

Daniel Alvarado Torres

ENGL 100

Alicia Fahey

15 August 2020

Food Systems

Food systems are present everywhere and are designed to provide us with the food we buy and consume. However, studies by Caroline Bagelman, “Unsettling Food Security: The Role of Young People in Indigenous Food System Revitalisation” and by Patricia Allen and Carolyn Sachs, “Women and Food Chains: The Gendered Politics of Food” have found that food systems have also created problems within our society that is more than just food related. Throughout history, oppression has impacted people from gender inequality to people of different cultures and continues to happen within our very own food systems. In my essay I will be discussing how food systems have caused these problems and what is being done in order to create change.

Not being able to have your voice heard and being completely looked over is something no one desires. It is important for everyone to feel as if they and their opinions matter. In Bagelman’s essay, she gives a look into colonial policies that have had a major impact on indigenous food systems, especially the violence that came with it into residential school systems for indigenous children. These school systems were aimed to kill the culture of the indigenous people and everything it came with. Another issue that arose was that the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) was excluding indigenous people from surveys. Bagelman writes, “CCHS, which claims to give a view of food security in Canada has excluded approximately half of Canada’s Indigenous peoples, which experience the greatest degree of poverty” (221). The

reason behind this is that the people that run the food systems want it to be seen as a great thing and want to keep that reputation. Food security within the indigenous people is at the fault of the colonial policies as they cut off the necessary learning of food gathering that would have been passed down through generations. This led to the indigenous people having to experience a greater degree of poverty and food insecurity that the food system is failing to help. In the essay done by Allen & Sachs, they write about the connection of food systems to gender inequality moving towards the idea that women are often overlooked in the decision making aspect of the food industry and food policy, even though they perform the majority of food-related work (23). Allen & Sachs write, “Women remain disadvantaged in the material, socio-cultural, and corporeal domains of the agrifood system. Yet, while women engage in significant and far-reaching efforts to change the system, few of these efforts focus specifically on improving gender relations” (Allen & Sachs 24). As can be seen, food systems do supply us with daily essentials, however, it fails to have a better understanding of the people that are not benefiting from it. Furthermore, it is important that these changes are brought into consideration to a greater extent which needs to start by not undervaluing people’s problems.

Furthermore, change is an essential component of moving forward to greater things. When there is an issue there is always a goal of a resolution in which changes can be made to resolve an issue from ever happening again. In this case, we can see the same idea being talked about within both studies. In Bagelmans essay, it talks about the importance of “young voices” being the key to the indigenous food system revitalization. Bagelman explains, “These projects are dictated by a community need for increased access to traditional foods, and new records of food knowledge to preserve this knowledge, which supports Indigenous food system

revitalization [...] This change has been set as a top priority and there has been a push to include these learnings within the indigenous school system (223). Likewise, regarding the change between women and food women will always be connected to food, however, the change that is taking place is their resistance in gender inequality and body shaming that society has placed upon women to have (Allen & Sachs 36). By doing this women have continued to get the rights they respectfully deserve to the fullest, which in return allows women to be in control of their own bodies and lives. As Allen & Sachs write, “Their resistance in the material, socio-cultural, and corporeal domains of food challenges global capitalism and male privilege” (36). As time progresses these changes will only get better and better as they fully deserve it. Hopefully in doing so can be great representatives on why changes in the food system should be evaluated to a greater extent, which will lead to changes that the undervalued people truly deserve.

In conclusion, these are just two examples of the food system not benefiting people as a whole. This brings great concern to the issue as there are most probably even more issues that are being overlooked and need change. Our history is full of oppression, and it is up to us to learn from it and resolve the issues it comes with. Mistakes are made and the best way to go about it is not overlooking the issue but rather fixing resolving it. The question I have regarding the issue would simply be why hasn't change happened sooner? The food system is just a chapter to the many more issues that revolve around oppression. I believe this topic is important not for the fact of just learning, but also for the fact that just like the indigenous people are doing. It is important to teach this to our future generations to a greater extent, in order to not commit the same mistakes such as these in the past. Learning from our past and current issues of oppression lead to change which will determine a greater future.

Works Cited

Bagelman, Caroline. "Unsettling Food Security: The Role of Young People in Indigenous Food System Revitalisation." *Children & Society*, vol. 32, no. 3, May 2018, pp. 219–232.

Allen, Patricia and Carolyn Sachs. "Women and Food Chains: The Gendered Politics of Food." *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, 4th ed., Edited by Hilary Melcarek et al., pp. 23-40.