

Garrett M. Broad

*More than Just Food: Food Justice and Community Change*

Oakland, CA: UC Press, 2016

ISBN: 978-052-028-745-7 (PB) £29.95. 296pp.

*More than Just Food* offers a networked analysis of community food organisations working in California to effect systematic food change. By taking an *activist-scholar* approach, Broad has first-hand experience of the issues confronting community food organisations and the processes that they undertake to improve communities' food knowledge and access to fresh food. Drawing from the field of Communications research, Broad utilises a *communication ecology perspective*, an approach that highlights 'the networks and narratives that characterise the actions and philosophies of food justice practitioners today' (pp. 8–9). This book will be of great interest and has much value for international community food/food justice researchers and community food practitioners.

The book begins by exploring the controversy surrounding Jamie Oliver's intervention into the Los Angeles school dinner service that was aired on US TV as 'Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution' in 2011. For Broad, the stand-off between the school district officials and Oliver epitomised the problems inherent in many approaches to 'fix' issues of poor diet and poor health in the USA. Whilst both parties may have good intentions and could point to exemplars of success, neither the officials nor Oliver displayed overt interest in those working at the heart of the community for systemic food change. In contrast, Broad's prime focus in this book is the South Los Angeles community food organisation Community Services Unlimited (CSU), that is run by communities of colour in low-income neighbourhoods. Taking an in-depth community-based perspective that explores community organisations' networks and political activist history, Broad sets out the work these organisations undertake to improve access to food for under privileged groups.

*More than Just Food* is structured around six chapters that include a focus on collaborative ethnographic methods, communication analysis techniques, in-depth insight into the workings of the South Los Angeles community food movement and their historical foundation in political activism. Chapter 1 outlines the prime theoretical and methodological perspectives underpinning the work as well as providing a useful introduction to key definitions, for example 'neoliberalism' and the locus of attention – the community. Broad explores important issues that require addressing when undertaking community food work, such as developing understandings of the organisations' networked action and capacity for change-making. This approach sets up, via an investigation of relevant literature, 'the community' as a dynamic site through which an investigation of 'the relationships between local activism and broader movements for social justice' can be made (p. 25). Chapter 2 introduces the work of CSU and the socio-political contexts, such as food deserts, that generate the need for community activism. Through this chapter, Broad explores why localised initiatives are necessary in America, where food provision policy is set within neoliberal agendas that entrench systematic inequality. Broad also goes on to critique the failure of alternative food initiatives to address racialised issues of food justice. It is this background of capitalist based food systems and inadequate food governance that has driven people of colour activists to organise community-based programmes promoting access to fresh, healthy food. Chapter 3 takes an in-depth analysis of the work of CSU. Through this, the chapter also goes in to more detail in to the methodological approach taken in the research. Using case studies of members of the community involved in CSU, Broad uses story-telling to bring the details of their experiences to life. This provides a rich insight,

demonstrating how collaborative ethnography can vivify the portrayal of research themes and participants interviewed. Story-telling is also highlighted as a vehicle used by CSU for *civic epistemology*, enabling the members of the community, including youth members, to express their lived experiences and garner a stronger sense of identity (Jasanoff 2005). The focus on youth involvement in community action, feeds in to Chapter 4, which is devoted to ‘The Youth Food Justice Movement’. The chapter again begins with vignette of Broad’s experience of working with CSU, this time assisting at a national youth food organisation conference, Rooted in Community. Rooted in Community works to educate young people about what is community and what is food justice. Again Broad explores modes of community knowledge production and tensions between dialogue and activism. Chapter 5 switches perspective by taking a historical analysis of the evolution of CSU from its beginnings within The Black Panther Party. As the party arose in response to a climate of injustice and institutional racism, an early focus was on feeding the vulnerable within communities. As Nelson (2011) states, ‘black communities had little choice but to provide their own solutions to what ailed them’. Food became to be seen not only a means of sustaining communities but also as ‘an organising tool’. In this chapter Broad continues by exploring the evolution of CSU into a fundable, networked food movement. Chapter 6 takes further the contemporary context within which CSU operates and discusses other organisations that achieve a higher profile in this field, particularly those that wield the power of celebrity. Broad explores the role of communication media in raising the profile of organisations operating within the ‘non-profit industrial complex’. Other organisations, like the Teaching Gardens, seek to replicate the work of CSU but in more middle class arenas. Broad critiques the work of the Teaching Gardens as *philanthrocaptialism* where solutions are parachuted in rather than drawn from the community itself.

‘More than Just Food’ is an important book for those interested in community organisation, community food networks, food justice and community-based collaborative research methodologies. A key strength is Broad’s story-telling approach, which is derived from his immersive research experiences. This enriches both the book’s readability and the depth of knowledge offered. Important themes are returned to over the chapters as our understandings of CSU and related organisations are layered up within different contexts. Some readers may find this approach results in some chapters not being clearly defined from others. However, the book not only contains a wealth of information about community food movements in South Los Angeles, it also tells the story of contemporary food economic and policy atmospheres generating the need for community based work. Whilst this gives much useful detail, a greater focus on decision making processes and examples where internal conflict is dealt with within CSU, would have been valuable for others working in this field.

The use of pertinent analytic tools result in this book being an important resource for those conducting community-based and food justice research. By focusing on the role of networks within which community based organisations operate, Broad provides an effective contextualisation of their work within these wider dynamic forces. Whilst governance and market forces are important but obvious forces shaping community action, more hidden networks emerge. Funding regimes, trans-global community activism, digital communication channels and dynamic partnerships have all shaped the emergent networks within which CSU operate. By adapting to these networked opportunities, CSU was able to uphold its principles and operate on a minimal organisational funding model. Broad highlights the value of these networked organisations as vehicles through which the ‘flow of narrative, knowledge, culture and identity’ can be traced (p. 30). Therefore analysis through a networked, storytelling lens

provides an effective toolkit for portraying the complexity as well as limitations of community based food organisations.

Broad's rich, complex ethnography provides an antidote to simplified research in to the work of non-profit food organisations. *More than Just Food* provides much insight into grassroots, community led food movements adapting to their situated circumstances.

REBECCA SANDOVER  
University of Exeter

### *References*

Jasanoff, S. 2005. *Designs on Nature: Science and Democracy in Europe and The United States*. Princeton University Press

Nelson, A. 2011. *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination*. University of Minneapolis Press