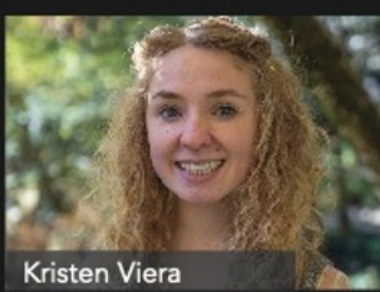


Alyssa Portez



Kristen Viera



Diamond Holloman



Townes Ellum



Maja Jeranko



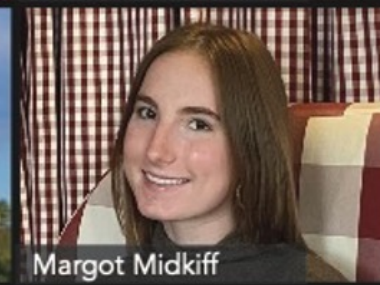
Elise Mahon



Sierra Roark



Bryn Walker



Margot Midkiff



Tori DeWald



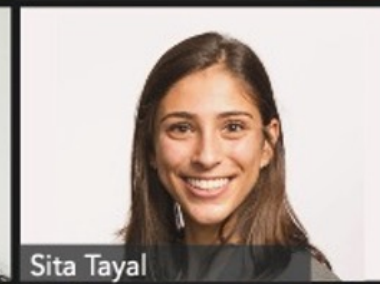
Nicole Barrett



Maggie Ferguson



Alana Philogene



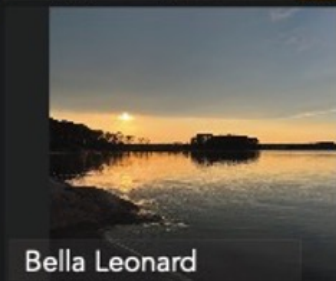
Sita Tayal



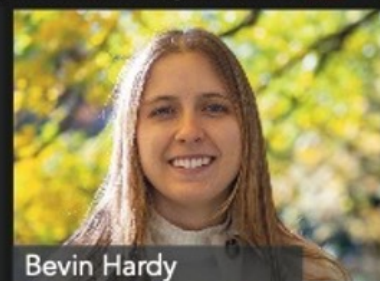
Shawn Griffith



Annika Hugosson



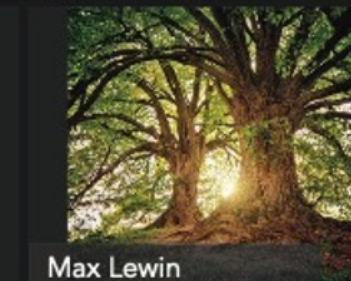
Bella Leonard



Bevin Hardy



Rosemary Gay

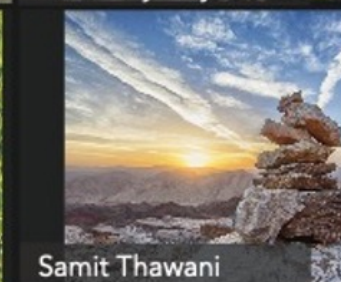


Max Lewin

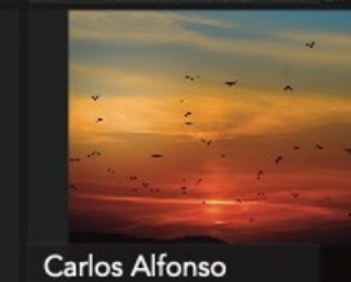
SECR LAB



Dr. Caela O'Connell



Samit Thawani



Carlos Alfonso

Socio-
Ecological
Change
Research
Lab

Socio-Ecological Change Research (SECR) Lab

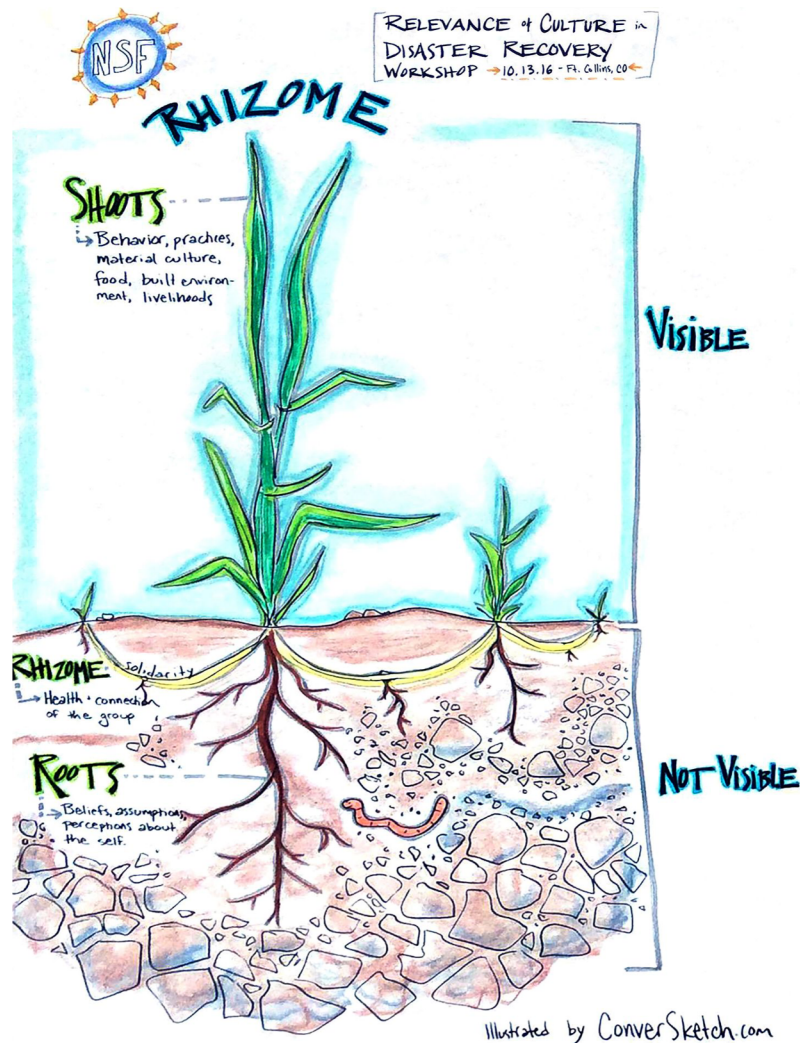


Putting People First

CADAN



Culture and Disaster Action Network



FEMA

HOW DO COMMUNITIES RECOVER?





COVID Connections: Lessons from Adaptations to COVID-19 as Strategies for Building Food System Resilience

Caela O'Connell, **Rosemary Gay**,
Noreen McDonald, and **Sita Tayal**

Abstract

To identify elements of crisis response that might hold lessons for resilience beyond the current moment, we studied a central North Carolina food system during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on ethnographic interviews with farmers, employees and volunteers of food access organizations, and

COVID-19 pandemic? This question guided our study and was primary on our minds one brisk morning as members of our research team adjusted masks and entered a farmers' market to recruit for our study and observe pandemic procedures. The market, known for packing in stalls and a lengthy waitlist for vendor space, was visibly transformed. Large signs about masking and social distancing mandates along with hand sanitizers greeted visitors as they entered the market. The individual vendor stalls were distributed

Collaborators & Co-Authors

Noreen McDonald,
Rosemary Gay,
Sita Tayal, SECR
Lab



COVID Connections: Lessons from producer, provider, and distributor adaptations to COVID-19 as strategies for building food system resilience

Collaborators & Co-Authors:

Noreen McDonald, Rosemary Gay,
Sita Tayal, SECR Lab



Main Research Question

What can be learned about fostering resilience and adaptation in local food systems from the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Study Basics



Central Piedmont region of
North Carolina



Data collection from July
2020- February 2021



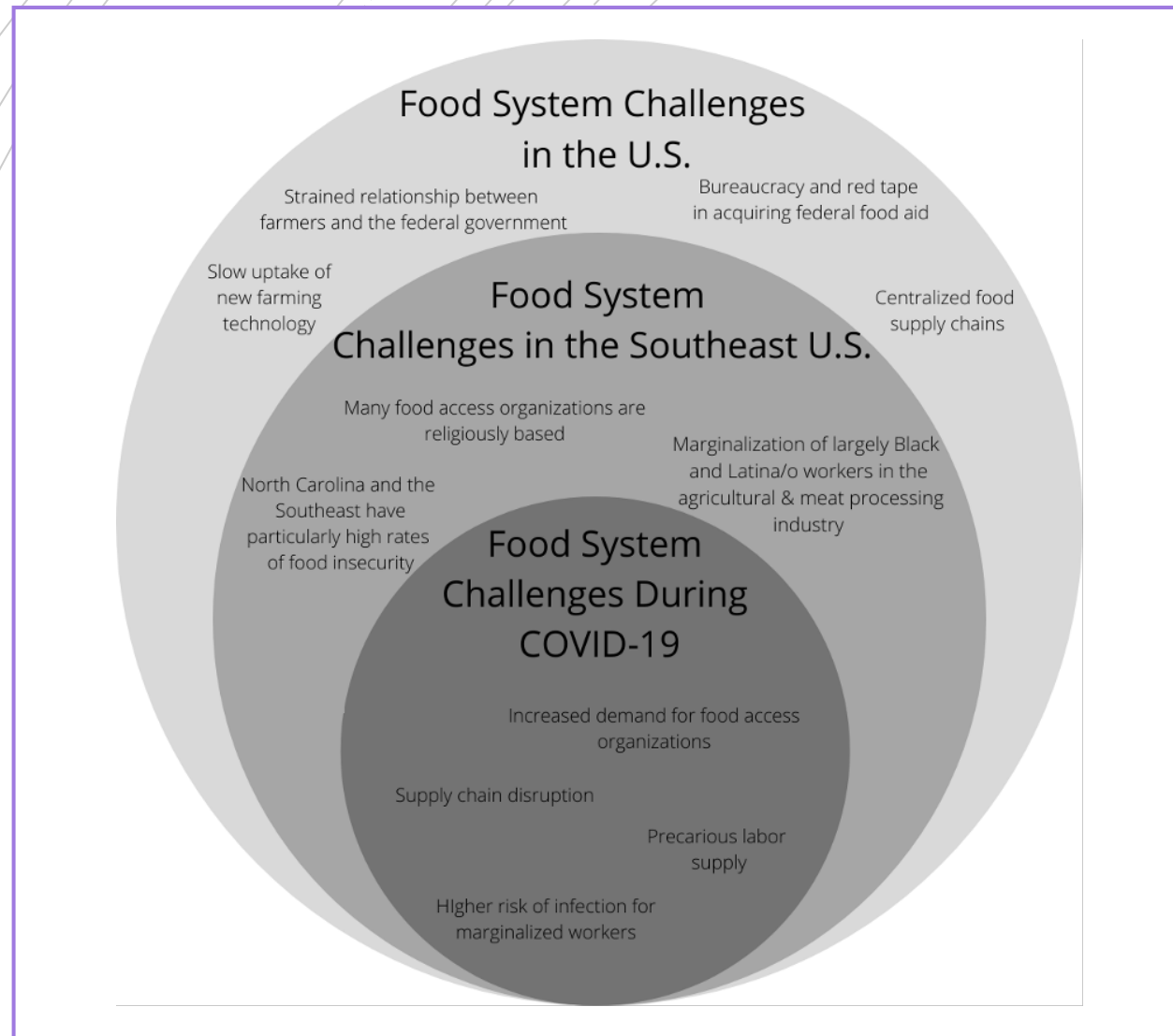
15 Ethnographic interviews
(7 with organizations and 8
with food producers)



Study participants were
farmers and organizations
involved in producing,
feeding, and facilitating
food access in the region



Interviews were recorded,
transcribed, and analyzed
with a set of 26 codes
developed in preliminary
coding using the qualitative
software MAXQDA



Scaled layers of challenges to the food system we studied highlighting those challenges that are known across the U.S., regional to the Southeast, and specific to COVID-19

Primary Findings

1. Greater communication over shared needs and interests helped most study participants during intense uncertainty and the absence of clear information
2. Communication networks were key step to strengthening food systems during crisis and typical operations
3. Flexibility in roles at the local government level facilitated strengthened food availability and employment continuity locally

Primary Findings Contd.

4. Disruptions in labor and access to new pools of employees and volunteers was often positive for business and organizational innovation; this needs more research given that frequent turn-over of employees and volunteers is also a noted setback because of disruptions, training, and loss of knowledge and competence
5. Food banks and pantries reported increased participation from Latino/a communities universally, suggesting that many from previously underserved communities are connecting with resources because they did not feel comfortable accessing or were unaware of them”

INNOVATIONS THAT WORKED

GRANT MATCHING
PROGRAM



UPDATED
FOOD OFFERINGS

ELIMINATED
POLICE TRAFFIC



PROVIDED LANGUAGE
INTERPRETERS



STREAMLINED
PICK UP OPTIONS



Deep roots in the community helped food access organizations be successful

CHALLENGES

VOLUNTEER ONBOARDING

Long-term volunteers were mainly older retirees prior to the pandemic.

College and graduate students were more willing to work as the pandemic progressed over the past two years



DECENTRALIZED

pop-up programs were temporary and uncooperative

NEED FOR

greater federal oversight, funding, and programming



Public charge policy may have impacted usage of food assistance organizations

INFLUENCES TO SUCCESS

SOCIAL
CONNECTIONS



EMPLOYEE
RELIABILITY



FLEXIBILITY AND
EXPERIENCE



AGE AND
LOCATION



TECHNOLOGY
PRE-PANDEMIC



LOCAL
ECONOMY



CHALLENGES

REASONS BEHIND INCREASED DEMAND

- Restaurant sale losses
- Market closures
- Contactless purchasing

HESITANCY TO ADOPT TECHNOLOGY

Preferred to upgrade technology
once pandemic pressure eased

Web-based technology varied from
weekly emails to well-designed web-

Further Research Needed

Further research and the expanded training of employees in contingency planning as a mitigation strategy for local communities

Research that explicitly engages the topics of Latinx food security and hunger in the US are urgently needed to redress food justice, nutrition, and systemic exclusion and racism especially in the Southeast and focused on non-governmental resource use

With Gratitude
to...

Our Research Participants

Our Funders

UNC Institute for Arts and Humanities
New Faculty Research Grant

UNC College of Arts and Sciences

UNC Department of City and
Regional Planning

Questions & Comments?
Reach out at caela@email.unc.edu