of garden activities. There are two assistants who share leadership roles and responsibilities for managing garden tasks, delivering the harvest to the food pantry, and sourcing garden supplies and other resources. All garden management personnel currently serve as members of the Social Justice Council.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS

4.1 Data Collection at Community Gardens and Nearby Residents

After obtaining consent to begin from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of North Texas, I began this study in the summer of 2016 at the height of the growing season. Due to the exploratory nature of this research, I relied on ethnography through participant observation and volunteering. In doing so, I was able to gain a more intimate understanding of the gardens in the way that gardeners participated in garden activities, as well as interacted with each other and the garden space. Participants of the two gardens involved in this study were interviewed at the garden site with the exception of three participants who requested that we schedule interviews. I provided all participants with an IRB consent form, which I explained prior to the interview. Time was allotted for any questions or clarifications participants had prior to consenting, particularly for translating to non-English speakers.

The duration time for semi structured in-depth interviews was approximately 30 minutes for gardeners from the Vickery Meadow and Temple Emanu-el garden sites and for the residents living nearby. A total of twelve garden participants were recruited for the study, six from each of the two gardens. The number of neighboring participants varied as discussed below. Demographic information collected in this study was discussed and recorded prior to beginning each interview, however was not included in the analysis. Demographic information for gardeners includes: gender, ethnicity, age, occupation, zip code of residence, number of years as a Dallas resident, garden location, and how long the participant has gardened at that location.

In the case of community residents, I substituted duration of time residing at the current address. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions and field notes were formatted for coding which revealed the salient themes in the data of the issues and ideologies among the groups participating in the study. In this chapter, I offer a more detailed discussion of recruitment and methods used for data collection for each of the community groups participating in this investigation.

4.2 Vickery Meadows Community Garden

My initiation into this investigation began at this garden site, which was established for the refugee community residing in the Vickery Meadows area. The members of this garden are predominantly Bhutanese; none were proficient in conversational English. This garden site is gated with a secured lock pad at the front entry gate. I was able to gain access to the code from my client supervisor who explained to me that CitizenD was in the process of taking over management. I conducted participant observation at the site four days a week for 5 weeks.

The garden operates by leasing plots to families which made it an ideal environment for observation, offering a different experience from a volunteer-based garden. I took advantage of the seating areas in the garden that were in close proximity to gardeners, ideal for data collection. While observing and recording data, I was at times approached by curious garden participants who did their best to communicate with me. Most were eager to show me their garden plots, where they were located in the garden, what they were growing, and they discussed the tasks they participated in the garden as well. Such occasions afforded me the opportunity to conduct informal interviews, which I recorded in my observation notes and

enabled me to build rapport. Some would sit with me and in their best efforts communicate their life narratives some of which I included in field notes.

Observational data allowed me to gain insight as to the activities and interactions that take place at this garden site. My observations included: gardening activities, leisure family gatherings, garden member exchanges, high traffic times at the garden, whether gardeners came to garden by themselves or if they were often accompanied. After two weeks of observations and informal interviewing, I met the garden manager, who I was told, was the translator for the Bhutanese gardeners. After our introduction, we discussed my project at which point I requested his assistance in translating the interviewees. This individual subsequently became my key informant to that community.

Aside from working as a garden manager, my informant was a member of the refugee community and a gardener at that location since its development. As an invested member of the garden, he became a valuable source for information and recruitment with his network of relationships as a member of the community, gardener, and garden manager. A few participants just happened to be at the garden tending their plots while others were scheduled for interviews at least two days in advance. I learned from my own experience that the prescheduled meetings were typically unsuccessful because participants would not show. The preferred method for recruitment turned out to be last minute requests to visit on the spot. The wait for participants who arrived on short term notice was no longer than 30 minutes. While the language barrier served as a major obstacle I did manage to establish and develop relationships with a few people, especially those that were practicing their English at this garden site.

4.3 Temple Emanu-el Community Garden

This garden operation relies on predominantly white middle upper-middle class group of volunteers who are members of the synagogue. There is a core group of garden participants who have been volunteering at the garden since the first growing season. Other garden members include those who have volunteered there for at least one year. In order to build rapport for interview recruitment, I also participated as a volunteer gardener. After locating this community garden among a working list of community gardens in the Dallas area website, I obtained permission from my client supervisor to include this site in my study. To begin research, I looked up their hours of gardening operations on the garden website, which I later learned was built by one of the volunteers as a way to introduce the garden and recruit volunteers.

In order to make contact with the director of the garden, I decided to pay a visit as a volunteer one Sunday morning, at their scheduled garden work day. I believed this would give me a good opportunity to explain my project and meet the other volunteer gardeners as well. During this time, I was in the advanced stages of gathering observational data and interviewing at the Vickery Meadows Community Garden site and wanted to compare the operation of individually leased plots to the operation of a volunteer based garden. As a volunteer, it was difficult to stop and record data or take any field notes. I wrote my field notes after garden work hours.

Volunteering, however, allowed me the opportunity to get to know the community of gardeners, providing me access to participants and an avenue for building rapport rather quickly. I found my experience comparable to Flachs' experience as an anthropologist

volunteering as a gardener, which he described to be advantageous to investigators looking to understand how these garden spaces are put to use (2016). My experience as a home gardener also put me at an advantage to be more of a helping hand while learning different techniques for maintaining certain plants that I had not grown before. The ability to conduct garden work with ease and confidence was appreciated and it situated me as more of an insider, in contrast to the other garden site where I was not permitted to do any volunteer work in spite of offering.

The first day of volunteering was a success. After explaining my project, I found that the director was enthusiastic and more than willing to participate. I was introduced to the community of gardeners and given the opportunity to explain my project after their morning prayer, which they did prior to garden work every Sunday. There are approximately ten to fifteen members who volunteer on a regular basis, two of whom are garden masters not including the director. After spending a couple of Sundays volunteering and getting acquainted with the gardeners I began recruiting participants. Interviews took place after garden work hours or just before.

For this group, half of the participants requested that we schedule a meeting during the week. Those meetings took place at other locations negotiated at the time of scheduling via email correspondence. I conducted approximately twenty hours of volunteer work at this site. Subsequent data collection was taken during a 1 hour monthly scheduled group meeting, two of which I was able to attend.

4.4 Vickery Meadows Residents Living Near the Garden

There are a cluster of apartments surrounding the Vickery Meadow Community Garden. Unsure as to how I would gain access to the residents, I decided to begin by making contact with the apartment managers, whom I would also interview. I focused recruitment from three apartment buildings, two of which were located across the street on Ridgcrest and one which was catty corner to the garden at the intersection of Ridgecrest and Eastridge. The two apartments across the street are lower income housing while the other houses middle income residents.

Initial attempts to contact the apartment managers were not successful; it took at least two or three attempts for each one. Focusing on one of the apartments directly across the street, and after a couple of failed attempts to reach the manager, I finally gained access by stopping someone on their way into the complex. After contacting the manager in the first apartment, I was informed that the majority of the residents are Hispanic and non-English speakers. I decided that I would try to recruit a bilingual resident from that apartment whom I could employ as a translator, which I managed to do. We met at the apartment complex where we took a moment to discuss the research once again and go over the questions and consent form. It was important that I chose someone from within the community to help navigate the best times and areas to go door to door. As a result I conducted three residents with the help of my informant.

The adjacent apartment was also a challenge. Attempting to make contact in person, I met a resident on a phone call in the courtyard which is visible through the front gate. As I was let in through the front gate, I realized the gate was unlocked. I learned that the manager was

only accessible by phone due to the fact that she was off-site most days. After several attempts to initiate contact with her, I was finally successful. I spoke to total of three residents. Two were semi-structured interviews and the other an informal interview because he was not interested in participating.

I was able to interview the manager who is also a resident of a third apartment building catty corner to the garden. Gaining access to the tenants was difficult. After speaking to the manager who was more than generous with her time, it became clear that the only way to initiate contact was through her. Relying on the manager to recruit participants required that I create flyers for her to hand out to residents as she encouraged them to participate and also supplied business cards for additional contact information. I made several trips to the office to check in regarding the status of recruitment. After three weeks a participant contacted me and an interview was scheduled. Other interviews were initiated during my visits to the office, which I found was an ideal location for meeting tenants since I was not able to conduct door-to-door recruitment. Interviews in this neighborhood took place predominantly at the manager's office and the tenant's apartments. A total of nine residents from this neighborhood participated in this study.

4.5 Preston Hollow Residents- Temple Emanu-el Community Garden

For this upper-middle class predominantly white residential area, I conducted door-to-door recruitment. When that was unsuccessful, I left a flyer at the front entrance of each home with my contact information and a brief explanation of the study. Some residents refused to participate while others claimed they knew nothing of the gardens and were not interested in

the subject. My recruitment efforts were focused on residents whose homes were directly across the alley way from the garden. However, it became necessary to recruit those residing across the street from those residents as I was not able to reach the targeted number of recruitments necessary for that neighborhood. A total of six residents were recruited from that neighborhood over the course of 4 weeks. Most attempts to reach residents were during the weekend morning hours or afternoons as well as some week day evenings.

4.6 Dallas City Officials

I interviewed three city officials from the Dallas City Hall. Semi-structured interviews lasted approximately one hour and thirty minutes. Interviews were conducted at their office or over the phone. Recruitment followed a snowball sampling after initiating contact with one of the participants who was on the steering committee and who encouraged me to attend a work shop held at Dallas City Hall. Sponsored by the EPA, the Local Food Local Places summit attracted community organizers involved in the local food movement in order to discuss the status of local food initiatives in Dallas.

The summit's aim was to assess the status of community garden development post zoning code amendments, which were intended to increase the development of urban gardens in Dallas. Some of the stakeholders who were involved in proposing the changes to the city code for urban agriculture development also attended. Informal interviews were conducted with three of those attendees who were directors of community gardens in Dallas. I also recorded observations and took notes, as part of data collection that I believed would inform my study. I learned about this summit by conducting an in-depth semi-structured interview

with the director of an organization that focuses on helping communities establish community gardens in Dallas.

4.7 Data Analysis and Limitations

The qualitative data analysis was organized using Microsoft Word and manually coded. I strategically sectioned off each group for analysis. Informal interviews that took place during field work were also included with field notes and accounted for. Using the major research questions and interview guide I developed codes, which I used to identify the major themes within the collected data. The themes that were revealed provided a better understanding for the perception of urban gardens among research participants. Particular attention is directed to the role of these gardens as perceived by these participants as well as the barriers that contrasts these green spaces from the other urban landscapes to be enjoyed by various community groups.

The limitations of this study primarily have to do with the language barrier that I experienced among the Vickery Meadow participants including, gardeners and nearby residents. It was difficult to engage in a conversation to get an in-depth understanding of how the community garden participants felt about their community and their experiences in the community as gardeners. While I was fortunate to have found an informant for this community, it remained a challenge at times to engage participants in conversation. There is the possibility that some of the data could have been misinterpreted during translation, whether it be during interview questioning or participant responses.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this chapter I discuss the major themes that I gleaned from data collection and analysis. The findings are meant to inform community organizers, policy-makers, and other interested groups involved in promoting urban agriculture of the different ways that urban gardens position themselves in their environment and how they are perceived among the groups identified in this study.

5.1 Gardener's Perceptions: Vickery Meadow Community Garden

The cultural identity and circumstances of the Bhutanese gardeners who are predominant members of this garden site enriches our understanding of perceptions and the meaning that this space provides for them. As I spent time with the gardeners, I discovered the importance of this garden to its members, which validates the stream of literature highlighting the benefits of urban gardens among refugee communities.

It was implicit during the analysis phase of my research that becoming a member of the garden allowed them the opportunity to participate in cultural practices that reconnected them with their origins in farming communities. These spaces of culture are interpreted as 'imaginative geographies and performance of space' (Gregory 2003). In the case of the Vickery Meadows gardeners, their performance of gardening activities were versions of past activities carried into the present to make their new environment more familiar. Doing so has helped this community negotiate their cultural identity by tapping into their past knowledge and skills, creating a space of an imagined geography as one participant explained, "I enjoy going out

planting and gardening with my neighbors. My daughter helps me garden as well. I planted with my father and mother in Bhutan. We had a lot of land."

The gardeners engage in growing food to not only reconnect with their agrarian heritage but to also regain access to fresh culturally appropriate food for themselves and their families. As one participant explained, "Normally I grow the vegetables that I know from back home like the beans, mustard greens, cucumber, and pumpkin." The Vickery Meadows gardeners occupy and produce space in the city by holding the past of their agrarian lifestyles and growing food native to their home land in order to ease their adaptation to a new home country, thereby allowing "a possibility for newness to enter the world" (Gregory 2003: 308). This implies that their right to the city is produced through an imagined geography which is a reflection of their identity through their performance of space. This plays a crucial role in alleviating the social displacement and disconnection that many refugees coming from a farming background face as they are often destined to migrate to industrialized countries. Exasperating the difficulty in the cultural transition is their forced migration to designated "landless" urban environments.

Growing their own vegetables gives these individuals the opportunity to be in charge of the food they eat. The gardeners were very welcoming and happy to show me their garden plots filled with vegetable plants, some of which I was unfamiliar. Some of the gardeners did their best to communicate the variety of plants native to their homeland and the way these plants are traditionally harvested, stored and prepared. It was clear that not only is it about growing culturally relevant food but it is also about the accessibility and preference for the consumption and flavor of fresh organically grown foods free of industrial agrichemicals. The

gardeners have discussed the discrepancy between the way produce look at the grocery store versus the quality and flavor.

> The food we bought from the grocery stores and food we just grow, it's different in taste, you know. When you cook the food from the grocery store vegetables and make the same cooking from the fresh vegetable from the garden they taste very different.

For the gardeners, their primary economic contributions to their households is growing their own fresh food for their families, which is significant for reducing food costs while increasing access to fresh vegetables. The majority of the gardeners are unemployed with the exception of my informant who was also the youngest of them. They serve their household as primary caretakers along with other domestic responsibilities while some of the younger family members, both men and women, partake in the work force to provide a source of income for the household. Participants discussed the fact that growing their own food provides self-sufficiency when used for supplemental production of food, thereby reducing their need to purchase food on a weekly basis. The role that they played in transforming the space that had been vacant land through their labor including planting, cultivating and harvesting meant that they were managing and producing space for themselves.

In their account of how Lefebvre conceived of the right to the city, Purcell and Tyman (2015) discuss such spatial transformations as an act that falls in line with Lefebvre's spatial *autogestation* or self-management, a right to the city in the struggle to create another city according to their own needs, in the same way the Vickery Meadow gardeners have. I have observed gardeners walking in with grocery bags to hold the harvest that they gather to either store for the next meal or to add to the table for that evening. On these occasions we discussed preferred ways to prepare and consume their freshly picked vegetables.

> I used to go shopping every week before I had this garden but now I am shopping every 2 weeks. That's a big difference here. At least I am getting something fresh here and I come to the garden daily and get something very fresh.

In the interest of the Vickery Meadows gardeners, the garden functions as a space of citizenship, allowing them to participate in public spaces where they otherwise would not.

One of the major barriers leading to the disconnection from their living environment is the language barrier. The majority of participants have little to do with their neighborhood as a result aside from engaging in familiar activities in the public realm. It also, relieves them of their domestic responsibilities by offering an avenue for recreation and social interaction.

> If I didn't have this garden, I probably would be staying home and doing nothing else. I am very happy that I have at least 1 little plot, so I feel very good when I come to the garden.

While empowering gardeners to manage space in the public realm, these gardens also serve as communal spaces by which those participating in gardening activities have a number of opportunities to engage in positive social action. Many see it as an opportunity to fulfill a basic human need for social inclusion but more in the way of strengthening community ties and building social capital from within their community. According to my findings, it is apparent that the participants in the Vickery Meadow Community garden have established, what I referred to previously as *bonding* social capital.

During our conversations participants pointed out the existing strong social ties between neighbors and families in their area. They also made it clear that the garden is a place where they can build relationships further by enhancing their ability to get to know other members of their Bhutanese community. Purcell and Tyman (2015) discuss this type of urban space as a "site of encounter" using Lefebvre's concept of right to the city in his analysis of the

capitalist city, which "segregates inhabitants ….to produce passive consumers and not active citizens" (p.1144). Access to green space has its benefits with creating community interaction, a place where the gardeners can come together, play, share their life experiences, and knowledge about gardening. This was both observed in terms of their interaction with one another as the gardeners participated in garden chores and discussed further in regards to how the gardeners adjusted their knowledge of gardening in their new living environment.

> So I did ask someone one day what things grow well. I was told these things as well as pumpkin grow well and so I started growing them. I knew what worked back in my home town but here I didn't know anything about what works so I asked the old gardeners and then started planting. We do share with each other whatever we know and we share with garden responsibilities. We help each other with watering and looking after the boxes.

I witnessed the way in which the gardeners worked together, socialized, and helped one another with garden chores. During my visits I observed gardeners convening together, often visiting the garden with family members and friends at their leisure. The gardeners that I spoke with and observed were generous in their care and willingness to help one another with garden maintenance tasks such as watering and harvesting. The interviews also reflect the way that gardeners feel about having the garden as a green space to enjoy with members of their community whom they have developed close ties with, as one participant reflects, "this garden had certainly benefited us. It has helped us spend more time together and get to know each other. We walk together to the garden and get a little exercise too."

Rather than reducing these urban spaces to the dominant for-profit ideologies that "operate within the capitalist system" the garden has become a "space for culture" (Marcuse, 2009: 197). In this way, the gardeners engage in preserving and exchanging cultivation

knowledge including crops, seeds, and recipes that are shared in their community (Purcell and Tyman 2015).

> We usually help each other with planting, saving the seedlings, and watering. If some of the plants are dying we ask each other why and find out what we can do to make it grow better. We usually share the seeds with each other. If I have the pumpkin and someone else has the beans then we share with each other.

In the process of working together and self-managing their production of space there is a great degree of solidarity, which is necessary in order for the garden to continue to thrive. Harvey (2008) argues that in fact these gardeners are changing themselves by changing the city. Through the act of participating in garden activities as a collective in decision making, participants' perceptions of themselves changes the way that they perceive and experience their environment. Most of these changes that participants discussed confirmed their adjustment to a new life in the U.S. as the gardeners at Vickery Meadow Community Garden play a role in the production of their new environment (Harvey 2008, Marcuse 2009).

Ultimately, the perception of the gardeners is that the garden allows them to take control of their own adjustments. In doing so, they transform their environment and build their personal experiences by opening avenues to creatively overcome barriers to cultural, social, and economic inclusion. Operating on the margins of a capitalist system, this community benefits from the garden in the way that it provides an alternative life in the city. In the context of Lefebvre's "right to the city" these garden spaces permit many within the refugee community who formerly led agrarian lifestyles to adjust to landless urban environments, where they are often relocated. Such urban projects allows them to exercise their right to the city, which "can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed right to urban life"

(Marcuse, 2009: 193). They do so at their leisure and certainly through collective effort in support and with respect for the cultivated spaces of one another (Purcell and Tyman 2015).

The participants in this study expressed their gratitude for their garden plot, which has benefited them and their families. These perceptions illuminate the advantages to the development and maintenance of community gardens as well. However, there are issues associated with transferring knowledge and experience of rural food production to the confines of urban space. The gardeners raise issue of the limitation of growing food in small plots. They find difficulty at times resolving to growing food in limited growing space. While all of the interviewees expressed their gratitude for a chance to a garden a plot, they also expressed their desire for more garden space. “This plot is nothing for me. If I had a big plot I would plant a lot of things. It would be good to have extra to share with the people in my community." Other participants agreed adding “yeah only one box is not enough for a whole family, they wish they had a bigger garden.”

Adjusting to conditions of urban gardening has proven difficult at times according to the participants. In recalling their former agrarian lifestyles, it was clear that the transformation of space through gardening activities was a way for them to transfer their life experiences and knowledge of food production to their new environment.

> We used to have big plots of land for agriculture. Actually our professions were in growing things…agriculture. I had 6 acres of land back in my home country, so that was our job. Even back in Nepal too, we used to go to communities and help them grow things too and we used to have ready fresh things.

There is a clear desire to recreate what was their agricultural way of life in their home country as well as what they were able to produce in the refugee camps. The link to the past is

well represented in this case as the interviewees recall the historical importance that food production played in their daily lives.

5.2 Perceptions of Residents Living Near the Vickery Meadow Community Garden

It was apparent during this study that the Vickery Meadow Community Garden was intentionally meant to benefit a community of individuals who share a similar social identity. The interviewees from the neighboring community are predominantly Hispanic and African American residents. None of these individuals are involved in the garden nor have ever been exposed to the concept of urban agriculture. In fact, many of these individuals while admiring the aesthetic of the garden, were unaware of what it was or whose community it aimed to benefit. Many of the interviewees inquired "who's getting the benefit of that garden? I see people coming in either planting and things like that but I really wouldn't know who's benefiting or what is the purpose of that garden." While other residents revealed, "we had no idea whose garden it was. We just knew people were out there gardening."

For them, the garden is merely "experienced passively as enjoyment of greenspace" from a distance (Kurtz 2001: 661). While community gardens discourse often promotes community-building, expectations for neighborhood sociability are not always met. This garden is fenced with a padlock, allowing access exclusively to the gardeners, which creates the sense of exclusion among the neighboring area. "Well it's probably none of my business especially when it's locked down and it has a chain and there's nothing for anyone other than the people that are involved."

The general perception among these residents in regards to the advantage of the garden's location is that it beautifies the neighborhood as many of the participants noted that "the look of it can enhance your neighborhood." For those who are invested in making a difference in their neighborhood, the garden comprises a sense of "community-mindedness," as it is connected to the larger urban scape (van Holstein 2016: 2253).

> Because when you see ballooned bushes around that means someone is taking care of it. If you see flowers that are blooming and their lush and if you see bushes in there that are round… it's a beautiful section.

For many of the residents the garden represents a break from a neighborhood characterized by high-density apartments with little to no communal green space. In this way, the Vickery Meadow Community Garden "counteracts material inequities" predominantly assigned to low-income inner city neighborhoods (Ghose and Pettygrove 2014: 1100).

While the residents predominantly discussed the benefit of the garden in terms of its aesthetic beauty, others felt that its benefits "depends on whether people in the neighborhood have access to it." As a result the majority of the interviewees expressed their distant relationship to the garden as one of the apartment managers explained,

> I was walking along the fence yesterday, walking to my other property and just glanced in there and it's very well maintained. I mean we walk and could see from a distance but "what are you doing here"!

Many of the Spanish speaking residents although interested in the potential social and recreational use of the garden, were very hesitant about associating with the gardeners or having anything to do with the garden space because of the language barrier and ethnic differences. This brings attention to the issue of race relations in the way it shapes perspective of exclusion, commonly found in the city.

> I wouldn't feel comfortable because they would look at me as different and we don't speak the same language. When I walk my dog I see the people and they just look at me.

The issue of exclusion does not indicate any desire for membership, in fact the majority of the residents in this study discussed their disinterest in participating in garden activities. Instead, those that had any interest in the garden at all were focused more on the ability to access this space for leisure activities.

> If the door was open I would walk around. There are places to sit. I've seen you there. If I could walk in there in the morning and sit and enjoy it. Maybe taking the dog for a walk. I walk alone usually. It would be nice to have other people around.

In a neighborhood with very little greenspace, the residents seek inclusion into a space that is exclusive to an ethnically affiliated group that some of the neighbors describe as the Asians. The exclusivity in terms of group membership has raised issues of difference among the neighbors, "It's like being at an exclusive country club. How do you get in there?" another participant confided, "I didn't feel that I could be included in the garden." Residents are looking for a community open space that could provide recreational benefits although the space itself is fenced for exclusive use. This garden falls in line with notions of a place-based garden project, typically established by and for the neighborhood. However, in this case the garden lacks the ability to foster community connectedness among the neighboring residents from different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities. Instead, it exemplifies a situation where a garden happens to be 'placed' (Pudup 2008) in terms of its interest-based membership.

The role of the garden project was intended to serve the refugee community, a predominantly homogenous ethnic community from the neighborhood and who are directly invested in managing that space. As a result, this project contributed to some challenges in terms of its "exclusionary effects of property practices" (van Holstein 2016: 2252). This had

implications among residents who were alienated from the possibility of it serving other functions. While the residents did not directly share in the experience of cultivating that plot, it is one of few attractive green spaces in a densely populated urban area. For this reason, there's a common interest among the residents to advocate for the protection and maintenance of the garden.

Discussion of fencing during interviews revealed the way in which residents legitimized exclusive access to the garden. Although the fence keeps people out, residents see it as a way to protect the space in which the gardeners invested their time and effort to produce their food. The common interest in protecting the garden space comprises the difference between public and community illustrating how people make sense of 'accessibility and enclosure' (van Holstein 2016). "You're blocking off the space otherwise you're inviting anyone in there to go in and get what they want and they're not participating with the work."

The fence creates a defining border between public and private community space legitimizing the garden project. Residents revealed that the fence serves more of an aesthetic function to exhibit a controlled environment, there was no assurance that it serves as the best source of security from vandals. One resident noted, "I know it's got a padlock but let me tell you there isn't anything like climbing a chain linked fence." An apartment manager believed that "the gate is good but you're not going to truly stop anyone who wants to get in but it's good to help keep out the animals and help protect it."

Transparency was a salient topic among residents and stakeholders in the neighborhood, representing another aspect of the desire for inclusivity. The apartment managers discussed a desire to know more about what was taking shape in their neighborhood.

As property managers, they view the garden as a beneficial community project, one that enhances the aesthetic of the environment and therefore the value of the neighborhood. While they endorse this type of community project in their neighborhood, they have a key interest in building a relationship with other neighborhood stakeholders and organizations engaged with property practices that effects the larger landscape of the neighborhood. In this case due to the visual accessibility of the garden, both the apartment managers and residents were concerned about the issue of accountability.

> …like a phone number should be there for people who want to participate because when you see it go in array you want to be able to know what's going on in there…

Interviews reveal a number of instances when residents discussed their interest in knowing who to contact for garden membership inquiries and other relevant information. Residents and apartment managers suggested that the garden post signage with contact information, as well as information about the garden project. Due to the exposure of the garden, those living nearby see the garden's potential as an inclusive community space greenspace.

> It would be nice if it was accessible. Maybe if there was a phone number on there that had a number listed for visitations, maybe somebody could meet us. Maybe somebody could be there so people could come in and take a look.

5.3 Perception of Gardeners: Temple Emanu-el

The thematic content of Temple Emanu-el gardener analysis revealed the way in which their role in the garden fits into their personal lifestyle choices as well as personal and political ideologies. This garden project is affiliated with a number of community organizations involved in charitable contributions to Vickery Meadow Food Pantry. Participation in this garden is

voluntary and has allowed the Temple members to strengthen their *bridging* social capital network within the community by cultivating a more intimate relationship with like-minded individuals (Firth et al. 2011). While garden participants enjoy the benefits of gardening they are engaging in issues of food justice specifically geared towards the refugee community in Vickery Meadow. The Temple Emanu-el Community Garden contributes fresh organic produce that are particularly inaccessible to refugees who are food insecure and lack access to urban green space to produce their own culturally relevant foods. The aim of this garden project was to "nurture a sense of community" (Kinsley and Townsend 2006: 532) among the Temple members.

The donation of fresh produce greatly benefits the refugee pantry clients who are unfamiliar with packaged and canned items typically served in food pantries. Accordingly, the gardeners' voluntary efforts have focused on promoting culturally relevant food choices while increasing the availability of fresh produce. The success of this garden has to do with the skill and dedication of volunteers who have proven their commitment. This communal project has been a worthy cause for participation as one participant noted, "social justice is what drives me for doing work for the food pantry and for the garden." The garden allows Temple members the opportunity to get involved in food activism, which is aligned with social justice initiatives.

While the gardeners have worked to transform a portion of the Temple's greenspace into an operation that provides a community service, the gardeners themselves have been transformed by the experience as well. Their communal efforts has allowed them the opportunity to work side by side in order to achieve a common goal encouraged by their biblical traditions. In doing so, this suggests that urban gardens fosters community-building

within the garden space by means of communal participation where gardeners can share ideals, work and engage in decision-making processes (Ghose and Pettygrove 2014). In line with Lefebvre's right to the city movement, the gardeners are able to occupy and produce space to benefit those in economic crisis. Such activities have been discussed by Lyson (2004) as civic agriculture through alternative local food production for the purpose of community problem solving linked to social and economic development. Garden volunteers saw themselves as "striving to make the world a better place," which many of them expressed a strong passion for as another participant explained, "so one way or another I feel like I have to do something."

The overlapping membership for those involved in the garden has reinforced the ability for them to become a part of a smaller, more tight-knit community. Members of the garden have assembled together under their shared binding moral code grounded in their religious affiliation and gardening hobbies. They have embraced a set of goals, creating a space for what Martin (2003) refers to as *collective-action framing* to achieve their food justice objective. In her analysis, Martin looks at collective-action framing to enrich our understanding of the way individuals organize their experiences relative to their values, beliefs, and goals to achieve some sort of change (Martin 2003). The garden serves as a space for informing and mobilizing social justice initiatives by, in this case, producing culturally appropriate foods for refugees benefiting from pantry donation. This community of volunteers has taken pride in their involvement towards civic action, as one participant explained, "the fact that we give the majority of the food to the food bank is really what makes it compelling for me." This framework gives merit to the way in which community garden projects can transform people and places. Temple

gardeners have used the garden as a frame for civic agriculture allowing them to foster a collective identity to take action towards increasing food sovereignty.

Another transformative measure is the way in which urban gardens provide spaces for social connections, therefore strengthening social cohesion and influencing positive social interaction. The communal model of the garden has offered participants a chance to work together. Not only does this have positive implications for achieving a dedicated organized group of volunteers to alleviate food injustices but it has also serves as a 'space of encounter' (Purcell and Tyman 2014) where participants can establish relationships with one another.

Volunteering at the Temple garden allowed me the opportunity to experience this first hand. I shared work with other gardeners and was able to engage in conversation while participating in garden chores together. We also shared knowledge with each other when one of us was unfamiliar with a garden chore, for example, knowing how or when to harvest a vegetable. The gardeners were very friendly and conversational. Some would sit and converse after garden work hours and on occasion some (myself included) would go out as a group for coffee or to shop at the local farmer's market. There was a sense of comradery among the core group of volunteers but they were also very welcoming of others who were there less consistently as well.

> The community of the garden. Getting to know people that you wouldn't know other wise and understanding what their interests are and hearing about the things that they're doing. It's created a sense of a strong community for us.

The social aspect of gardening is a major draw for Temple members to volunteer their time there. It serves as a private space where Temple members "can come together, interact, and share experiences" (Purcell and Tyman 2014: 114). For many the garden offers a more

intimate setting to develop close friendships, as opposed to the Temple itself. According to the director of the garden, the Temple holds “something like 3 thousand families," which makes it difficult to meet people. The garden manager explained, “Here it’s like a big family. So we’ll have potlucks and we’re in a discussion group and stuff like that, so I feel really close to the people." It was explained that the Temple garden is often used as a space for social gatherings to promote community building. Aside from garden activities there are group meetings that take place once a month, which is often led by the garden organizer.

I attended a meeting, which was held after garden workday hours. Some of the gardeners were able to attend along with a few other Temple members. The meetings are typically directed by a topic of discussion intended to allow participants the chance to reflect and share their personal experiences, reflections, and engage in spiritual group discussions. For these participants, the garden has served as a private space for intimate gatherings, engendering “elements of social capital that affect levels of participation” (Cox 2002, as cited in Kingsley and Townsend 2006: 526).

The Emanu-el Community Garden is associated to a hierarchal structure, which has influenced social interaction and participation and has been exclusive to Temple members only. Participants of this garden revealed that their perceptions of the ideal community garden was depended upon how these individuals defined community. Those who aligned with Temple guidelines believe that the community in community garden is aligned with Temple efforts to build social cohesion among Temple members, “we’re very close, and we didn’t know each other before we started the garden.” In fact, the intimacy of the garden space provided a setting where members have been able to develop friendships and therefore generate social

capital. Research findings revealed what Firth et al. (2011) discusses as “bonding social capital," which has been associated to gardens similar to the Temple model, characterized as “place-based” gardens. In this context, the Temple gardeners have developed strong ties with one another based on their association as Temple members who volunteer at the garden, which is internally driven and managed. The garden has offered the volunteers a place where they can gather and work together in a communal and cooperative environment where tasks are shared and they can identify with one another in their ideals and traditions.

Still, there are Temple gardeners that opposed the exclusivity and homogeneity of this type of membership. While community gardens are perceived as potential inclusive spaces, the social capital they generate may not be equally available to individuals who do not meet the criteria for membership. Temple gardeners perceive the ideal community garden as a more heterogeneous environment encompassing members with culture and class diversity. This type of involvement offers garden members from different backgrounds the opportunity to establish binding ties, which is often associated with interest-based participation (Putnam 2000, as cited in Kingsley and Townsend). There were gardeners who believed that “It’s not really a community garden in the sense that it’s not really open to people in the neighborhood. It’ll feel more like a community garden to me, when we have more diversity."

While reflecting on the nature of membership at the garden, participants grappled with the idea that the policy endorsed by Temple stakeholders has led to the exclusion of non-temple members who live nearby from the ability to participate in the garden project. In fact, according to the garden director, there were residents from the neighboring area, some of whom were master gardeners that inquired about participation but were told that it was for

Temple members only. Garden volunteers who were unaware of the policy regarding participation assumed that it was open to the general public. This was a point of frustration for some of the interviewees, which they actively contested. Future plans to expand the garden in order to accommodate the need for additional gardening space for refugees will encourage temple leadership to re-examine participation policy in the long term. This is also true for garden participants who have expressed their contentment in the way the garden currently operates.

Management also impacts the perception of community gardens as a place worthy of support and dedicated participation. Garden organizers bear great responsibility for managing and motivating productivity in the garden. Management strategies at the Temple garden are geared toward reaching food production goals each week for pantry donation, which is reported to the Temple's social justice committee. The purpose of reporting the amount of food produced each week is for Temple stakeholders to verify the effectiveness of the garden in terms of meeting the Temple's standards of a viable service project. It fosters a sense of accountability among the gardeners who fully support and are motivated by the central goal of the garden to provide a community service by fulfilling the *Mitzvah*.

The success of the garden is attributed to the technical management by the garden director of garden activities in order to maintain a productive work flow within a short time frame. Interviewees discussed the effectiveness of the garden's top-down management in a way that made them feel like they have purpose.

> We feel that we're in it together and that it's being managed both technically and collaboratively in a good way. So that keeps us all participating actively and I think that it leads to effectiveness. We have a lot of that collaborative, quality focus and that keeps us involved and everyone's position effective.

The garden director facilitates knowledge by offering technical advice to gardeners on effective techniques to ensure a successful harvest through a working list of what tasks needed to be accomplished each week. Doing so has impacted the dynamic of the garden by encouraging social support, creating a communal and cooperative environment where everyone has worked towards achieving the same goal. This was well noted in Kingsley and Townsend's (2006) 'Dig In' Community Garden case study, which revealed the importance of management in facilitating social cohesion to enable a more productive work environment where garden members were able to share knowledge and problem solve as a group. At the Temple garden I witnessed participants discussing issues and concerns related to garden work geared towards growing food that the gardeners were unfamiliar with for the refugee population.

Garden participants stressed the importance of the garden as a gathering space for sharing knowledge, but relied on management for the organizational component. Many believed that the potential for learning best practices for food cultivation was the best source for attracting dedicated volunteers some of whom were master gardeners themselves as one gardener explained, "I like the idea that there's a lot of knowledge here and that it's so willingly shared is important." This degree of interaction that is accompanied by a shared set of values is central to the context of social capital, which was implied in the membership of this garden project. Members of the garden had intentionally constructed their community by voluntarily interacting with one another to benefit the disadvantaged residents of Vickery Meadow. It was evident that in the process of benefiting "the wider public" the gardeners were expanding their social network while learning new skills (Firth et al. 2011).

5.4 Nearby Residents of Temple Emanu-el

The Temple Emanu-el garden is a somewhat hidden garden, tucked away in the back corner of the Temple parking lot away from any main streets. The garden, is not in open view to the neighborhood or the public which is surrounded by tall shrubs but with fencing low enough that it only defines the Temple's property. The neighborhood alley is hidden by fencing and tall shrubs on top of a concrete base. There are two pathways in between the housing properties and the Temple property with a barricade of yet more tall shrubs. These physical barriers resemble what Edward Soja discusses in *Seeking Spatial Justice* as a 'fortressed' urban environment that insulates this upper-middle class neighborhood (2010: 42). Soja borrows this concept from Mike Davis's *City of Quartz* (1990) in which he describes fortressing as a "security obsessed urbanism" aimed at protecting property from "real or imagined threats" (Soja 2010: 42). This was telling in the characteristic of the neighborhood and the culture of the residents as their discussions were tinged with the issue of security and control over their lived environment.

A concern to me when I began data collection in this neighborhood was whether or not the residents were even aware of a garden near their homes. During my door-to-door visits to recruit residents to participate in this study, I initiated conversation by introducing my research topic of community gardens in relation to the one on Temple property, inquiring whether they were aware it existed at all. Only one of the participants who lived closest to Temple knew of the garden because of their Temple membership but had never volunteered to participate. For this portion of the research, my findings rely on perception of community gardens in general and what they thought about the future initiative to expand the Temple garden, which will

become more visible to the neighboring area as it stretches across the property to the main street. I also reveal the responses to the reason for garden expansion, which as I mentioned earlier, is to accommodate refugees with additional garden space.

The Temple garden has no direct benefit to the residents living nearby although the participants were aware of the advantages. Many discussed the benefits of community gardens as offering a community service by “helping others out of hardship” in an altruistic way of food offerings. While others discussed the implications of social connectedness as one participant noted that “it sends a great message to communities by bringing people together," from a perspective of community building. The few residents with gardening experience discussed the quality that locally grown fresh produce provides “there’s nothing like fresh fruits and vegetables.” Yet, juxtaposing their argument in regards to the number of advantages that community gardens provide are the disadvantages, which became a salient topic of discussion among the residents I interviewed. These discussions fall in line with Setha Low’s exploratory research of fear and violence of gated communities (2001). There were a number of rhetorical points that alluded to class, race, and ethnic exclusion which was also reflected in the social homogeneity of the neighborhood.

There were major concerns regarding security and the ability to control one’s environment. Participants spoke about “vetting” as a necessary measure for controlling who would take part in gardening activities once the Temple garden expanded to allow refugees to participate, “I don’t want a lot of strangers coming into the neighborhood," was predominantly the sentiment among residents. Low discusses this as a socially constructed urban discourse that reinforces residents to fear the “other” as potentially dangerous. This coincides with the

preference that the garden stay small and manageable as one participant suggested that it should be “nothing huge so that a ton of people aren’t coming in and that’s just a safety thing.” In fact there were Temple garden volunteers who also agreed to the size staying “small and manageable” in order to could keep track of who participates. One garden participant discussed the issue of security as one of the challenges to expanding the garden.

> It’s something that we envision and would like to have happen, it’s just a matter of making it work. We have a pre-school here and it’s just beefed up security there and having people in the garden when we’re not here has become an issue.

Edward Soja (2010) refers to these preferences as “spatial control," which are tactics driven by fear of crime and violence (p.43). The possibility of cultural diversity puts the residents in a defensive mode of thinking resulting in the obsession over security, which becomes central to creating social and spatial barriers.

> The temple has concerns over security itself. So the concern would be what it would bring in or more people would need to be vetted. Who are you going to allow to have access to it? If it’s just anybody off the street then you’re bringing in a potential problem.

These residents reinforced the limitations regarding the inclusiveness of community gardens when confronting ideas and perceptions of diversity among neighborhoods designed for exclusivity. Discussions with residents regarding the participation of refugee gardeners at Temple revealed that race and class issues can make access to gardening spaces a source of contention. The urban ethnographies that Low (2001) examines to understand the discourse of fear in gated communities identify the role that “familiarity, avoidance, and surveillance” plays in mitigating the fear of crime (p.47). This was evident as my interviewees described the social dynamic of the neighborhood as a “very tight-knit community from within, from crime watch to everything else.” While other comments were indicative of just how close the residents are to

one another by watching out for each other in the neighborhood and trying to get to know each other.

Another theme depicting the way in which residents try to control their environment aside from surveillance tactics is the way in which they manage their neighborhood space. Most of the participants made a point about parking, should the Temple garden expand. This concern was intriguing in a sense that I took it upon myself to explore some of the concepts assigned to the interplay between material space and conceptual image (Purcell 2001). In Purcell's work regarding neighborhood activism and the politics of space, he discusses the way conceptual space influences how we experience and modify material space, which ultimately reshapes our conceptual space ideas.

In this case the residents compare a congested parking area to neighborhood deterioration, which exemplifies how the ideal spatial vision represents a set of social values. Such concerns as the neighborhood aesthetic bring the "socially constructed discourse" about class exclusion and racial, ethnic and cultural bias to the fore (Low 2001). The residents that I interviewed stressed the fact that they enjoyed their quiet neighborhood as one resident explained, "nobody knows we're here." I spent time in the neighborhood while I was looking for recruits, and realized just how isolated and quiet it was from the busy outside urban environment of shopping strips off of a major highway.

This group of interviewees recognize the numerous benefits and contributions community gardens are capable of generating. However, when plans for a more inclusive garden space was mentioned issues of fear and insecurity regarding the possibility of neighborhood change and increased social diversity was revealed. Residents spoke of the need

for new refugee gardeners to be 'vetted', that the garden needed to be secured and controlled in some way and not too big so that it was manageable. Issues of vandalism and robbery, liabilities, and the unknown dangers were major concerns for the residents, which plays into "the discourse of urban fear" where the social values are enmeshed with what is portrayed as a 'defensive space' (Soja 2010).

5.5 Perception of Dallas City Officials

In order to understand the perception of the policy makers in the city of Dallas I interviewed 3 city staff members. Their roles and responsibilities as citizen advisory committees are to provide the city officials the regulatory tools to help shape the goals and vision for the community. We discussed much of what Dallas is reaching for in terms of the development of future urban agriculture initiatives. I conducted a number of informal interviews with some of the grass roots stakeholders, who in a collaborative effort with city staff were able to provide input at a workshop in city hall during the summer of my research called Local Foods Local Places.

As explained in a previous chapter, this was a summit that was sponsored by the EPA in order to facilitate change in the food economy of Dallas. They were ultimately looking to find ways to build community around food production by building local food networks and adjusting policies to meet local demands. The growth and popularity of these projects created the need for new city policies. As a result, on March 2015 the Dallas City Council passed a new city ordinance permitting broader food production options to increase food sovereignty, and the promotion of economic development through the approval of sales. City staff believed that

increasing access to locally grown fresh food would also build a more resilient food system and increase community development.

Staff members who were involved in the most recent ordinance amendments discussed that the way to appeal to city council members in order to make such changes was to focus on the economic benefits of urban gardens. Many of the council members were more interested in the idea that garden initiatives could account for “self-determined spaces” through civic engagement. In this way, urban policy increases the responsibility of citizens to improve their own material conditions by encouraging entrepreneurialism at the local level (Rosol 2010).

> So we quantify it by looking at what the economic opportunities are to making these changes. How can people solve the access problem, can they make their own money to support themselves and pay taxes and things like that. That was what was going through and the committee actually thought it was great.

This is characteristic of entrepreneurial cities like Dallas directed towards business development and market dynamics to encourage citizenship practices and volunteerism as self-help strategies to aid those effected most by state retrenchments as a result of neoliberal politics (Harvey 1989). This is especially the case for resource-poor areas in Dallas identified as food deserts where discriminatory policies have led to limited supermarket access in predominantly low-income minority residential areas (thefoodtrust.org 2015). Citizens that suffer from economic distress have had to rely on grassroots community development, which have acted to alleviate the state from any service provisions (Perkins 2009). Drawing on this form of citizenship the scope of civic participation becomes narrow when such practices are not accessible to all, which isolates communities even more, “the people that needs this the most are probably the least likely capable of being able to utilize it or shape it."

The continual emergence of community development strategies in the context of community gardens has led individuals to internalize neoliberal rationality. These garden spaces become sites for empowerment strategies, instilled with the discourses of self-improvement and self-reliance (Classens 2015; DeFilippis et al. 2010). This is evident in the stated goals of city staff members to boost community garden initiatives by supplying the technologies necessary for citizens to take action through voluntary participation.

> And just for perspective on what your government should be doing for you…your government isn't there to help you like your neighbors and help come together as a community. The government can give you all the tools to do that but that's up to us as individuals as citizens of the United States and as residents of Dallas…that's up to us to make those connections with each other.

The importance of civic engagement is encouraged by city officials and staff members as a way to stabilize marginalized neighborhoods as a form of social control (Rosol 2010). The emphasis on community building is rooted in the independent scope of economic revitalization attempted in the 1970's grassroots movements.

These movements generated local support to address social disparities to cover gaps of government support. In light of the current political milieu, this has led to the increasing importance for "community-based third sector initiatives" to respond to social services desperately needed on the local level. Amin refers to this concept as the "social economy," which creates economic opportunity geared towards "social provisions of services" often headed by non-profit initiatives filling the void of state retrenchments (Amin 2010: 68-9). The non-profit or third sector urban social services have been geared towards organizing interest-based garden projects in an effort to bring individuals together in a collective setting. In this case the incentive to push for policies to increase agricultural production in Dallas has been to

allow for entrepreneurial opportunities of growing and selling food. Other community leaders were looking to find ways to address poverty and hunger solutions locally.

Another perspective that was discussed had to do with the need to clarify the language of urban gardens and other industry terminology so that there was no crossover terms that integrated with rural or periphery farming type of operations. For any amendment to pass there could be no confusion with rural language due to the notion that nature and society are oppositional (Classens 2015).

> They just don't see gardening as part of the urban model. They're worried that next thing we'll have horses back on the street… gardening isn't associated with industry and commerce.

It reflects an understanding of the city as separate from greening activities that mimic nature within gardening initiatives.

For urban planners, food systems have been largely a rural issue, which has belated attempts to accept a food planning agenda in cities like Dallas. As city officials and staff members address provisioning of food policies to expand the capacity for a viable food network in Dallas, they were having to "re-imagine the city as a farm" (Viljoen 2005, as cited in Morgan 2009). During the last amendment, city staff recalled some of the concerns voiced by city officials regarding scenarios of mismanagement and whether ordinances were prepared to resolve such possibilities. The issues debated illuminated the lack of understanding by city officials as to the amendments that were already in place because of the confusion with language that is typically not indicative of the urban character.

> There were things that they weren't comfortable about in the ordinance and in the proposed changes… things that were already addressed in other sections in the city code and we explained that to them at the time. One was "what if chickens go loose?"

> Well, it's the same as a stray dog going loose or a stray cat. Animal services and Dallas city code already addresses that.

City staff who were in support and engaged with community leaders were in charge of addressing the realities of gardening operations to city officials who were less informed. Some city officials were misinformed of the development and management of community gardens. Those that voiced concerns over control and management of garden projects represented the stigma of urban gardens through the "dominant classist and racist ideologies that conscribe what kinds of people should belong in public space" (Barraclough 2009; Domene and Sauri 2007, as cited in Ghose and Pettygrove 2014: 1094).

> We had council people, you can go back and look at the recordings that were concerned that if we allowed community gardens in Dallas that "my neighbor is going to have a community garden" it was more like "what's going to stop my neighbor from wanting to have a community garden, that guy that owns that big vacant piece of property over there and then homeless people come walking through my neighborhood all the time. I don't want homeless people in my neighborhood, I know my constituents don't want homeless people in their neighborhood.

This statement exhibits a significant moment of discriminatory and exclusionary ideology that perpetuates structural inequalities that this very movement aims to alleviate. It exemplifies what I previously discussed as socially constructed notions of urban fear "creating forms of exclusion and residential segregation" (Low 2001). The homeless and hungry in the public realm are a contested part of the class based notions of space. These ideas manifested into emphasizing the control and management of gardens, which led to some hesitation to consider the proposal for changes to the ordinances. Motivations to control urban garden environments revealed the misinformation of the current state of garden projects as to how they operate, for what propose, including the requirements for participation.

The critical interpretations of community gardens illustrates some of the issues concerning civic engagement in entrepreneurial cities where local policies are influenced by private interest (Harvey 1989). The language of city officials mimics the neoliberal policies which have reconfigured the role of city government from their traditional task of social provisions services to business development. Interviewees discussed that in order for ordinance changes to take place it was either accepted as a greening initiative or as a collective self-help strategy in which participation could lead to economic gains and self-improvement in the way of entrepreneurial garden projects (Guthman 2008; DeFilippis et al. 2010). Another benefit promoted by city staff to encourage the change in zoning ordinances in favor of expanding urban agriculture production in Dallas was the ability of community gardens to strengthen resource poor communities through community participation.

In this case the development of social cohesion is what ultimately compensates for state social welfare reductions leaving government with less responsibility for the well-being of its citizens (Rosol 2010). Linked to such concepts is the central notion that social capital is enhanced among individuals participating in community gardens, which generates and strengthens support networks (Putnam 2000). According to Rosol (2010), this goes along with the increase in civic engagement in the form of grassroots community development, which collaborates with city government as a way to supplement for well-fare retractions. Non-profit organizations like CitizenD and citizen volunteers are compelled to step in to fill in and cover gaps in services and provisioning in basic supports such as food, housing, and health due to these market led policies (Guthman 2008; DeFilippis et al. 2010). In this context, organizers and participants of community gardens providing services to communities can be seen as unaware

that their participation has socio-political implications. Having a broader understanding of the role that community gardens serve in urban environments can encourage community organizations to simultaneously challenge the structural conditions reproducing inequities produced from neoliberal politics.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that community gardens do in fact contribute to the needs of participating communities. This thesis has demonstrated that urban food gardening is beneficial in a way that it provides space for individuals to grow culturally relevant nutritious foods but it also provides an opportunity for members to build community, social connectedness, and social capital. Such developments offer individuals the opportunity to broaden their networks and therefore strengthen communities. Gardens are spaces for encounters -- gardeners can come together and share experiences, gain knowledge, and identify with like-minded individuals. I found this to be the experience of the Temple gardeners as they also fulfilled their traditional and civic roles of charitable contributions while cultivating more personable relationships among the members within their community. Urban garden programs can also be identified as community resources that are capable of evaluating community needs and facilitating collaboration with other community-based networks.

This exploratory research also revealed some insight into the perceptions of community gardens from gardeners, nearby residents, and city officials in terms of their role in the city. When urban agriculture is promoted, it is necessary to understand the role of the gardens in neighborhood environments and how they benefit communities. In this way the promoters – usually community organizers or policy makers and /or other interested groups will get a better sense of how these cultivated sustainable spaces could be put to optimal use. In order to convey community gardens as viable community resources that could serve a number of

interests, garden organizers should consider reaching out to the neighboring areas of place-based garden cites in order to gain support from non-participating residents living nearby.

Gardens could serve multiple purposes in areas where there are few greenspaces for residents to enjoy. One way this could be organized is to dedicate hours for the garden to open for social and recreational purposes. For example the Vickery Meadow Community Garden has a physical presence in a densely populated area where there are few attractive green spaces, yet is closed off to the public and remains exclusive to members of the refugee community it serves. While not everyone has an interest in gardening, the garden could expand its use to facilitate connections as a gathering space between participating members and the residents that live close by and who feel excluded. The residents of Vickery Meadow expressed their desire to be able to enjoy a walk through the garden area and were interested in knowing what sort of gardening activities were taking place.

In order to mitigate feelings of exclusion, gardens could maximize their benefits by offering tangible means to address the needs and interests of other community groups in the neighborhood. This research also revealed the way community gardens can illuminate the existence of 'urban fear' in middle and upper-class neighborhoods, which is associated to the "fear of crime, social diversity, and neighborhood change" (Low 2001). This was evident in neighboring area of the Temple garden, which seemed to legitimize racial and class difference and therefore exclusion. Community garden developers need to consider the socio-political and cultural makeup of the neighborhoods where land is leased for garden development in order to secure sustainable garden initiatives in those areas. Community outreach by garden organizers could allow them to align themselves with local neighborhood associations and make efforts to

address some way to connect with neighborhood interests. Transparency and accountability are some of the ways in which organizers can mitigate issues of fear and insecurity, while allowing community stakeholders to feel like they have knowledge and control over their living environment. This could be accomplished by posting signage with the contact information of garden management as well as advertising garden activities and events in neighborhood newsletters.

The results of this work have important implications for helping organizations bridge their agenda with the interests of city politics. This approach could maximize the value of community garden initiatives in a progressive way that would be able to integrate these practices into city life. Providing more informative measures of different types of community garden operations and the different communities that are involved can encourage city officials to consider gardens as a viable community resource and therefore worthy of support. At the same time, organizations that understand city politics need to be critical of the political conditions that result in structural inequalities. In order to effectively do so, community organizers need to understand the basis by which gardens are situated within the economic context of neoliberal politics (Pudup 2008).

For these initiatives to succeed, organizations must evaluate their garden projects and stay in touch with members to make sure that the garden is satisfying their needs and interests. In order to support the national movement advocating for the proliferation of urban agriculture, organizations must encourage research of various garden operations to effectively examine and raise awareness of the many roles that garden projects play in the context of their socio-ecological environment.

6.1 Food Provision Issues in Dallas

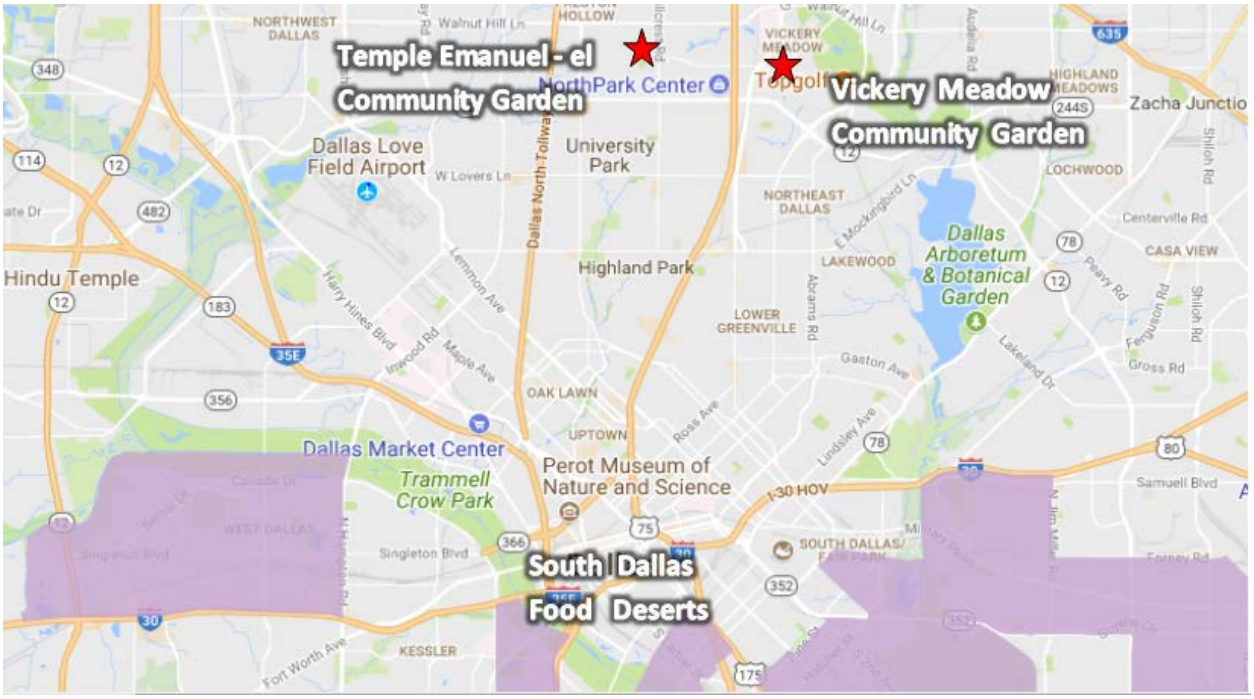

Figure 2: Community Garden Locations Relative to Food Deserts Predominantly Located in South Dallas

There is a substantial literature on food deserts and food provision[2], both generally and pertaining to South Dallas specifically (Bell et al. 2013; Donald 2013; Regan and Rice 2012). A major factor in the uneven distribution of food retailers is a result of supermarket migration to suburbs leaving urban areas with high portions of racial and ethnic minorities with limited healthy food access (Bell et al. 2013). Studies indicate that such structural disparities are directly associated to the socioeconomic status and racial composition of neighborhoods (Berg and Murdoch 2008; Albert et al. 2015). The demographic and economic disparities in those areas indicate that twice the number of African American and Latino residents live in areas that lack access to healthy food than white, higher income residents (Bell et al. 2013).

[2] Food provisioning is making food available to those in need.

While the most obvious resource an urban garden provides is a place to grow food, it is not the ultimate solution to issues of food access. Given the realities of inequalities in food provision and the location of grocery stores in Dallas, it is important to consider what Donald's concept of a "retail provision intervention" in underserved neighborhoods of Dallas (2013:232). She suggests that a small-scale grassroots-based "retail provision" intervention might have modest socio-economic impact. Healthy food provided through such an intervention would make it possible for smaller scale retailers to earn a profit necessary to stay in the community. This would also increase of the much needed food security in those areas. Gardens are wonderful, but they alone won't provide all the resources the community needs to thrive. As one of the garden participants noted, "You either like to garden or you don't." In some cases residents who were gardeners that lived in the neighborhood of the gardens in my study no longer participated in garden work because of their physical disabilities or no longer had the time.

However, for community groups that choose to take on an active role in developing and operating alternative food sources, community gardens can undoubtedly play a significant role in community revitalization both aesthetically and socially in marginalized areas (Pudup 2008). These collective endeavors could be used to stimulate potential food retailers to invest in low-income areas, often overlooked by businesses due to beliefs that these are high-crime neighborhoods. Such beliefs are not necessarily supported by statistical data but they often result in potential investors overlooking these stigmatized areas. The lack of retail business deters potential investors from choosing these locations because of their reliance on retail

clustering where owners have already taken risks and invested their own capital there, without incentive to do so (Berg and Murdoch 2008).

While community gardens can increase the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and provide a number of community benefits discussed in this research, there are undeniable "community benefits that come with a full-service grocery store" as well (Donald 2013: 233). Not only do these primary food retailers make a variety of healthy food options at lower prices available but they can serve as significant economic drivers. The Grocery Gap, a report by PolicyLink and the Food Trust, found that aside from health benefits, food retailers fuel economic activities and revitalize low-income neighborhood. Their significant impact in local economy goes as far as improving housing values and creating jobs. More importantly, grocery stores serve as anchors to other retail businesses investments (2010) signaling a sign of a healthy community. By contrast, entrepreneurial garden projects are less flexible in terms of the skill sets required, which are not applicable to the urban employment market (Lawson 2005).

Currently, neighborhood areas in South Dallas are classified as food deserts, because there are no grocery stores (Berg and Murdoch 2008). Instead, these areas have a number of small corner stores that tend to predominantly stock energy dense snack foods and beverages and low amounts of fresh fruit and vegetables. Such limited options have led to poor diet behaviors contributing to diet related health disparities among adults and children. However, these stores are easily accessible which is of great importance among neighborhoods characterized with low rates of household car ownership. Research suggests that these small neighborhood stores are frequent points of food purchases, typically within walking distance

(Laska et al. 2010). These positive options are not often considered, and therefore possibilities to alter the inventories of small corner stores to better fit the health needs of the community go unconsidered.

Attempts to mitigate disparities in healthy food access have resulted in healthy corner store initiatives. Healthy corner stores have great potential to improve the nutrition environment of low-income communities (Dannefer et al. 2012). The rise of alternative retail makes it promising for low-income urban neighborhoods to have access to healthy food. In their study, Reagan and Rice discuss the impact that small food retailers could have in redefining food desert areas in the South Dallas despite the lack of big grocery store retail (2012). While alternatives like the corner store initiatives are at their infancy, program-based interventions supported by nonprofit organizations and other agencies, demonstrate that these retailers could be the best strategy to improve the availability of healthy food options (Edwards et al. 2012). Such "community-based retail interventions" are aimed at altering food purchasing behavior to healthier options by making fresh produce and other healthy options available and ultimately strengthening the health of communities.

Such food issues are clearly political and ultimately relate to the stratification of social and economic power. These spaces of injustice require organizations and citizens engaged in voluntary civic responsibility to join social movements and activists in coalition building with those who share a common urban struggle. Community garden organizations and developers can provide spaces for community collaboration where local interests can align with regional and national issues. Serving as meeting points, community gardens are one of the few spaces where people can gather, share conversations, and raise social and political awareness

regarding issues plaguing urban neighborhoods. These endeavors are formed around 'right to the city' objectives, which effectively empowers grassroots organizers to take on the uneven effects of globalization and unifying forces against unjust socially produced spaces.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT FLYER FOR RESIDENTS

Did you know that you live near a community garden?

I'm a graduate student from the University of North Texas who wants to know what you think of community gardens.

I would love to meet with you at your convenience to learn about your perceptions and experiences with community gardens.

Please contact me if you are interesting in discussing this topic further!

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Understanding Perspectives of Community Gardens in the Dallas Area

Supervising Investigator: Dr. Beverly Davenport, University of North Texas

Student Investigator: Raja Ayyad, MS Candidate University of North Texas

I. Demographic Data Collection: Community Garden Participants

Gender:

Ethnicity:

Age:

Occupation:

Zip code of residence:

No. of years residing in Dallas:

Gardening Location: How long at this location:

II. Gardening Experience: Understanding the Perception of Participating Gardeners

How long have you been a gardener at this community garden?

Tell me about your experiences as a community gardener?

What do you do when you come to the garden?

How far is it from where you live?

Why do you garden?

Do you sell or share any of the produce? Who do you share with or sell to?

What do you like or dislike about gardening?

Do you go to the farmer's market? Which one? How far is it from where you live?

How much produce (if any) does your garden yield?

What is the benefit in community gardening according to your experience?

What does it mean to you?

Does anyone in your family come here as well? If so, who in your family? Do they garden also?

What do you hope to see happen in the future of the community garden?

Understanding Perspectives of Community Gardens in the Dallas Area

Supervising Investigator: Dr. Beverly Davenport, University of North Texas

Student Investigator: Raja Ayyad, MS Candidate University of North Texas

I. Demographic Data Collection: Dallas Municipal Officials

Gender:

Ethnicity:

Age:

Occupation:

Zip code of residence:

No. of years residing in Dallas:

II. Understanding Perception of Community Garden as a Visible Part of the City

What are your experiences with urban agriculture in general?

Have you visited any garden sites?

What comes to mind when you think of community gardening?

What do you think about the growth of the urban agriculture movement in Dallas?

Is there a vision or place for urban agriculture to become integrated into the Dallas landscape as the city continues to develop?

How do you feel about the expansion of local food production as a supplemental food source?

How do you place urban agriculture in terms of its value in urban land use? (Organizers turning vacant lots into community gardens vs. a professional urban farm operation growing produce for sale)

What are the advantages and disadvantages to urban agriculture in the Dallas area?

Understanding Perspectives of Community Gardens in the Dallas Area

Supervising Investigator: Dr. Beverly Davenport, University of North Texas

Student Investigator: Raja Ayyad, MS Candidate University of North Texas

I. Demographic Data Collection: Nearby Residents

Gender:

Ethnicity:

Age:

Occupation:

Zip code of residence:

No. of years residing in Dallas: At your current location:

II. Understanding Neighborhood Perceptions of their Local Community Garden

I would like to know about the community garden:

- When did it become a garden?

-What was it before it was turned into a garden?

- Who developed (started) the garden? Why?

-How/when did you find out it was going to be a community garden?

-What did you think about the process of development or the fact that it was to become a garden at all?

-Do you think that a community garden is a good use of space in your neighborhood? (If not, other suggestions?)

-Do you think this was a good place for a community garden?

-If the garden was not here what do you think would be in its place?

-Who do you see working or visiting the garden? Can you describe them?

-Why do you think they garden here?

How do you feel about the community garden?

What do you think the advantage or disadvantages are to having a community garden in your neighborhood?

Do you have an ideal community garden in mind? What would it look like?

Do you have any experiences or interest in gardening?

Have you ever visited your local garden or any other gardens in the city?

Where do you frequently shop for groceries?

Have you ever been to a farmers market? If so which one?

Are you involved in community activities?

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