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Lunch Money: Understanding Community-Led School Food Programs in Regina, Saskatchewan

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Abstract

Unlike many countries throughout the world, Canada does not have a national school food program (Rutledge, 2016). As such, school meals in Canada are typically provided by community-led organizations or are paid for out of individual school budgets, if they are provided at all (Gougeon, Henry, Ramdath, & Whiting, 2011). In the absence of a national program, community-led organizations can be effective at providing nutritionally-adequate meals to students in need (Gougeon et al., 2011). Across the country, community members are participating in these organizations as staff and volunteers to meet the food needs of schoolchildren (Gougeon et al., 2011). However, the rich perspectives of these school food facilitators have not been deeply explored and integrated into school food discourse. The objective of this research, therefore, is to contribute to the body of literature on school food in Canada, specifically developing a deeper understanding of community-led school food programs and the people who facilitate them.

Using two community organizations in Regina, Saskatchewan as a case study, this research informs the question, "how and why are school food programs operationalized by community organizations?" Through qualitative interviews and field observations with the staff and volunteers of these organizations, school food facilitators shared insights about their practices, motivations, and observations as they operate within their specific community as well as within the broader Canadian landscape. Three emergent themes illustrate the class, gender, and race relations operating within the current climate of school food in Canada: (1) functioning within the neoliberal context, (2) operating as gendered subjects, and (3) acting to support racialized subjects. Together, these themes highlight the shortcomings of the neoliberal model — wherein gendered subjects facilitate charitable programs to support underserved, often racialized, community members — and point to possibilities for an alternative Canadian school food future.

Lunch Money: Understanding Community-Led School Food Programs in Regina, Saskatchewan

by

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Acknowledgements

Many months ago, I sat in the spare bedroom of my cousin's house, huddled intently over my laptop with my phone on speaker-mode, a research participant on the line, herself taking time out of a vacation in the Maritimes to chat with me. A few months after that, I watched dedicated volunteers make hundreds of cookies and biscuits in one tiny oven, and I helped to package the best bannock I have ever tasted. Shortly after, I sat with an excessive amount of sushi and an ideal amount of emotional support, compiling and analyzing my data during an evening study session. For the months that followed, I laid on my living room floor, slouched in my library chair, and began many a sentence with "Canada does not have a national school food program...", struggling through the articulation of my ideas to anyone who would listen. And a few weeks ago, I downloaded many files tiled "Comments" and "Edits."

I am eternally grateful to everyone who has accompanied me along this journey. To my family, who has supported me whether I am near or far, I owe an unrepayable debt. I particularly want to thank my grandparents, who know that I would love to be playing cards with them, but encouraged me to pursue this project nonetheless. To my Regina friends, including Ahleah Baker, Tegan Beattie, and Colleen Henschel: thank you for being my faithful editors, for your remarkable ability to ask the perfect questions, and for your unwavering love. To my Syracuse roommates, Cheyenne Schoen, Katie Mott, and Marlowe, and to all my colleagues in Food Studies, thank you for intellectual and emotional contributions to this process. And for enabling my food cravings. I also owe tremendous thanks to the entire Food Studies faculty and staff, as well as the professors of each course I have taken at Syracuse University. I have grown tremendously from you all, and hope I have done justice to the ideas I have learned from you. To my advisor, Laura-Anne Minkoff-Zern, my committee members, Rick Welsh and Melanie Bedore, and my chair, Saba Siddiki: I am so grateful for your time, support, and critical eye. Thank you for everything you have done to make this project a reality. Finally, this research would not be possible without the generosity of the staff and

Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Unlike many countries throughout the world, Canada does not have a national school food program (Rutledge, 2016). As such, school meals in Canada are typically provided by community-led organizations or are paid for out of individual school budgets, if they are provided at all (Gougeon et al., 2011). In the absence of a national program, community-led organizations can be effective at providing nutritionally-adequate meals to students in need (Gougeon et al., 2011). Across the country, community members are participating in these organizations as staff and as volunteers to meet the food needs of schoolchildren (Gougeon et al., 2011). As such, the school food climate varies significantly throughout Canada, as organizations develop unique approaches to establish and maintain viable breakfast, lunch, or snack programs. Valaitis, Hanning, and Herrman (2014), for example, have found that school food program coordinators, operating non-governmental and largely volunteer-driven programs, experience challenges with funding, volunteer management, and food distribution logistics.

The aim of this research, therefore, is to understand what motivates community members to step into the roles of school food providers in the absence of a national program, and to hear directly from these facilitators about what influences their work. Using two community organizations in Regina, Saskatchewan as a case study, I ask, "how and why are school food programs operationalized by community organizations?" Through qualitative interviews and field observations with the staff and volunteers of these organizations, school food facilitators shared insights about their practices, motivations, and observations as they operate within their specific community as well as within the broader Canadian landscape. Given that Canada has yet to establish a national school food program, and instead relies on community members to facilitate the

provision of food to students in need, it is crucial to understand community members' own perceptions of this work if the school food climate is to be thoroughly assessed and/or re-imagined.

The importance of schoolchildren having access to adequate food and nutrition is well-established. A long-standing body of literature explores school food environments and their relationship to childhood hunger and food insecurity, health and obesity, behaviour and the ability to learn, and to children's and human rights (Gougeon et al., 2011; Howe & Covell, 2003; McIntyre, 1993; Mullaly, Taylor, Kuhle, Bryanon, Hernandez, MacLellan, McKenna, Gray, & Veugelers, 2010; Ohinmaa, Langille, Jamieson, Whitby, & Veugelers, 2011; Poppendieck, 2010; Riches, 1992). However, much of this research remains centred on the health, behavioural, and scholastic outcomes for students, or on the technical aspects of school food programs such as funding amounts, nutritional quality, quantities of food, or distribution logistics. While others have conducted qualitative research to understand the experiences of facilitators of national school food programs (Poppendieck, 2010), the facilitators of charitable school food programs continue to be under-represented in the literature.

Through qualitative methods including interviews and field observations, this research expands on the work of Valaitis et al. (2014), who conducted a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis with school nutrition program (SNP) coordinators in Ontario. Through this study, they demonstrate how qualitative interviews with SNP coordinators can effectively result in a greater understanding of how this work is done and what factors influence this work. My methodology will expand on their work by also understanding the motivations of school food facilitators, including how they become involved, why they think the work is important, and how they think about themselves within the broader Canadian landscape. Additionally, the SNPs in Valaitis et al.'s (2014) Ontario study functioned within a network, with regional SNP directors distributing funding from the Ministry of Child and Youth Services (Valaitis et al., 2014). A network of this kind does not exist in

Regina, nor in much of Canada (Gougeon et al., 2011). "Lunch Money" also includes field observations in order to glean rich descriptions of how school food programs get operationalized and how staff and volunteers interact with one another, their space, and the researcher.

Thus, this research shifts away from the dominant discourse on nutritional adequacy and the specific health outcomes of what kids are eating, and instead looks toward an understanding of the community-led practical responses to the Canadian school food crisis. Community-led organizations are key sites across the country for providing food to schoolchildren. Yet, we have not developed a deep understanding of how the staff and volunteers have become involved in this work and what they see as the achievements of and threats to this system. The experiences of the staff and volunteers that make school food possible across the country have not been carefully considered within the broader school food discourse. These insights will be crucial if we are to use grounded community-based knowledge to develop more effective school food programs that address the persistent disparities in childhood food access. The school food facilitators participating in this research envision a national school food program that provides all students with consistent access to nutritious and delicious food, regardless of their situations at home. Collectively, they offer evidence and advocacy for a Canadian school food future that is (1) government-supported, (2) universal, and (3) educational.

1.2   Literature Review

The importance of school meals is well established throughout many areas of scholarship. Drawing from multiple academic disciplines, including political economy, public policy, social work, public health, and nutrition, the following map can be clearly drawn: (1) the Canadian neoliberalized economy has exacerbated unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity, with particular impacts on children; (2) childhood poverty and food insecurity increase the risk of illness, adverse behaviour, and lower educational

success; and (3) school food becomes a crucial site of intervention to mitigate the former.

As the hegemonic mode of discourse, neoliberalism champions the shrinking of the role of the state and the expansion of market rule, promoting the liberation of individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills (Harvey, 2005). This ideology has dominated Canadian politics and policy-making for the past thirty years (Riches & Tarasuk, 2014). The roll-back of government support for social services and the deregulating of the private sector that characterize neoliberalism have made social inequality "such a persistent feature of neoliberalization as to be regarded as structural to the whole project" (Harvey, 2005, p. 16). Peck and Tickell (2002) characterize these "destructive" moments as "roll-back" neoliberalism (p. 380). As the "perverse economic consequences and pronounced social externalities of narrowly marketcentric forms of neoliberalism became increasingly difficult to contest," (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 388) neoliberalization responded with "creative moments" characterized as "roll-out" neoliberalism. Among these "creative moments" has been the promotion of individualized responses to social inequality in the form of the rising non-profit sector (Peck & Tickell, 2002). Particularly important to the context of community-led school food programs has been the ballooning of the charitable food system to address pervasive hunger and poverty (Poppendieck, 1998; Riches & Tarasuk, 2014). Riches and Tarasuk (2014) argue that neoliberal policies have led to a dependence on food charities. The neoliberal paradigm has shaped "the social construction of hunger as a matter of charity" rather than a matter of state intervention (Riches & Tarasuk, 2014, p. 43).

Given these realities of the Canadian political economy, Canadian families and children are certainly not immune to food insecurity and hunger. In their analysis of child poverty in Canada, Howe and Covell (2003) cite "income polarization between Canada's richest and poorest families, relatively high rates of unemployment and underemployment, family breakdowns and the rise of single parent families, and a scaling back of social programs including social assistance and employment insurance" (p. 1075-1076). Howe and Covell (2003) associate the increase in child poverty after the

1980s with the simultaneous implementation of neoliberal policies.

Today, food insecurity affects one in six children in Canada (Tarasuk, Mitchell, & Dachner, 2016). Ranging in severity from "concerns about running out of food before there is more money to buy more, to the inability to afford a balanced diet, to going hungry, missing meals, and in extreme cases, not eating for a whole day because of lack of food and money for food," food insecurity has a strong connection to economic circumstances (Tarasuk et al., 2016, p. 6). Food insecurity in Regina, the site of this case study, appears to be rising, measured at 13.6 percent of households in 2013-2014, up from 11.01 percent in 2007-2008 (Tarasuk et al., 2016). At the same time, Food Banks Canada saw a 27.8 percent increase in the number of people seeking assistance from 2008 to 2016, from 675,735 people per month to 863,492. Saskatchewan, even more drastically, saw an increase from 17,751 people in March of 2008 to 31,395 in March of 2016, or a 76.9 percent increase (Food Banks Canada, 2016). Across food banks in Saskatchewan, 50.5 percent of users rely on social assistance as their primary source of income (Food Banks Canada, 2016), yet still must draw on charitable support to meet their food needs. Canada-wide, 35.6 percent of food bank users are children (Food Banks Canada, 2016).

The consequences of food insecurity during childhood are multiple and severe. Food insecurity has been shown to result in increased illness, adverse behaviour, and difficulty learning (Howe & Covell, 2003; Poppendieck, 2010; Slack & Yoo, 2005). Howe and Covell (2003) chart a path between poverty, food insecurity, and lowered education opportunities: "the major correlates of poverty are poor learning, poor academic achievement, reduced participation in extra-curricular activities, increased absences, early school drop out, and decreased likelihood of post-secondary education. Some of these are a direct result of hunger" (p. 1077-1078).

As Janet Poppendieck (2010) summarized during her study on school food programs in the United States, "hunger is the enemy of education" (p. 9). She found

that "study after study has shown that hunger inteferes with the ability of children to absorb an education" (Poppendieck, 2010, p. 9). She lists irritability, social withdrawal, difficulty with concentration, illness (and therefore school absences), and behaviour resulting in disciplinary action as just some of the ways that hunger negatively impacts a child's ability to learn (Poppendieck, 2010). She also notes that long-term hunger has lasting consequences on a child's brain development (Poppendieck, 2010).

Slack and Yoo's (2005) research on food hardship and adverse behaviour agrees with Poppendieck's analysis. The authors defined food hardship as either unstable/insufficient levels of food intake, or insufficient variety of food consumed. Considering overall food quantity and quality, they found that, while the relationship is mediated by other parental characteristics, food hardship is positively correlated with behaviour problems in children (Slack & Yoo, 2005).

In addition to educational outcomes, public health and nutrition scholars have analyzed the impacts school food environments have on nutritional diets. In their analysis of the meals provided by a community-led school food program in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Gougeon et al. (2011) found that the meals provided adequately nutrient-dense foods to schoolchildren. Mullaly et al. (2010) examined the effects of Prince Edward Island's School Nutrition Policies (PEI SNP) on students' diets. The new policies were aimed at addressing the nutritional quality of food in the school environment. While there is no national legal regulation of the nutritional standards of school food environments, Mullaly et al. (2010) presented the first Canadian study to demonstrate that the implementation of a provincial school nutrition policy can improve students' food access and consumption. Finally, in their study of the Annapolis Valley Health Promoting Schools Program (AVHPS), Ohinmaa et al. (2011) highlight the cost effectiveness of nutrition-improving programming. AVHPS receives funding from a variety of sources, including government funding for breakfast programs, and is presented as a best practice case study of a government-supported school-board-wide initiative that provides nutritious breakfasts (Ohinmaa et al., 2011).

In the Canadian context, with no federally mandated school food programming, students remain disadvantaged in unique ways compared to children in the many other countries with such programs (Riches & Tarasuk, 2014). Children clearly do not have equal and sufficient access to adequate food outside of school, as demonstrated by increases in food insecurity rates and severity (Tarasuk et al., 2016), high food bank usage among children (Food Banks Canada, 2016), and studies on childhood meal-skipping (McIntyre, 1993). McIntyre's (1993) study on breakfast-skipping and inadequate breakfast eating in Nova Scotia found that young elementary school students had a breakfast-skipping rate of 4.8 percent. That equates to approximately one in twenty children not eating breakfast at home before attending school. These statistics on childhood food insecurity are not being addressed through effective government intervention, and are only worsening.

School food, therefore, is recognized as a key site of intervention to mitigate childhood hunger and its many adverse outcomes. Incorporating school food programs such as lunch, breakfast, or snacks into the school environment has the demonstrated "potential to contribute to child, family, community, and environment health and well-being [...] improv[ing] access, quantity, quality and sustainability of foods" (Hernandez, Engler-Stringer, Kirk, Wittman, & McNicholl, 2018, p. 209). Hernandez et al. (2018) argue that, "globally, government-supported institutional meal programs support redistributive and developmental goals such as food security, environmental sustainability and economic growth in relation to local food systems" (p. 217). Yet, this strategy remains absent from Canadian policy, with the consequences of neoliberalism only becoming further entrenched as food access becomes increasingly individualized and inequalities widen.

1.3 Methods

This research emerges from the identification of an under-explored piece within the larger picture of school food in Canada: the perspective of charitable school food program facilitators. The staff and volunteers who are filling in the gaps left by inadequate public policy, and who are working to mitigate the impacts of childhood poverty by providing nutritious food, have not been richly incorporated into the school food academic discourse. Their motivations, their decision-making processes, their relationships with policy and the economy, their evaluation of social concerns such as hunger and poverty, and their visions for an alternative school food system are largely absent from Canadian school food literature. These deep aspects of school food facilitators' experiences drive the methodology of "Lunch Money." I aim to draw on the rich knowledge of school food providers to contribute to the existing broad literature on the current and future school food landscape in Canada.

In order to gain the perspectives of diverse actors in school food programs, this study has utilized qualitative interviews and field observations to develop a deep understanding of a non-unique case study (Poppendieck, 1998; 2010). Two charitable community-led school food programs were selected in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. Due to ethical considerations, such as protecting the privacy of participants and the funding of the organizations, all participants and both organizations have been given pseudonyms. The two organizations involved are Food for Kids and Regina School Food. Regina was initially considered as a possible case study of community-led school food programs in Canada because, as it is my hometown, I had prior knowledge of the role of these organizations within the city. The structure of these organizations mapped onto the existing literature of the Canada-wide climate of small, charitable organizations, operated by community members (Gougeon et al., 2011). With a population of 215,106, the Regina census metropolitan area is the twenty-fourth largest in Canada, representing a mid-size urban centre (Statistics Canada, 2017). Additionally, Regina's food insecurity prevalence of 13.6 percent is relatively mid-range compared to other census metropolitan

areas, with other areas ranging between 7.3 and 17.6 percent (Tarasuk et al., 2016).

Regina was then selected as the research site after conversations with the staff of three organizations: two that directly prepare and deliver food to Regina schools, and one umbrella organization that supports a variety of food initiatives, including providing funding for school food programs. Following these conversations, it became clear that the two organizations that directly prepare and deliver school food (Food for Kids and Regina School Food) embodied many of the characteristics of charitable school food organizations described in the literature. Food for Kids and Regina School Food were founded in 1979 and 1988 respectively, and have grown considerably since. This is consistent with the timeframe of the expansion of charitable roll-out throughout the era of neoliberal roll-back policy-making. Both have small staffs, with one heavily utilizing volunteer efforts. In my initial conversations with one representative from each organization, it was clear that the impetus was addressing the negative consequences of poverty by feeding hungry children in the community.

Once Regina and these two organizations were selected as a viable research site, a qualitative approach for further understanding the school food facilitator's perspective was developed. All participants were made aware of the purpose of the research and consented to participation. A loose interview guide was formed (see Appendix A), to facilitate in-person or over-the-phone conversations, as well as written submissions. This loose interview guide of open-ended questions allowed the researcher and participants to be flexible with discussions of history, goals, perceived strengths and weaknesses, and imagined threats and opportunities. The goal of these interviews was to gain the participant's perspective and understand how they make sense of their work (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Both staff and board members were invited to participate in interviews because of their shared active involvement with the organization as well as their differing roles, with staff members being paid and board members working with the organization on a volunteer basis.

Four qualitative interviews have been conducted with staff and board members from Regina School Food and Food for Kids. In addition, one written response to the interview guide was received. One limitation of the study is that the researcher, studying at Syracuse University at the time of the research, had limited in-person access to Regina. It was therefore difficult to coordinate in-person interviews with participants. As a result, all four interviews were conducted over-the-phone. Interviews were approximately thirty minutes to one hour in duration. Written responses provided an additional option for participants who were unable to meet in-person. While the ideal site for qualitative interviews is in-person, the researcher is confident that participants were nonetheless able to share their perspectives in an engaged way due to the length and candor of the responses. Verbatim transcriptions of the interviews, as well as the written response, were manually coded for major themes. These themes have been analyzed through political economic, feminist, and critical race theoretical frameworks.

Additionally, field observations have been conducted at the food preparation sites of both Food for Kids and Regina School Food. These observations were conducted overtly out of ethical considerations and respect for the participants' autonomy to decide how they want to interact with the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Field observations allowed the researcher to interact with additional staff as well as with volunteers, and to observe how these participants interact with one another and the space. Three field observations were conducted over 7.25 hours and included twelve additional participants who were not involved in interviews. This time was spent conversing with staff and volunteers; listening to conversations between staff and volunteers; observing the routine tasks of the organizations such as baking, packaging, and inventory; and participating in these tasks, such as by preparing bags of bannock. Field notes were compiled immediately following the observations. These notes were also manually coded for major themes. The analysis of these themes is situated within the diversity of theoretical frameworks noted above.

1.4   Outline

Through a qualitative methodology, I seek to address the following question: how and why are school food programs operationalized by community organizations? From the perspectives of the staff and volunteers who facilitate these programs, it is clear that both the "how" and "why" are informed by class, gender, and race relations. Three emergent themes illustrate these class, gender, and race relations that operate within the current climate of school food in Canada: (1) functioning within the neoliberal context, (2) operating as gendered subjects, and (3) acting to support racialized subjects.

Chapter 2, "Functioning Within the Neoliberal Context," explores the broader history of neoliberalization, globally and on the national scale in Canada, including the reduction of social services in Canada and the expansion of the charitable sector. These political economic factors directly influence the realities of food insecurity and childhood hunger and are crucial to the understanding of why community-led school food programs operate in the ways that they do. The staff and volunteers of Regina School Food and Food for Kids are acutely aware of the ways that they operate within the neoliberal context, making connections between the observed increase in need and the decrease in support for social services. They explicitly relate the persistence of childhood hunger to inadequate social services and prevailing household poverty. Charitable school food program facilitators are also aware that the government has downloaded the responsibility of feeding children onto them, and that the charitable model that they must operate within is inherently precarious and limited.

Chapter 3, "Operating as Gendered Subjects," argues that the neoliberal paradigm has depended on a reproduction of normative gendered roles through the roll-back of state interventions and the roll-out of feminine care through charitable organizations. In the absence of a national school food program, the state maintains normative expectations for women either in their own homes, as women must continue to bear the disproportionate responsibility for staying home or preparing a bagged

lunch, or through their charitable efforts in school food organizations to provide for the children of others. Of the seventeen participants of this research, fifteen are women. As they conduct their work, many of these women situated themselves and others as gendered subjects, explicitly "women," "ladies," "mothers," or "men." The recurring motivation for women to become involved in this work was their having "seen the need," thus directly responding to the resulting unequal poverty, hunger, and education of an ineffective state. The characteristics of gendered feeding within the home therefore become reproduced in the public space of school food, situating women who facilitate school food programs as mothers of the children of the nation.

Finally, chapter 4, "Acting to Support Racialized Subjects," analyzes the race relations operating within community-led school food programs. Who these programs serve cannot be analyzed apolitically or ahistorically. Rather, these programs are situated not only within the broader Canadian neoliberal context, but also within the contemporary realities of colonization. The observations of the staff and volunteers from Regina School Food and Food for Kids reveal school food program facilitators' awareness that Indigenous children are particularly impacted by neoliberal and colonial policies and institutions. Using critical race theory and tribal critical race theory, this disproportionate food insecurity and childhood hunger among Indigenous households can be understood as a direct consequence of the colonial project that continues to be endemic to Canadian society. School food programs, led by Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members, are therefore simultaneously doing the work of feeding children, advocating for policy reform, and challenging Indigenous stereotypes. However, as they themselves are aware, charitable roll-out will not be sufficient to address widespread racialized poverty and hunger.

Together, these themes highlight the shortcomings of the neoliberal model — wherein gendered subjects facilitate charitable programs to support underserved, often racialized, community members — and point to possibilities for an alternative. Chapter 5, "Imagining Canada's School Food Future" provides a discussion on these three

themes as a whole, with implications for the present and future. The staff and volunteers have given considerable thought to the possibilities for the future of Canadian school food programs, and these are shared here. Specifically, these program facilitators provide evidence and advocacy for a national government-supported universal school food program that is integrated into the curriculum. This counter-neoliberal vision is a clear paradigm shift away from the recent decades of neoliberal roll-back. Although such a change would not address facilitators' underlying concerns with income inequality, their envisioned school food future is one in which the government increases its social involvement and accepts responsibility for the well-being of all children.

2 Functioning Within the Neoliberal Context

"It's tentative, really, every year is tentative."

-Rose

The facilitators of school food programs in Regina, Saskatchewan do not function in a vacuum. Rather, to inform the question, "how and why are school food programs operationalized by community organizations?", it is key to understand the political economic climate that shapes the realities of the organization, the community, and the larger national context. Since the late 1970s, the world has been making the uneven and often self-contradictory shift towards institutionalized neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005). The process of neoliberalization has been occurring congruently in Canada, defined by the shrinking of the state and the expansion of market rule (Harvey, 2005; Riches & Tarasuk, 2014). Amid the reduction in social services and the deregulation of the private sector, social inequality has been rising for over thirty years around the world and in Canada (Harvey, 2005; Riches & Tarasuk, 2014). In response to the crises resulting from roll-back neoliberalism, the project has adapted with the roll-out of creative fixes, including the expansion of the non-profit sector (Peck & Tickell, 2002). It is within this space that we can understand the motivations of community members in the late 1970s and early '80s to create organizations such as Food for Kids and Regina School Food, and can make sense of the realities of their continued existence. While these school food facilitators do not explicitly name neoliberalism, they are acutely aware of the ways that they operate within the neoliberal context. They explicitly relate the persistence of childhood hunger to inadequate social services and prevailing household poverty. Charitable school food program facilitators are also aware that the government has downloaded the responsibility of feeding children onto them, and that the charitable model that they must operate within is inherently precarious and limited as a short-term solution.

2.1 The Global Transition to Neoliberalism

On a global scale, "neoliberalism has, in short, become hegemonic as a mode of discourse. It has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world" (Harvey, 2005, p. 3). This rise of neoliberalism has not been a natural process, of course, but rather a distinct political project implemented by particular world powers through various institutions and mechanisms. In his analysis of the global proliferation of neoliberalism, Harvey (2005) points to the period from 1978-1980 as "a revolutionary turning-point in the world's social and economic history" (p. 1). During this time, monumental policy changes and elections in countries such as China, Great Britain, and the United States marked a decided shift towards the liberalization of industry and the reduction of the role of the state (Harvey, 2005). Harvey (2005) argues that this shift was an intentionally political project designed to "re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites" that had been stifled by the Keynesian policies of the previous era (p. 19).

Post-World War II, the global regime was one that embraced Keynesian economic policies in the pursuit of the development of national industrialized economies (Harvey, 2005; McMichael, 2017). The global doctrine was that "the state should focus on full employment, economic growth, and the welfare of its citizens, and that state power should be freely deployed, alongside of or, if necessary, intervening in or even substituting for market processes to achieve these ends" (Harvey, 2005, p. 10). Global institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, spearheaded by developed countries such as the United States, sought to facilitate this style of development. Although there is an abundance of literature on the ways in which this project served the national interests of developed countries and exacerbated many of the same inequalities of the colonial era (McMichael, 2017), the prevailing ideology was nonetheless one of "embedded liberalism": "market processes and entrepreneurial and corporate activities were surrounded by a web of social and political constraints and

15

a regulatory environment that sometimes restrained but in other instances led the way in economic and industrial strategy" (Harvey, 2005, p. 11). For several decades, Keynesian policies served as a "class compromise between capital and labour," restricting the mobility of capital and expanding the role of active state intervention (Harvey, 2005, p. 10).

However, by the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s, crises of capital accumulation were apparent, manifesting in unemployment, inflation, and economic stagnation (Harvey, 2005). A series of economic, social, and environmental crises throughout these years suggested to many that Keynesian policies were no longer effective (Harvey, 2005; McMichael, 2017). As Harvey argues, these crises, and the potential socialist solutions to address them, posed a distinct threat to ruling elites and the upper classes (Harvey, 2005). According to Harvey (2005), "redistributive effects and increasing social inequality have in fact been such a persistent feature of neoliberalization as to be regarded as structural to the whole project [...] neoliberalization was from the very beginning a project to achieve the restoration of class power" (p. 16).

This revival of capital accumulation occurred through various mechanisms and institutions. As neoliberal ideologies gained ground in the late 1970s and early '80s, the lending policies of the IMF and the World Bank "became centres for the propagation and enforcement of 'free market fundamentalism' and neoliberal orthodoxy" (Harvey, 2005, p. 29). Loans became coupled with Structural Adjustments Policies (SAPs) that mandated reductions in social spending — such as in public infrastructure, health care, and education — and the privatization of public assets, including water, land, and so on (McMichael, 2017). This new globalization era became defined by the reduction of the welfare state, wage erosion, relaxing barriers to trade, and overall privatization (McMichael, 2017). Neoliberalization thus became a global regime subsuming countries through debt regimes, the mobility of capital, and international governance bodies like the World Trade Organization (WTO) (McMichael, 2017). It became clear to much of

the world that, as Margaret Thatcher often declared, "there is no alternative."

Of course, the process of neoliberalization has not always been even or consistent. Key to understanding the ways that neoliberalism unfolds, adapts, and becomes embedded is Peck and Tickell's (2002) analysis of roll-back and roll-out neoliberalism. They draw the "stylized distinction between the destructive and creative moments of the process of neoliberalism — which are characterized in terms of 'roll-back' and 'roll-out' neoliberalism, respectively" (Peck & Tickell, 2002). Analyzing the dominant shifts in logic and the patterns of restructuring that have occurred through the rise of neoliberalism, Peck and Tickell (2002) see the deregulation of industry and the dismantlement of the role of the nation state as roll-back neoliberalism. However, this era of roll-back, Peck and Tickell (2002) argue, necessarily encountered institutional and political limits as the economic and social crises of the project became apparent. Rather than imploding, the neoliberal project has adapted to these crises and developed creative responses.

These creative responses, or roll-out neoliberalism, are characterized by "new modes of 'social' and penal policy-making, concerned specifically with the aggressive reregulation, disciplining, and containment of those marginalized or dispossessed by the neoliberalization of the 1980s" (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 389). The concern becomes, for example, the management of those who have become unemployed by the mobility of transnational corporations and labour outsourcing, the regulation of those whose wages and job stability have been eroded with the disappearance of the middle class, and the oversight of surplus labour and those who cannot work. One adaptation to these consequences of neoliberalism has been the roll-out of the charitable model (Peck & Tickell, 2002; Poppendieck, 1998; Riches & Tarasuk, 2014). The voluntary sector has ballooned around the world "in the shape of (local) voluntary and faith-based associations in the service of neoliberal goals" (Peck & Tickell, 2002), including the expansive range of emergency food charities, such as food banks, soup kitchens, and, as will be discussed, charitable school food programs (Poppendieck, 1998; Riches &

Tarasuk, 2014).

2.2   Neoliberalism in the Canadian Context

Following the global trend, Canadian policy has embraced the shift towards neo-liberalization. According to Riches and Tarasuk (2014), neoliberalism has dominated Canadian politics and policy-making for over thirty years. Post-WWII, Canada supported Keynesian policies as a liberal welfare regime state (Carbone, Power, & Holland, 2018), enacting programs consistent with Harvey's (2005) notion of embedded liberalism. Under the liberal welfare regime, Canada supported modest universal programs and means-tested programs for lower-income citizens (Carbone et al., 2018). The state incentivized employment and implemented programs such as workers' compensation (Carbone et al., 2018). At the same time, social policy was largely premised around ideas of the "deserving poor," while also promoting a socially conservative model of the family that encouraged parents to use income supports along with their market income to provide for their families (Carbone et al., 2018). The gender relations of the state will be discussed further in chapter 3, "Operating as Gendered Subjects." What is key however, is that since the rise of neoliberalism, social welfare polices have been repeatedly eroded while notions of individual responsibility have been strengthened (Carbone et al., 2018). As the social safety net has been reduced over the last thirty-five years (Riches & Tarsuk, 2014), neoliberalism proposes that individuals exercise their individual freedoms and skills in the marketplace (Harvey, 2005).

The consequences of these policies have been far-reaching. In their analysis of child poverty in Canada, Howe and Covell (2003) cite "income polarization between Canada's richest and poorest families, relatively high rates of unemployment and underemployment, family breakdowns and the rise of single parent families, and a scaling back of social programs including social assistance and employment insurance" (p. 1075-1076). Howe and Covell (2003) also associate the increase in child poverty after

the 1980s with the simultaneous implementation of neoliberal policies. These arguments echo Harvey's (2005) claims about the exacerbation of inequality as structural to the neoliberal project.

The effects of the neoliberal era can be observed in provincial politics as well. Provinces are constitutionally responsible for such social matters as child welfare, education, and income security, yet are trending towards unresponsive in these areas (Riches, 1992). In Saskatchewan in particular in the 1980s, Riches (1992) describes the Progressive Conservative provincial government as having "consistently rejected growing poverty, food banks, and inadequate welfare benefits as issues requiring its attention" (p. 156). During the same period, the Regina Food Bank was established (in 1983) due to the increasing demand for food support from low-income community members, and the Regina Child Hunger Coalition was established (in 1987) to specifically address child hunger (Riches, 1993). This narrative is congruent with the phenomenon of roll-back and roll-out neoliberalism described by Peck and Tickell (2002), which is pervasive on the Canadian landscape.

Consistent with other neoliberalized countries, the charitable response has become completely entrenched as a feature of the Canadian political economy. The reduction in the social safety net, characteristic of roll-back neoliberalism, has promoted individualized responses to poverty and hunger through the roll-out of the charitable food system (Poppendieck, 1998; Riches & Tarasuk, 2014). Riches and Tarasuk (2014) argue that neoliberal policies have led to a dependence on food charities. Indeed, the neoliberal paradigm has led to "the social construction of hunger as a matter of charity" rather than a matter of policy (Riches & Tarasuk, 2014, p. 43). This roll-back of government intervention and roll-out of charitable responses that have been so characteristic of neoliberalization correlates to the development and continued existence of community-led school food programs, which have mobilized the charitable model to address prevailing childhood hunger.

2.3 School Food Programs in the Neoliberal Context

The staff and volunteers of Food for Kids and Regina School Food are able to shed important insight into the ways that the charitable model functions within the neoliberal context. Interview participants were asked to discuss the history of their organization, their goals and primary operations, the importance of their programs, and their perceived strengths, challenges, threats, and opportunities. Field observation participants discussed these topics in conversation with one another and with the researcher. In doing so, participants were clear about the distinct political economic circumstances that limit their work, as well as the ways they successfully navigate within the constraints of the neoliberal paradigm to achieve their goals of feeding hungry children. Staff and volunteers consistently point to the phenomenon of increasing need and decreasing support. However, they do not view this phenomenon apolitically. Rather, they are acutely aware of the impacts of public policy and the ways the social safety net, or lack thereof, affects their work. Several participants also pointed to the occurrence of government downloading, wherein they are aware that the government has shirked responsibility for feeding children and they are filling this gap. Finally, at the forefront of the staff and volunteers' minds is the precarious nature of the charitable model and the ways in which it is insufficient compared to an effective state model.

2.3.1 Historical Background

The histories of both organizations are rooted within the rise of the neoliberal era. Food for Kids was established in 1979 by one woman in the community. According to Francine, who has worked for Food for Kids for thirty years, the founder started by helping just a few kids, and the program quickly ballooned: "we started with about two or three kids, next day we have about five, and then ten, and towards the end we ended up in the hundreds." Started by just one woman who noticed a need in her community, Food for Kids now serves approximately 800 kids each day of operation.

Regina School Food, similarly, was founded by a small number of community members who noticed the need. Interestingly, Regina School Food was established almost ten years after Food for Kids, at the time of a community-led political movement known as the Regina Child Hunger Coalition (RCHC) (Riches, 1992). A coalition of community members including the Regina Food Bank and the Social Administration Research Unit of the University of Regina, the objective of the RCHC "was to persuade both the municipal and provincial governments to accept children's hunger as a serious issue requiring attention and to take action" (Riches, 1992, p. 153). The RCHC's work was based on two primary assumptions: (1) child hunger was a political issue that required a universal and publicly funded school meal program, social security reform, adequate incomes, and full employment, and was therefore beyond the capacity of volunteer work; and (2) children's hunger required immediate attention (Riches, 1992).

In response to the RCHC, the municipal government established the Mayor's Board of Inquiry into Hunger. Several research participants cited this task force as being key to the creation of Regina School Food. However, different participants viewed the City of Regina's role differently. As Glenda explained, emphasizing the initiative of members of the community, "there was a City of Regina task force to assess the problem with child hunger in the city. They realized it was a serious problem that was identified, but didn't do anything about it. Concerned citizens decided to do something about it and started [Regina School Food]." Rose, similarly, recalled that Regina School Food "was started by a very kind and wonderful parent in a small school in Regina, and she could see that there were kids who didn't have enough food, and she just wanted to do something about it. She had kids in the school herself, and she just kind of slowly got organized and, you know, a few people helped her out." Morgan's account gives perhaps more credit to the relationship between the task force and the community: "there was a mayor's task force, and it was around food security. And a lot of the conversation was: there's a lot of kids coming to school hungry. So, through conversations and different pieces, that's kind of how [Regina School Food] was formed, and then it has kind of evolved over time to the organization it is now. But it did stem from a city initiative

and conversation." Rose also acknowledged that, "there just happened to be probably a municipal political mindset at that time that this would be a good thing, a helpful thing. [...] We got a lot of support from the city which is almost — you know, it's not very common."

Each of these recollections on the history of Regina School Food highlights the complex relationships between community members who spearhead charitable initiatives, and the government, whose level of support can be critiqued to varying degrees. In Riches' (1992) analysis, municipal government was at least more supportive than the provincial government. As explained above, the provincial government appeared to have embraced neoliberal ideology, and as a result "the political climate was at best uninviting and at worst hostile" to the aims of the RCHC (Riches, 1992, p. 156). The Mayor's Board of Inquiry into Hunger, however, was able to bring their recommendations to the provincial government, resulting in a provincial budget allocation of $740,000 in 1990 for meal programs (Riches, 1992). While this was an improvement over the previous inaction, it fell short of the RCHC's goals of a universal school food program and increases in welfare payments (Riches, 1992). Riches (1992) and the community organizations involved in the RCHC concluded that "the relief of hunger would remain the responsibility of food banks [...] of non-government organizations, and of the unpaid voluntary labour of women and Native peoples" (p. 159). These conclusions, made almost thirty years ago, ring just as true today, as the neoliberal project continues to entrench individual responsibility, charitable solutions, and uncompensated gendered and racialized labour.

2.3.2 Increasing Need, Decreasing Support

Despite their differing histories, Food for Kids and Regina School Food have the shared experience of being founded at the dawn and rise of the neoliberal era by concerned community members. Since their establishment, both organizations have

22

become fully entrenched within the charitable model, relying on a diverse array of support, including municipal funding, grants, private donations, and fundraisers. Consistent between both organizations is the observation that the need continues to increase, while support decreases.

When asked about the goals of their organizations, participants consistently stated that they exist to feed hungry children. As Rose expressed, the goal of Regina School Food is to "try to alleviate hunger in schools, because we know that you can't learn on an empty stomach." In response to the same question, Morgan, also from Regina School Food, similarly said, "I think it's to make sure that kids have a full stomach so that when they're at school, they have the opportunity to learn." Francine, from Food for Kids, became involved with the organization because "it was a need. Poverty. And like, you could see it." Julia, from Regina School Food, also felt that "the program is important to our schools because it provides food to children that may not otherwise have a meal before or during school." Echoing her colleagues, Glenda from Regina School Food asserted, "the goal is to raise enough funds to feed all hungry children." However, neither the need nor the funds to address it are consistent. As Glenda stated point-blank: "need is growing and funding is shrinking."

Importantly, the staff and volunteers were acutely aware that neither the need nor their capacity to address the need could be analyzed apolitically. Rather, they view both in relation to political economic circumstances that shape household incomes, social services, private support, and government involvement. Participants consistently expressed that the need for their programs was growing as more families experienced household poverty, pressure from being overworked, and insufficient social services. As Morgan explained when asked about the importance of her organization's school food programs, "providing your basic needs is really important. It takes pressure off the parents to be able to do so. Provincially we've a lot more additional cuts, so parents are a lot more stressed than what they used to be." Here Morgan explicitly connects the growing necessity of Regina School Food's programming to ongoing provincial cuts and

the resulting stress on individual households. She went on to explain that "the other threat to the organization is the fact that there's such a huge need increase for kids who are hungry. Food insecurity rates keep rising, poverty rates keep rising, huge cutbacks to housing supports and other different supports that are in place for people."

Francine similarly explained that social services are not adequately meeting people's basic expenses for things like clothing, housing, utilities, and groceries. She says that people end up "jiggling your money around, and that's not enough money." The staff of Food for Kids also observe the increased need through their other community programs. They receive bread donations from grocery stores and place it out on bread racks for community members to pick up for free. During field observations, Francine and Claire were putting the bread in bags and discussing how people fight over the bread. They felt that people have been getting more desperate for food give-aways and the fighting has become worse.

None of the participants expressed an indication that childhood hunger or its causes are on their way out. Their observations that need is increasing are consistent with Harvey's (2005) analysis of neoliberalization's impacts on social inequality, as well as with normative measures of growing social inequality in Canada. The Gini coefficient, for example — the standard measure of income inequality, where zero equals perfect equality and one equals perfect inequality — has been steadily rising in Canada, from 0.31 in 1991 to 0.34 in 2013 (World Bank, 2019). Having worked in her organization for thirty years and observed the ways changing policies have impacted people's livelihoods, Francine sombrely but confidently claimed, "it will always be there. Hunger will always be there. With the cost of living and all that's going on, eh."

As the political economic climate has increased the need for school food programs, it has also decreased the capacity of charitable organizations to address the need. Charitable organizations are not entitled to a consistent funding base, but instead depend on the continued benevolence of their funding sources (Riches & Tarasuk, 2014).

As a volatile economy results in increased household food insecurity and poverty, it also decreases the capacity of other community members to donate to the charities that address this need. Additionally, they have to compete with other charities that are also directed at the consequences of worsening socioeconomic conditions. Each of these phenomena is observed by the staff and volunteers of Food for Kids and Regina School Food.

Many participants, such as Rose, acknowledged the "goodwill of donors out there." Regina School Food receives a grant from a local umbrella organization in the city, which covers a large portion of their operating budget. The City of Regina also permits them to use their space for free and provides them with a grant. These funding sources, however, are not locked in, but are part of the precarity of the charitable model, which will be discussed further below. Additionally, while these grants are key to the functioning of the organization, they do not cover all of Regina School Food's expenses, who must also depend on private donations.

Both organizations implement a variety of fundraising strategies to obtain private donations — a pursuit that comes with its own obstacles. As explained by Glenda when asked about the challenges of her organization,

> Fundraising is getting harder and harder all the time. There's so much need out there, not only just for food but all kinds of things. There's more and more charities all the time, and there's more and more people in need, and the dollars are just getting stretched thinner and thinner. I think our biggest obstacle is fundraising. It's getting harder and harder. Especially with the economy having taken a downturn, people's purses are a little bit tighter and corporations are being a little more selective in where the money goes. So keeping it up I think is going to be the biggest challenge.

When asked about her organization's achievements, Rose echoed Glenda's sentiments: "it's incredible that the organization has, I think, continued, because it's not easy to get money from people any more. There's high competition for money." Francine has also observed that they "really don't get too much funding. [...] We're kind of on the same wavelength that we were on five years ago yet." She then went on to wonder "what can

you do" but try to fundraise and find more money for programming, even though everyone is running out of money. Morgan reflected that "people used to help each other out. A little bit more of a village type mentality." This remark suggests an awareness of the phenomenon described by the infamous Thatcher quote, that there is "no such thing as society, only individual men and women" in the neoliberal era (quoted in Harvey, 2005, p. 23).

The reality of increasing need and decreasing support has real consequences for both organizations. In Glenda's experience, she witnesses "the numbers growing all the time, and every year we get more requests, and it just breaks your heart when we say no because we just don't have the space or the money to do it." Francine similarly experienced her organization cutting down on the schools they serve: "we couldn't do it. We had to refuse them. We couldn't do it. Too much." During a field observation, Nicole told me that three schools were recently approved to receive programming from Regina School Food. However, after these new approvals, she had to let the board know that they are completely at capacity and cannot accept any more schools. Thus, the staff and volunteers of charitable school food programs are consistently navigating the challenges of a growing need and the decreased capacity to support that need, both of which are viewed internally as distinctly political.

2.3.3   Government Downloading

Navigating within the reality of increasing need and decreasing support, school food facilitators are also aware that they are the ones doing the work, and not the state. Throughout the literature on charitable food systems, there is the theory of government downloading, wherein the neoliberal state has shifted the responsibility for hunger, poverty, social well-being, and so on, onto the charitable sector (Poppendieck, 1998; Riches & Tarasuk, 2014). As Riches and Tarasuk (2014) conclude, "the social construction of hunger as a matter of charity" has replaced a public policy response

from the state (p. 43). From her work on the emergency food system, Poppendieck (1998) has also determined that "hunger has become a national pastime" (p. 24). Nearly everyone has become involved in the fight against hunger, either as the staff and volunteers of charitable organizations, or as donors of money and food to these organizations (Poppendieck, 1998). Charitable responses to hunger create an "illusion of effective action [...] and legitimates personal generosity as a response" (Poppendieck, 1998, p. 5) consistent with the individualized mantra of neoliberalism, while the state continues to roll-back. As the government has downloaded responsibility onto the charitable sector, the neoliberalized public has come to accept charity over policy (Riches & Tarasuk, 2014).

However, this new paradigm between the state and social welfare has not gone unnoticed by those onto whom the responsibility has been downloaded. Rather, several participants from Food for Kids and Regina School Food believe that childhood hunger has been constructed as a matter of charity, when it should be the responsibility of the state. As explained in the history of Regina School Food, the Regina Child Hunger Coalition knew that hunger could not be addressed through charitable efforts, and sought direct political involvement from various levels of government. Although it has been thirty years, politicizing childhood hunger continues to be an important element of Regina School Food's work. An important goal, according to Rose, is "to actually try to be an advocate — well not an advocate, because that's not the right word — but to do some work to try to let people know that there is hunger in the city. [...] And I just wish that there would be some political will to look at other countries. [...] In the meantime, it hasn't really improved very much." She goes on to ask, "how sad is that, that we cannot move things along politically that people would recognize that you need food in school?"

Morgan, similarly, felt that advocacy was a necessary component of the organization's work, but also shed insight on the challenges that come with drawing attention to income inequality and childhood, and calling for change. As she explained,

> The ultimate opportunity is we can be an advocacy body that says, you
> know, kids are coming hungry, it's increasing. We need to start addressing
> income issues. The problem with that is, um, we're not in a political
> environment where people like to say that the government maybe is doing
> something wrong. So all of a sudden you can lose your funding. So
> non-profits aren't really able to advocate to the extent that they would like
> to, or probably should.

Morgan highlights the ways that the neoliberal paradigm of government roll-back and charitable roll-out has become so entrenched, such that the hopes of challenging it are all but dashed. Making demands on the state is seen as both crucial and nearly impossible when the charity has been burdened simultaneously with responsibility and risk.

Along these same lines, Glenda felt that people don't realize how many children are hungry in the city and how many community organizations work to address this need. While she expressed gratitude to the City of Regina for its long-standing support through space allocation and a grant, she was also conscientious of the ways that her organization continues to do its work amid provincial cuts and reduced funding at various levels of government for social services. When discussing potential opportunities for school food programs to expand, Glenda said, "I can't see [the government] spending more money on food for those kids." I wasn't able to finish my sentence when I began to ask "do you feel that the government downloads this responsibility —" when Glenda replied, "of course they do! Absolutely they do! Yup, they're not doing anything about it."

Staff and volunteers of Food for Kids and Regina School Food are constantly mindful of the reality that, if not for their programs, hundreds of children might not eat during the school day. They have a strong desire for political action and state involvement, but are knowingly limited by the confines of a neoliberal paradigm that has decisively put the responsibility for childhood hunger on the shoulders of charities. The staff at Food for Kids have watched as several generations of students — the children of the children of the children they were serving when they first began working — have used their program, without any changes to the system that causes their hunger, nor the

system that addresses it. Reflecting on what the founders of Regina School Food would think about the continued prevalence of childhood hunger thirty years later, Rose summarized the reality of the government downloading paradigm: "it's not going away. We're plugging away, we know we're not doing very much, but we do a little bit and we try to educate as many people as we can about the realities."

2.3.4   The Band-Aid Solution

Thus, the facilitators of community-led school food programs are under no illusion that their organizations are sufficiently addressing childhood hunger or its root causes. They do this work largely because they see it as an immediate need, and have observed that the immediate needs of childhood hunger are not going to be addressed without them. As such, they are aware that they are providing a band-aid solution consistent with critiques of the charitable approach writ large. In her analysis of the emergency food system, for example, Poppendieck (1998) compiled a list of seven deadly "ins" that plagued charitable food distribution: insufficiency, nutritional inadequacy, inappropriateness, indignity, instability, inaccessibility, and inefficiency. These same concerns are echoed by the staff and volunteers of Food for Kids and Regina School Food as they attempt to consistently provide sufficient amounts of nutritious foods to as many children as possible, while navigating the inconsistency and precarity of their funding.

Describing the nature of their work as a band-aid solution was consistent across the staff and volunteers of Food for Kids and Regina School Food. According to Rose, "we know it's a band-aid approach, we know that what we need is a universal, properly funded, probably national school food program. [...] Until that day, it's a little bit that we can do." She went on to agree that Regina School Food does successfully achieve their goal of getting hungry food to kids, but "within that sort of confine of a bit of a charity, you know, band-aid, but we know that's what we're doing. We're doing the best we can within sort of a charity, band-aid model, but we don't think we're solving the

problem." Glenda felt similarly, saying, "as far as I'm concerned we're barely scratching the surface. I know there's a lot more hungry kids out there than what we can possibly serve. We're doing our best to get as many as possible, but I know there's still a lot more hungry kids out there." Other participants, such as Morgan, shared that they knew insufficient household income was at the root of the issue, but all they could address was feeding the children: "well at the end of the day we're a band-aid solution. Kids should never be hungry in the first place. Kids are hungry because there isn't an income system that allows for people to have a minimum standard of living. It's an income issue, at the end of the day, it's an income issue."

Not only did participants feel that they were a band-aid solution but that they, metaphorically, did not have enough band-aids, often struggled to apply the appropriate band-aid, and could run out of band-aids at any moment. These concerns point to the ways that charitable school food programs have to navigate the insufficiency and precarity of resources, including funding, space, and labour. Francine explained how serving nutritious meals was important to the schools and to her organization, but that her organization's capacity to do this was strained. She said, "we do good, wish we could do more. [...] Nothing's cheap around here. And yet they want their food. But come on, go out and check the prices, you know. Very expensive around here." Food for Kids employs a number of creative fundraising strategies to support their school food program, including bannock sales at gas stations and taco sales. During my field observation, the staff of Food for Kids made bannock in the time between cooking the lunches and having to deliver them. Because the upcoming Friday was a day off school, they were going to have a taco sale at the community centre. Labels on the bags of bannock remind buyers that the organization feeds 800 school kids per day.

The staff and volunteers of Regina School Food are acutely aware that their capacity could change at any time. Relying on the City of Regina for free space, as well as the City and a local umbrella non-profit organization for sustaining grants, puts the organization in a precarious position that was at the forefront of many participants'

minds. Rose explained that while these partnerships are assets to the organization, the precarity of maintaining the vital resources that these partnerships provide also poses one of the greatest threats. As she very clearly articulated,

> We just hope that the city doesn't come in one day and say, "we've been helping out for twenty-five years and we really should help other groups too." Well, where would we go? We could be looking for a place to rent and cook our food, and ooh boy, that would really make a big difference to us because it would cut our budget so much. So it's tentative, really every year is tentative.

Additionally, the nature of depending on donated space means that the space does not necessarily meet the needs of the organization. The limitations of the space came up as an issue in every Regina School Food interview, as well as in conversation with participants in Regina School Food field observations. The organization works out of a small kitchen as well as a multi-purpose program room. Both of these spaces are shared with multiple organizations and greatly limit the organization's capacity to store and prepare food. During my field observations, staff and volunteers were baking cookies and cheese biscuits. The issue of oven space frequently came up among the bakers, as Nicole explained to me: "can you imagine what we could do with three convection ovens? Right now we only have two ovens, and they're not even convectional. So they can only put one tray in each oven, or the bottoms burn. But if we have five ovens..." At multiple points of the biscuit baking, Denise simply looked at the full oven, sighed, and said, "we're stuck." In her interview, Morgan raised a question that is at the root of Regina School Food's capacity to address childhood hunger: "when we're making decisions on who we can and cannot accept: do we have storage space to take on more programs?" While giving me a tour of the program room, Nicole pointed out the limited freezer, fridge, and cupboard space, and described the extra labour she undertakes to constantly move everything around to maximize the amount of food they can order, prepare, and store. To save money and time, Nicole has been shifting toward ordering from a large supplier rather than make smaller grocery store trips. However, bulk orders can be unfeasible when there is simply nowhere to store the product, stifling some of her

efforts to economize the purchasing process.

Unlike Food for Kids, Regina School Food depends largely on volunteer labour for food preparation. Similar to funding partnerships, volunteers are seen simultaneously as one of the greatest strengths and one of the biggest challenges of the organization. According to Glenda, "we've probably got about 23-28 really dedicated volunteers — people that come on a regular basis to make cookies and muffins and chili and meat sauce and we just have a wonderful, wonderful arsenal of volunteers." Providing nutritious food is important to Regina School Food as well, and Nicole feels that the organization's ability to serve homemade baking and snacks is helped by the fact that the labour to produce these foods is free. Nicole had praise for all of the food preparation volunteers, expressing amazement at how much they are able to accomplish with such limited equipment. At the same time, however, retaining a consistent base of volunteers to meet all of the labour demands can be a challenge. Volunteers have no obligation to the organization, and as such their labour is precarious. It was explained to me that because many of the volunteers are retired, several of them leave for up to three months in the winter. The same amount of work has to get done, but there are fewer volunteers. At that point, compromises have to be made, such as buying store-bought baking and snacks. Staff and volunteers feel that this is not ideal and would like to see consistently high nutritional adequacy, but are limited by the realities of depending on volunteer labour.

Research participants shared other concerns that are tied to the band-aid solution. For example, volunteer bakers at Regina School Food discussed how their program may result in stigma against some children, as students may be singled out in their non-universal schools. Morgan also expressed concerns that "darn right you're gonna notice that's a poor kid" in a non-universal program. One participant from Food for Kids also shared that the staff earns minimum wage due to limited funding, which can cause difficulty in their own lives. Additionally, several participants, as explained in the above sections, knew that their programs simply were not able to reach all of the hungry

children, and that there were still students whose needs were not being addressed.

2.4   Conclusion

School food facilitators are demonstrably knowledgeable and articulate about the ways their work is limited by the realities of increasing need, decreasing support, government downloading, and the charitable model writ large. These observations are consistent with the literature on the rise of neoliberalism and the expansion of the charitable sector, which suggests that charitable roll-out has become a hegemonic response to the retrenchment of state involvement and must operate within the new rules of the neoliberal game. As Peck and Tickell (2002) argue, these types of roll-out responses represent "*both* the frailty of the neoliberal project *and* its deepening" (p. 390). While acknowledging the shortcomings of the social safety net that are at the root of childhood hunger, participants are also aware that their approach is not addressing these root causes, but is limited to treating the symptoms within the confines of a neoliberalized band-aid solution.

3 Operating as Gendered Subjects

"Maybe we were always caring for people."

-Denise

In the absence of a national school food program, why the facilitators of community-led programs step in to provide food for schoolchildren depends on personal motivations as well as systemic expectations. In this chapter I argue that the paradigm of roll-back and roll-out neoliberalism is necessarily gendered. The project depends on women to reproduce socially constructed expectations of care and food work through charitable roll-out to mitigate the consequences of government roll-back. Embodying normative roles as "mothers of the state" (Sinha, 2004), the women facilitating these school food programs enact traditional practices of food work to care for the children of the nation.

3.1 Feeding and Care: For the Family, For the Nation

In the Canadian context, and in many societies around the world, food work has long been coded as feminine (Bellows & Jenderedjian, 2016; DeVault, 1991; Cairns & Johnston, 2015; Guptill, Copelton, & Lucal, 2013). For generations, women have been socially constructed to hold the specific identity of feeders, in addition to the general identity of eaters (Bellows & Jenderedjian, 2016). While recent social shifts have begun to include all genders in food work, it continues to be women who are socialized and expected to be responsible for ensuring the successful feeding of themselves as well as their communities (Cairns & Johnston, 2015). Feeding is one of the many domains through which women enact a practice of care — a practice that is highly regulated by women themselves, their families, their communities, and their nations (DeVault, 1991). Thus, as women continue to be the ones who perform the majority of food work and are seen as primarily responsible for feeding, how well they embody these roles as feeders

becomes a marker of both their successful femininity (DeVault, 1991), as well as their successful citizenship (Sinha, 2004).

While it is by no means exclusively women who hold the primary responsibility for food and feeding, Cairns and Johnston (2015) argue that "conceptualizations of femininity are still profoundly connected to food" and "meeting (or at least approximating) contemporary standards of normative femininity requires tremendous attention to food" (p. 174). This attention to food encompasses much more than the presentation of an edible product (Devault, 1991). Feeding, in the broadest sense of the term, can include budgeting for food, grocery shopping, managing kitchen gardens, knowing family members' needs and preferences, preparing and serving meals, cleaning and maintaining a kitchen space, and more (Allen & Sachs, 2012; Cairns & Johnston, 2015; DeVault, 1991). The labour, then, that women deploy in the practice of feeding is not only physical and mental, but also requires the work of care (Allen & Sachs, 2012). Physical tasks, such as shopping and cooking are underpinned by mental considerations such as budget, time, and nutritional value as well as care for family members' preferences for what, when, and how they eat. Each of these tasks is normatively constructed as the woman's responsibility, as she is expected to plan, procure, prepare, and provide in service of her family's needs and desires (DeVault, 1991).

How well women attend to the needs and desires of their families reflects on their ability to care for and produce family (DeVault, 1991). As DeVault (1991) explains, "by doing the work of 'wife' and 'mother,' women literally produce family life from day to day" (p. 13). She then continues to describe the ways in which "feeding the family is work that makes use of food to organize people and activities," constructing individual family members within the acceptable bounds of larger society (DeVault, 1991, p. 78). Feeding remains predominantly recognized as an individual domain, where food choices are viewed as isolated decisions that can be demarcated as healthy or unhealthy, ethical or unethical, good or bad (Guptill et al., 2013). A person's relationship with food then becomes a marker of illness or wellness, discipline or laziness, responsibility or

incompetence, reflected not only in their own body, but in the bodies they feed as well (Biltekoff, 2013). Women's feeding and care work thus serves to organize the members of the family, including women themselves, into their acceptable roles in society.

Sinha's (2004) work on gender and nation establishes that gendered roles exist not only in the family, but in the nation as well. As she explains:

> The discourse of the nation is implicated in particular elaborations of masculinity as much as of femininity. As such, it contributes to their normative constructions. It becomes a privileged vehicle in the consolidation of dichotomized notions of "men" and "women" and of "masculinity" and "femininity." We thus have "fathers" and "mothers," and "sons" and "daughters," of the nation, each with their own gendered rights and obligations (Sinha, 2004, p. 231).

Sinha (2004) describes the different ways in which the nation calls upon its various familial subjects. As mothers of the nation, women contribute to the national project in a number of ways, including "as participants in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture" (Sinha, 2004, p. 231). Food, therefore, becomes an important site for this work of cultural reproduction, as a medium for transmitting the collective norms of family, health, and care. Women's citizenship is thus structured in relationship to both the state and the family, as feeders within both of these.

Sinha's (2004) work explored the ways in which the gendered articulation of the nation can be examined in specific historical contexts. In the following sections, I argue that the contemporary neoliberal phenomenon of government roll-back and charitable roll-out is a deployment of the nation's normative expectations of masculinity and femininity. Wherein women are constructed as mothers of the family and of the state, normative expectations for the feminine caring practice of feeding can be understood as fundamental to the roll-back of the government and the roll-out of food charity. In the case of community-led school food programs, it is the fatherhood of the state that has clawed back its intervention in the well-being of the household and calls upon the mothers to feed and care for the children. Indeed, the patriarchal state expects women

to fulfill these roles as mothers of the nation and devote their labour to caring for the children of the nation.

3.2 Gendered Relations of School Food Programs

National school food programs have been implemented around the world to address childhood hunger, stimulate consumption of domestic commodities, alleviate the household responsibility for feeding children, and foster communal eating and feeding cultures (Rutledge, 2016). In Canada, however, the responsibility of caring for children's food needs remains within individual households when children have to either pack a lunch or go home to be fed. Or, when it is community-led organizations that provide food for schoolchildren, the community members who facilitate these programs are establishing relationships with the children, each other, and the state. These relationships reproduce normative expectations of women's underpaid and unpaid labour of care that, understood in a neoliberal context, situates feminine care as the response to the lack of masculine state intervention.

The formation, or not, of government-run school food programs is connected to national ideologies of gender (Rutledge, 2016). As Rutledge (2016) states, "gender is an essential category to consider in the creation of school lunch programs," where either their creation or lack thereof reflects attitudes towards the role of women (p. 43). In the first wave of school food programs in Europe, gendered ideologies regarding the role of women are central to the history of the formation of these programs. In Sweden, for example, a policy shift in the early 1940s towards supporting women in the workforce as well as the individuality and equality of women led to state support for programs that were oriented toward gender equality, including school food programs (Rutledge, 2016). However, at the same time in Norway, the belief that mothers should be home caring for their children persisted, and the formation of a school meal program that would have supported women's ability to work outside the home never gained traction (Rutledge,

2016). In Germany, similarly, "the ideational component of gender, whereby women were expected to be at home" hindered the formation of a school food program, despite other factors such as agricultural policies that mirrored countries where programs were being formed (Rutledge, 2016, p. 52).

Rutledge (2016) further highlights the significance of gender ideology through the comparison of the United States and Canada. By 1942, school lunch programs in the United States were serving six million children per day, while Canada still does not have a national school food program (Rutledge, 2016). Both countries had similar agricultural policies at the time that the United States developed its school food programs (Rutledge, 2016). A key difference, however, was that the United States' welfare system was one that created programs to provide people with jobs (Rutledge, 2016). Among this job creation was women working as cooks, servers, bakers, clerks, and typists in school lunch programs (Rutledge, 2016). This "ready and cheap workforce" supported the rapid expansion of school lunch programs to every state (Rutledge, 2016, p. 69). Additionally, the war fostered women's employment, positioning these working women as supporters of school lunches (Rutledge, 2016).

Comparatively, in Canada, social, political, and economic forces made it less likely for women to enter the workforce and subsequently support school food programs. Social discourse continued to herald a woman's place as being in the home, condemning working women (Rutledge, 2016). The male breadwinner model with an unpaid mother who was responsible for childcare and the maintenance of the home persisted (Carbone et al., 2018). Further, and in contrast with the United States welfare model, the Canadian welfare system of family allowances encouraged mothers to stay home and care for their children (Carbone et al., 2018; Rutledge, 2016). The effectiveness of family allowance at supporting mothers to provide for their children reinforced the belief that this was an adequate system, "absolving the government of other care" (Rutledge, 2016, p. 9). The model that a woman's care takes place in the home, as unpaid labour at the service of her family, was maintained (DeVault, 1991), consistent with "the dominant

ideological notion that it was the family's responsibility, not the state's to feed and properly nourish children" (Carbone et al., 2018, p. 2).

Where national school food programs do exist, they have demonstrated sentiments of national security, wherein the vitality of the nation's children is seen as a valuable asset to the state (Rutledge, 2016). Such was the case in Great Britain, where concerns about national security and the fitness of children served as the impetus for a school lunch program that made child nutrition the responsibility of the state (Rutledge, 2016). Thus, national school food programs function as "a point of overlap between the family and the state" (Rutledge, 2016, p. 15). Significantly, this is a point "at which families expect the state not only to educate their child but also to help them feed their child" (Rutledge, 2016, p. 15). This is a fundamental ideological shift away from the belief that the sole responsibility of feeding children should rest on the unpaid and private labour of women. School food programs around the world demonstrate "the emergence of a new norm: a public responsibility to feed children" (Rutledge, 2016, p. 13). This "new norm" has yet to emerge in Canada.

It is therefore crucial to situate the continued lack of a public, national responsibility for feeding school children within today's neoliberal political economy to understand the contemporary gendered relationship between the state and the people. As explained in chapter 2, the neoliberal paradigm is characterized by a shift away from government intervention and towards privatization and individualized resonsibility. To quote Riches and Tarasuk (2014) once again, neoliberalization has led to "the social construction of hunger as a matter of charity" (p. 43). Deploying Sinha's (2004) framework of gendered roles within the nation, I argue that Riches' and Tarasuk's claim can be expanded to say that the neoliberal paradigm has led to the social construction of hunger as a matter of women's underpaid and unpaid care through charitable work, setting out the expectation that women extend their work as caregivers within the private sphere of the family to the public sphere of the state. The Canadian government is not taking on the role of feeder for children in public schools, and instead reproduces

the relegation of this role to women through the dependence on the charitable model. In the roll-back and roll-out neoliberal paradigm, the state simultaneously enacts policies that exacerbate childhood hunger and calls on women as the mothers of the nation to attend to the feeding and care work that the fallout of these policies necessitates.

3.3   School Food Facilitators and Gendered Roll-Out Neoliberalism

In the neoliberalized structure of community-led school food programs, individual members of the community take the initiative to form these organizations and make the work possible. In conversation with school food facilitators and through field observations, three key findings emerge that illustrate the gendered relations of roll-back and roll-out neoliberalism: (1) research participants, the vast majority of whom are women, see themselves and each other as gendered subjects; (2) participants became involved because of their pressing concern for the poverty, hunger, and education of children; and (3) the characteristics of gendered feeding within the home become reproduced in the public space of school food, thus situating women as mothers of the children of the nation.

3.3.1   Gendered Subjects

Through the course of this research, four participants were interviewed, an additional twelve were involved in field observations, and one participant submitted written responses. Of these seventeen staff and volunteers, fifteen are women. As they conduct their work, many of these women situate themselves and others as gendered subjects, either through gendered titles such as "cookie ladies" and "the meat guy," or by working consciously as mothers, wives, or widows.

The first field observation was conducted at Regina School Food on a Monday

40

morning. I was shown to the kitchen to observe the group affectionately referred to as the "Monday ladies" and the "cookie ladies" by the food services coordinator and by other volunteers. On the day of my observations, there were three cookie ladies, each of whom presented as a white woman. They explained that normally there are two additional women working with them, but that they were away on that particular day. At the next field observation at Regina School Food, on a Thursday, I met two other white women volunteers who were baking biscuits. In conversation, these women also referenced the "cookie ladies" as such. Through this identity of "cookie ladies," known throughout the organization, these women are doing their working explicitly as women.

Also during the first observation, I was acquainted with another volunteer, Ross, who is the husband of one of the "cookie ladies." His responsibility was to supervise a group of volunteers in the making of trail mix bags. Nicole explained that Ross' wife convinced him to come and get involved. She then explained that the only other man who volunteered was responsible for cutting the meat. Trained as a professional chef, Nicole explained how she is perfectly comfortable cutting the meat, but this volunteer is good at it, and it gives him an important role. When the two women in my second observation were reflecting on the gender demographics of the volunteers, they similarly named Ross and "the meat guy" as the two volunteers who are not women. The title of "the meat guy" is yet another recognition of how volunteers perform their gender in this space. This is consistent with DeVault's (1991) argument that, as a traditional woman's role, food work is always conducted by gendered subjects. Women do food work as women, who are expected to take on the complete project, and men do food work as men, who do not have generations of social conditioning as caring feeders, and who often take on small, novel pieces of food work, such as meat slicing (DeVault, 1991).

Additionally, women navigate this space not only as women, but as mothers, wives, and widows. When asked about their motivation to become involved in their organizations, staff and volunteers pointed to these identities. For example, several participants explained that they themselves had children, and they knew that other

people's children were going hungry. One board member shared that her involvement with the organization began before she had kids; she then had children of her own, stepped away from the board for a time, and is now back in this role. When discussing the history of their organization, participants referred to the founder as "a very kind and wonderful parent" who herself had kids at school and saw that there were kids who didn't have enough to eat. Denise, one of the Regina School Food volunteers, hypothesized that there are a large number of women volunteers because many of them are alone once their husbands pass away, and they are looking for something to do. Together, these narratives suggest that women have constructed the importance of their care work in relation to members of their own families, and have now extended these relationships to others. Having engaged in caring food work in their own homes for their children and husbands, these women extend that ethic of care to children outside of their families.

3.3.2   Seeing the Need: Beyond Hunger

One primary factor appears to motivate all staff and volunteers to become involved in these organizations: seeing the need. As touched on in chapter 2, seeing the need suggests two things in the context of neoliberalization: (1) women do this work out of a perceived necessity; and (2) this perceived necessity is understood as a failure of the (masculine) government which requires (feminine) charitable intervention. Importantly, participants do not see hunger as the only need that their work addresses, but also think about the ways food becomes a site to address unequal educational outcomes, to strengthen a sense of community, and to re-skill children in food work. Just as participants see hunger and poverty as systemic, they also see this complex of issues as political, requiring their intervention due to a failing state and society.

When asked why they became involved with their organizations, the women consistently cited the existence of an immediate need with long-term impacts on

children's ability to succeed in the education system. Echoing the literature on the consequences of childhood hunger, many of the staff and volunteers felt that, by providing school food, they were addressing inequalities in children's ability to attend, behave appropriately, learn, and succeed at school. According to Glenda,

> [Students] come in and they're angry and they're hungry and they can't concentrate, they can't focus, their behaviours escalate, you know once we feed them and once they've got their belly full and they're nourished and they've had some good food, they just settle down and they can concentrate better and their behaviours turn to good behaviours rather than poor behaviours, and less incidents of bullying, the absenteeism goes way down when they're being fed. A lot of the schools we talk to [...] we hear over and over again "the only reason I come to school is for the food."

Morgan felt that by providing school food, her organization has "created an opportunity where kids are more ready to learn." The need that these women observe, therefore, is not just for food itself, but for the many impacts food has on children's lives.

Staff and volunteers also viewed the food they provide as an avenue for building community and developing important life skills. Several participants explained how their organization provides food to a high school program for student mothers with young children. The ingredients get delivered to the school and the program facilitates the mothers learning how to prepare healthy meals for them and their children. Participants saw this re-skilling of young mothers as an important component of their work. Julia, similarly, explained that, "in schools where all students receive a meal, the program is also an opportunity for them to create a sense of community by coming together and sharing food as a group. Other schools benefit by using the program to also teach food prep and other life skills."

In some ways, the goals of community-building and re-skilling are arguably counter-neoliberal, in the ways that they challenge the individuality that is so characteristic of neoliberalism and by contradicting the de-skilling that has been the project of hegemonic corporate food system actors. At the same time, however, these practices also reproduce traditional gender roles and expectations. This intervention

becomes a practice of care, where the women are aware of their own and others' roles as caregivers. This re-embeds the expectation that women do and teach caring food work, whether providing food to improve behaviour, using food to build community, or passing on food knowledges.

At Regina School Food, the volunteers had noticed that the majority of them were currently in, were pursuing, or had retired from careers of care. Intervening in the food needs of children that are not their own is an extension of the way these women have been caring for others throughout their careers. All of the "cookie ladies," for example, had worked as teachers or nurses. When asked why they became involved in the organization, the women discussed how they had all witnessed the consequences of poverty, and had seen the need for food to get to kids. Following a discussion on this topic with the Thursday volunteers, Denise shrugged and said, "maybe we were always caring for people." The "cookie ladies," and the Thursday volunteers as well, agreed that they were driven to get involved out of a belief that they could have some impact on a multi-faceted issue that requires a great deal of attention.

Having worked previously in traditionally feminine careers, these women view their volunteerism as an extension of the caring work they have been doing for most of their lives. In this way, women's care transcends all social sectors, having been developed in the home, practised in the private sector, and now provided to the private non-profit sector in the service of the failing public sector. As they do this work, they have a consciousness that the public sector only requires their intervention because of its own failings. As one interviewee articulated, "if the government would do this, we would smile and wave good-bye." In the meantime, women view their care as a necessary intervention when both the existence and consequences of childhood hunger persist.

3.3.3 Feeding the Children of the State

As long as neoliberalized government roll-back persists, and charitable roll-out continues to be perceived as a necessary response to the fallout, normative expectations for women's caring food work will be replicated in these community spaces. DeVault's (1991) analysis on women's experiences feeding in the home maps congruently onto women's experiences feeding through charitable school food programs. Thus, the woman as the mother of her children in the home becomes the woman as the mother of the nation's children in the school. The women in Regina School Food and Food for Kids are conscious of the ways that they are stepping in both for the state and for other women as they provide caring food work for children that are not their own.

First, the same requirements for feeding in the home (DeVault, 1991) can be mapped onto the ways community-led school food programs operate. During field observations, I heard discussions around budgeting, procurement, taste preferences, nutrition concerns, and scheduling. I observed women preparing food, managing time, navigating kitchen spaces, cleaning, and monitoring food supplies. The kitchens of Regina School Food and Food for Kids became analogous to home kitchens, with women diligently managing all components of food work in order to successfully feed hungry children. When Nicole and I returned to the trail mix room where Ross had been working, he asked "are you happy that I used all of the supplies or are you mad at me that I used all of the supplies?" Ross and Nicole continued with light banter about how doing an efficient job as a volunteer means using up all of the supplies, which means more work for the staff to replenish those supplies, to do it all over again the next Monday. This interaction highlights DeVault's (1991) conclusion that caring food work must uniquely be performed continuously, over and over, as hunger is continually recurring. Women, in community-led school food programs just as in DeVault's (1991) households, must diligently manage their resources to ensure that this hunger can be continually cared for.

Of course, the women are aware that these spaces are not their own kitchens, and that they are reproducing caring food work in these spaces because of a perceived necessity. As much as participants invoked the state's failure to provide a sufficient economy for families to meet their own basic needs, they also pointed to a growing absence of other women that necessitates their own intervention as feeders. As Morgan describes, "you used to have one parent at home all the time. [...] Now it's, you've shifted to two parents working, you know, the kids don't have anywhere to go." Several participants perceived the recent shift towards working women to be a detriment to children's food needs. As Bronwyn, one of the "cookie ladies" described: "not everyone has that mother, grandmother, aunt, you know, or even the lady next door. It used to always be that you had someone." That someone, of course, was a woman in the home to care for children's food needs.

In addition to children having somewhere to go and someone to feed them, participants also feel that a key role of their organizations is to provide food knowledge. As DeVault explains, food knowledge is traditionally understood to be transmitted intergenerationally through mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and so on. When this intergenerational transmission is perceived to be broken, other women see themselves as necessary to fill in for these missing roles. As Glenda explained, "many of the kids at risk, they don't get modeled for them what healthy food is, or how to prepare healthy food. All they know how to do is rip open a bag or open a can." Women, therefore, are called on as mothers of the nation to be feeders in multiple ways, both as transmitters of cultural knowledge (Sinha, 2004), and as providers of sustenance.

The children of the nation, occupying the spaces of public education, are perceived to lack proper support from both the state and from their own mothers. By observing the presence of hunger and the lack of food knowledge, staff and volunteers witness the need for their intervention as mothers of the nation. While they understand their intervention as a band-aid solution, they perceive it to be necessary given the urgent need for care. Thus, out of necessity, they replicate the normative feminine

46

feeding practices that have been socially constructed in the home, and reproduce them in community-led school food organizations.

3.4   Conclusion

Canada missed a wave of national school food program creation because gendered ideologies fostered social programs that kept women in the home, caring for their families (Carbone et al., 2018; Rutledge, 2016). But now, of course, Canada does have women working outside of the home, and has yet to develop a school food program to address this shift in home environments. As DeVault (1991) explains, the movement of employed women is of great concern to the state: "policy makers begin to identify conflicting demands of economy and family as a 'problem' for society. They begin to wonder who will take care of families" (p. 3). In the neoliberal political economic context of Canada today, it appears that the answer to this question, "who will take care of families?", is not one that destabilizes normative gender roles of caring and feeding. Rather, the answer to this question depends on the reproduction of traditionally feminine practices of caring food work. The answer to this question, and to its subsequent question, "who will feed the nation's children?", is charity, and the women who work within these charities.

In the absence of a national school food program, the state maintains normative expectations for women either in their own homes, as women must continue to bear the disproportionate responsibility for staying home or preparing a bagged lunch, or through their charitable efforts in school food organizations to provide for the children of others. The neoliberal roll-back of government and roll-out of charity is thus necessarily gendered. Government policy intervention, coded as masculine, is rolled back and becomes increasingly less involved in the household. In response, women, as mothers of the state, are expected and depended on to step into their roles as feeders to care for the family of the nation as a whole and to feed its children. One board member for Regina

School Food aptly summarizes this relationship between children, food, and the care provided by community-led school food programs: "I wish everyone could see it, just to know how important food is [...] that someone really cares about them."

4 Acting to Support Racialized Subjects

"Oh my God, they're just hungry."

-Francine

In the absence of a universal program, and given the limitations of the charitable model, community-led school food programs must make calculated decisions about who they can serve. Therefore, who these programs serve reveals not only who is in need, but also whose need gets noticed. School food programs are situated not only within the broader Canadian neoliberal context, but also within the contemporary realities of colonization. The staff and volunteers of Food for Kids and Regina School Food reveal school food program facilitators' awareness that Indigenous children are particularly impacted by neoliberal and colonial policies and institutions. Using critical race theory and tribal critical race theory, this disproportionate food insecurity and childhood hunger among Indigenous households can be understood as a direct consequence of the colonial project that continues to be endemic to Canadian society. School food programs, led by Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members, simultaneously work to feed children, advocate for policy reform, and challenge Indigenous stereotypes. As they themselves acknowledge, however, charitable roll-out will not be sufficient to address the widespread racialized poverty and hunger of a neoliberal colonial paradigm.

4.1 Critical Race Theory

Initially developed in legal scholarship, critical race theory (CRT) is now deployed interdisciplinarily, including in education and food studies. Lawrence, Matsuda, Delgado, and Crenshaw (1993) define CRT as "grounded in the particulars of a social reality that is defined by our experiences and the collective historical experience of our communities of origin. Critical race theories embrace subjectivity of perspective and are avowedly political" (p. 3). CRT resists ahistorical analyses, seeks to end racial

oppressions as a component of the broader goal of ending all oppression, and recognizes racism as endemic to society (Lawrence et al., 1993).

Expanding on CRT, Brayboy (2005) deployed tribal critical race theory to argue that colonization, not only racism, is endemic in society. Brayboy's (2005) analysis of tribal critical race theory is critical to understanding both food and education as modern sites of colonization. As he argues, education policy historically and in the present is rooted in a colonial and assimilationist project: "government policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 43). Colonization continues through the mechanisms by which the colonial state and dominant colonial culture suppress Indigenous cultures and livelihoods (Brayboy, 2005; King, 2016). As Alfred and Corntassel (2005) explain, contemporary settlers follow the colonial legacy "by trying to eradicate [Indigenous peoples'] existence as peoples through the erasure of the histories and geographies that provide the foundation of Indigenous cultural identities and sense of self" (p. 598).

Thus, an ahistorical context will be insufficient for understanding contemporary realities in Indigenous households and communities. In order to understand why community-led school food program facilitators are able to speak to a disproportionate need among Indigenous children, an analysis of the colonial project must be traced back into the past and carried into the future. Despite colonial and neoliberal intentions to isolate today's inequality as a phenomenon of individuality, colonization remains endemic to the ways Indigenous children experience food insecurity and hunger.

4.2   The Imposition of the Colonial Food System

The colonial project on now-Canadian soil has been characterized by settlement, assimilation, genocide, destruction of land, and economic restructuring. European colonial efforts imposed physical and cultural genocide; displacement; legal, political and economic control; and the seizure and exploitation of natural resources (King, 2016).

Colonial measures aimed at assimilation and erasure, such as the reserve system, treaty processes, the Indian Act, and the residential school system caused intergenerational disruption to mediums of cultural transmission, including traditional foodways (Bodirsky & Johnson, 2008). These policies displaced Nations from their traditional territories, eradicated entire populations, separated families, imposed European beliefs and cultures, and established capitalist modes of operation on land, food, and bodies (King, 2016). Food in particular, by virtue of its deep connections to land, its necessity for life, and its role in practicing and maintaining culture, has been uniquely targeted by colonization efforts (King, 2016). The destruction of Indigenous food systems and the imposition of the colonial food system has been fundamental to the colonial project and has lasting consequences today.

The world has witnessed a massive transformation in political economic logic that has shaped the proliferation of the modern colonial food system. Through the emergence of urban industry and commerce, the capacity of peasant production was outstripped by manufacturing and industrial production (Kautsky, 1988). The peasantry, once able to maintain self-sufficiency through food production and the production of essential goods, now competed with an industrial system that could produce goods better and for cheaper. Once this transition has occurred, "peasant economic existence, and with it peasant life in general, becomes impossible without money" (Kautsky, 1988, p. 15). The peasantry is forced to turn to the market, commodifying their products and tailoring production to the needs of a capitalist food system. "The peasant was now dependent on the market, which proved to be even more moody and unpredictable than the weather," susceptible to fluctuating prices and to the whims of buyers and sellers (Kautsky, 1998, p. 16).

Although Kautsky (1988) writes about agrarian transformation in Europe in particular, the same logics and processes were brought to Canada. Kautsky's conclusions — that the market was ever more devastating to food producers' livelihoods than nature had been — can be similarly applied to the consequences of the imposition

of colonial logics on Indigenous foodways. As King (2016) so poignantly summarizes the logic of the historical and ongoing colonial project and its impact on Indigenous food systems: "teach Indians to fish, but teach them to be Christian fishers. And then you can sell them fishing gear" (p. 104).

According to Robin Kimmerer (2013), traditional Indigenous relationships to food and land are characterized by responsibility, community, and gratitude. These relationships have been forcibly oppressed and nearly destroyed by the incursion of colonial ideologies and institutions. Indigenous traditions that view the natural world as a gift rather than a commodity have been attacked by the colonial ideology that land and food can be privately owned. In the minds of settlers, and in the mindset of the colonial food system, land and the goods it produces are property. When the needs of the market determine the most valuable use of land and the most important commodities to produce, rather than the needs of the people or the needs of the environment, what was once a communal gift becomes merely a tool for personal wealth. The displacement of Indigenous peoples to unproductive lands, and the parceling off and marketing of traditional territories, relegated control over land, food, and the economy in general to settlers (King, 2016).

These processes served to separate Indigenous communities from natural resources and traditional food sources. Through the residential school system, children were deliberately removed from their traditional foodways, and separated from intergenerational teachings of trapping, hunting, fishing, gathering, and preparation (Neegan, 2005). Indigenous foods were prohibited and scorned, while the food that was served was grossly inadequate, causing hunger, malnutrition, and illness (Neegan, 2005). While these explicit acts of displacement, assimilation, and erasure may seem to be situated in the past, these colonial processes have continued. Particular to the colonial incursion into Indigenous foodways, Morrison (2011) as well as Skinner, Hanning, and Tsuji (2013) point to environmental degradation and contamination, climate change, neoliberal trade agendas, lack of access to land, breakdown of tribal social structures,

loss of traditional food practices, and socio-economic marginalization as acts of the modern colonial political economic project.

Defined by the commodification of both land and food (Kautsky, 1988), today's food system is dependent on the destruction of the subsistence agriculture, communal land use, and gift economies that once defined Indigenous foodways on now-Canadian soil (Kimmerer, 2013). The disruption of Indigenous foodways, through displacement, seizure of land, and cultural erasure and assimilation, has created a persistent dependence on Western foods produced by the colonial food system. The institutions, social structures, and inequalities produced by these acts of colonization have not been excised. Rather, the ongoing maintenance of these colonial processes has allowed for the persistence of disproportionate poverty, food insecurity, and adverse health outcomes among Indigenous Canadians.

4.3   Modern Disparities in the Colonial Neoliberal Paradigm

The history of colonization in Canada is crucial to the understanding that modern inequalities are the direct, ongoing impacts of colonial processes (Brayboy, 2005). Colonial sentiments of property ownership, industrialization, and individual freedom are endemic to the neoliberal ideology that dominates the political economy of today. Together, these ideologies perpetuate massive inequality across the country that disproportionately disadvantages Indigenous peoples. Colonization has always been a political economic project, and is now manifesting itself through neoliberal policies that exacerbate poverty, ill-health, and food insecurity among Indigenous communities and households.

Indigenous Canadians are more likely to experience food insecurity than any other ethnic group in Canada (Tarasuk et al., 2016). In 2014, 25.7 percent of Indigenous Canadians experienced food insecurity, while 7.9 percent experienced severe food insecurity, categorized by missing meals, reducing food intake, or going days without

food (Tarasuk et al., 2016). This prevalence of 7.9 percent is more than three times as high as the rate of severe food insecurity among white Canadians, at 2.4 percent (Tarasuk et al., 2016). Additionally, rates of diabetes are nearly three times as high among Indigenous Canadians compared to the national average (Milburn, 2004). Disproportionately high rates of diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cardiovascular disease contribute to a life expectancy among Indigenous Canadians that is five to seven years lower than that of the national average (Mundel & Chapman, 2010). Mundel and Chapman (2010) argue that colonization underlies each of these disproportionate outcomes.

Clearly, colonial violence against Indigenous bodies has not ceased, but has been transformed and works through mechanisms embedded in the contemporary political economic project. According to Corntassel (2008), "disruptions to Indigenous livelihoods, governance, and natural-world relationships can jeopardize the overall health, well-being, identity, and continuity of Indigenous communities" (p. 118). In his own community of Cape Breton/Unamaki, Milburn (2004) has found that environmental degradation had devastated access to traditional food sources, necessitating a dependence on industrial foods. He argues that, "traditional diets and lifestyles provide protection against Western diseases, as rates of chronic, degenerative disease were historically low in Indigenous populations" (Milburn, 2004, p. 415). Comparing the health outcomes of the average U.S. diet to those among !Kung, Evenki, and Quechua Indigenous peoples, Milburn concludes that, "clearly, humans can thrive on a diversity of dietary patterns, and the modern diet, characteristic of industrial, consumer culture, is not one of them" (p. 420-421). But this modern diet has dominated the food system, imposed by historic and contemporary colonial practices.

The reserve process, which systemically displaced Indigenous communities onto unproductive lands, has created massive disparities in food access. In addition, these lands are becoming increasingly isolated and contaminated. In their study of on-reserve First Nations households in Fort Albany, Skinner et al. (2013) found the prevalence of

food insecurity to be more than seven times that of Canadian households in general. First Nations food security survey respondents in Fort Albany noted that traditional foods were not being incorporated into institutional assessments of food insecurity, and were particularly concerned with poor access to traditional foods due to climate change, contamination, and expense (Skinner et al., 2013). These barriers — the anthropogenic altering of the change due to industrialization, environmental degradation due to inadequate regulation of industry, and the commodification of the means of hunting as a corporate practice — have been externally imposed on Indigenous communities who once maintained sustainable food practices. Thus, Skinner et al. (2013) demonstrate how Indigenous communities are particularly disenfranchised within a colonial food system, as various environmental, political, and economic factors compound to interfere with traditional food access.

When framed ahistorically and apolitically, those who do not thrive under the neoliberal paradigm have simply not successfully leveraged market mechanisms. Other individuals have the prerogative to act benevolently and come to their aid, but the government has effectively shirked its obligation to produce supportive public policy (Riches & Tarasuk, 2014). Situated historically and politically, however, those that disproportionately experience the negative impacts of neoliberalization are Indigenous, and this must be seen as an extension of colonial processes. The peoples and communities who experience increased rates of poverty, illness, and food insecurity, as well as decreased life expectancy, are the same as those whose erasure has been attempted since first contact with colonizers. The Canadian government has not decolonized or made restitution for colonization, but has, under the neoliberal paradigm, maintained colonial practices of the seizure of land, food, and bodies.

4.4   Community-Led School Food Programs in the Colonial Neoliberal Paradigm

As described in previous chapters, within the phenomenon of charitable roll-out writ large, community-led school food programs have emerged to address childhood food insecurity and the unequal educational outcomes caused by the experience of hunger while in school. In the absence of a national school food program, it is up to community-led school food programs to operate within the charitable model to address these inequalities. Often working with individual schools, these organizations identify the need for their programs and implement diverse strategies to meet this need. Those in need, those perceived to be in need, and the existence of the need itself all must be understood as a function of the colonial neoliberal paradigm and analyzed within this particular historical and political economic context. The staff and board members of these organizations must make difficult decisions about who their programs can reach as they negotiate the constraints of budget, space, and time. As illustrated by the staff and volunteers of Food for Kids and Regina School Food, it is clear that the facilitators of community-led school food programs are conscious of the racialized identities and experiences of the children they support as Indigenous in a colonial society. Facilitators are aware of the ways neoliberal policies and colonial processes manifest disproportionate poverty and hunger among Indigenous children and families, as well as stereotypes that stem from colonial racism and neoliberal individualism.

As a site of persistent income inequality, increasing food insecurity, charitable responses to childhood hunger, and a high urban Indigenous population, Regina is an informative location for understanding how neoliberal policies and colonial processes manifest themselves among Indigenous schoolchildren. Research participants framed poverty and hunger as unnecessary inequalities that exist in a society with adequate resources to eradicate them. Referring to the hunger of the children her organization serves, Francine reflected, "I dunno why we're like that in Saskatchewan. We've got so much of everything." Glenda similarly discussed the lack of support for school food

programs receive from the government and said, "it's really sad. And the country that we live in, and the affluence that is here, you know, that there's anybody that's hungry in this country and homeless — it's ridiculous." Both Glenda and Francine point to the existence of poverty and its outcomes as unnecessary in a province and country of abundance.

While many participants spoke generally about trying to address the hunger caused by poverty without naming racialized inequality, the statistics are clear about who is disproportionately poor in Regina, and where. A comparison of City of Regina neighbourhood profiles reveals that the neighbourhood in which Food for Kids operates has both the highest percentage of Indigenous residents and the highest percentage of residents earning below the low income measure city-wide (City of Regina, 2019). The Regina population is ten percent Indigenous, with thirteen percent of total residents earning below the low income measure (City of Regina, 2019). In Food for Kids' neighbourhood, forty-four percent of residents are Indigenous and thirty-four percent of residents earn below the low income measure (City of Regina, 2019). Of course, this is not to say that all Indigenous residents earn below the low income measure, in this neighbourhood nor city-wide, and the neighbourhood profiles do not cross-tabulate this data. However, according to a report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Regina has the second highest Indigenous child poverty rate of all Canadian cities, at forty-one percent (Macdonald & Wilson, 2016). This is compared to a child poverty rate of twelve percent among non-Indigenous children in Regina, representing the largest gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous child poverty rates of any city in Canada (Macdonald & Wilson, 2016). Designed to target children in need, these organizations are necessarily targeting Indigenous children, who are disproportionately negatively impacted by the colonial neoliberal climate.

An Indigenous women herself, Francine explains that she "come[s] from the same background that these kids kind of came from," and says, "I know what they're going through." As described above, the legacy of colonization is the ongoing inequality of

poverty, food insecurity, and illness between Indigenous and settler Canadians. Indigenous Canadians disproportionately bear the consequences of the reality of government roll-back because of their removal from traditional and productive territories, the attempted erasure of their cultures and communities, and the entrenchment of institutional racism into the fabric of Canada. This structural inequality necessitates government restitution and intentional decolonizing policy-making. Instead, modern neoliberal ideology serves to reinscribe colonial policies and beliefs. Public school is a site where "the colonial system of the past continues to function" (Neegan, 2005, p. 8) — not only where Indigenous knowledges and leaders are underrepresented, Indigenous students are alienated, and notions of inferiority are institutionalized leading to high drop-out rates (Neegan, 2005), but also where Indigenous children's hunger and its many negative outcomes go unaddressed by the government. Through an anecdote about meeting the grandchildren of students that she fed thirty years ago, Francine points to the ways that the same families, from initial colonial efforts through to today, have been oppressed into a cycle of poverty: "when I look back at all the years, at the students that come back [...] some of them are still living the poverty line. And their children, and their children, are using the Food for Kids lunch program yet, eh. It's so hard out there."

While they themselves are aware of the ways in which poverty and hunger are systemically reproduced in Indigenous households, program facilitators are also conscious of racist stereotypes that prevent others from seeing this reality. A white board member, Morgan, names this phenomenon as such:

> I think we have some, um, what do you want to call it? Racism or stereotypes of what a poor person is and why a kid is coming to school hungry or fed. [...] For example, if I were to send a kid with a slice of bread or a slice of pizza every single day for lunch, people probably wouldn't talk the same as if you saw an Indigenous person who lived in a specific area who may look a little bit differently from an upper middle-class white person. For sure, it's a different conversation.

That conversation, Morgan goes on to explain, surrounded the individual shortcomings

of Indigenous parents. When the food choices of racialized bodies are scrutinized, this becomes terrain for the reification of stereotyping and blame. As Morgan emphasizes: "the blame gets placed on 'the mother and the family doesn't budget properly.'" The conversation becomes one of personal failings within a flawed racial identity, rather than a consequence of a larger political economic and sociocultural structure rooted in colonialism. These judgments are rooted in the long history of stereotypes about irresponsible parenting and poor behavioural choices that were central to the rhetoric of residential schools, and have found continued salience in the individualism that is fundamental to neoliberalism. As Morgan explains, the result is often that the food choices of white parents go unscrutinized, while Indigenous families are hypervisible and subject to the imposition of racially-derived blame.

All research participants expressed that they partake in the facilitation of community-led school food programs, either as staff or volunteers, because they have seen the need. They are all aware that children in Regina are going to school hungry, and that this has multiple negative impacts on behaviour, learning capacity, and health. Many participants explicitly named the government as the failing party necessitating their intervention. Staff and volunteers shared the feeling that the need for their programs is increasing in the wake of cuts to social services and fluctuations in the economy. The statistics are clear that it is disproportionately Indigenous children who the government is failing, and who may need the services of Regina School Food and Food for Kids. A few facilitators explicitly named this racial dynamic and shed insight on the ways in which the political economy and the sociocultural climate disadvantages Indigenous students. These findings suggest that future research can more directly investigate the racial dynamics of charitable school food programs, including collecting more robust data on facilitators' perspectives on race and on the demographics of program recipients. This preliminary analysis provides evidence for the claim that community-led school food programs are situated as a charitable roll-out in direct response to the colonial neoliberal paradigm.

4.5   Conclusion

As Grande (2004) argues, persistent socioeconomic disadvantages among Indigenous households "is not a problem of children and families but rather, first and foremost, a problem that has been consciously and historically produced by and through the systems of colonization" (p. 19). However, the mantras of colonial and neoliberal ideologies strive to convince otherwise. Together, these two structures spread an ahistorical and apolitical message that individual families are to blame for any experience of poverty and hunger. While Indigenous children, and their children, and their children, as explained by Francine, continue to attend the schools of the colonial state hungry, the prevailing political economic discourse refuses to see this phenomenon in historical context. Indigenous childhood hunger is a problem to be solved by market mechanisms first, charitable programs second, and government not at all.

The bodies of Indigenous children continue to be colonized by the government's failure to decolonize land, food, and the economy. School food programs, led by Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members, are simultaneously doing the work of feeding children, advocating for policy reform, and challenging Indigenous stereotypes. However, as they themselves are aware, charitable roll-out will not be sufficient to address widespread poverty and hunger. As long as colonial neoliberalism is the political economic model, Indigenous families and children will continue to disproportionately bear the consequences.

5 Imagining Canada's School Food Future

"We would like to put ourselves out of business if the federal government would say, 'oh

we're gonna have a national school food program now.'

Well good, we would be waving goodbye."

-Rose

How and why are school food programs operationalized by community organizations? The staff and volunteers who facilitate these programs inform this question by illustrating three key themes that illuminate the class, gender, and race relations existing within their work, their communities, and the country: (1) functioning within the neoliberal context, (2) operating as gendered subjects, and (3) acting to support racialized subjects. Together, these themes highlight the shortcomings of the neoliberal model, wherein gendered subjects facilitate charitable programs to support underserved, often racialized, community members. However, as the facilitators of school food programs are acutely aware, this paradigm is not natural or inevitable. Rather, they have given a great amount of thought to the ways school food could be operationalized in Canada to disrupt these realities.

5.1 Informing the "How?"

How are school food programs operationalized by community organizations? Community-led school food programs operate in ways consistent with analyses of other charitable food programs, such as food banks (Poppendieck, 1998; Riches & Tarasuk, 2014). As explained in chapter 2, these organizations depend on the benevolence of the municipal government, other local organizations, and private donors in order to sustain their work. They also deploy creative fundraising strategies, such as Food for Kids' bannock sales. The partnerships with other organizations and with government become increasingly important as school food facilitators continue to witness a growing need for

their services. How they operate is closely linked to the goodwill of supporters, making organizations mindful of changes to the economy and public policy that might affect others' capacity to support their work.

How community organizations operationalize school food programs also depends on the labour available to secure funding, coordinate food procurement, prepare the food, and facilitate its distribution. As I argued in chapter 3, this labour is highly gendered and is consistent with a larger phenomenon of government roll-back and the roll-out of feminine care. The women who staff Food for Kids — who have all been employed there for over a decade — earn minimum wage, consonant with the long history of undervaluing and underpaying women's food work. Regina School Food, similarly, has two staff members and depends on a network of volunteers for all additional labour. The unpaid caring labour of the volunteers is vital to the capacity of the organization. This dependence on volunteer labour, not just by the organization but by the state as well, further emphasizes how women are required to do unpaid feeding care work, not only for their own families, but for the nation.

Additionally, given the constraints of operating within the charitable model in a neoliberal climate, school food organizations must make selective decisions about who they serve. Both Food for Kids and Regina School Food expressed that they know they are not fully meeting the need and would like to serve more students in more schools, but are limited by funding, space, and labour. Given this reality, who is (or gets perceived as) in need has to be analyzed historically and politically, in the context of the colonial neoliberal project, as was done in chapter 4. Research participants' recognition that Indigenous students have a different experience than non-Indigenous students is consistent with the statistics on disproportionate poverty and hunger among Regina's and Canada's Indigenous populations. Therefore, community-led school food programs, by virtue of their efforts to meet the need where it is the greatest, are operationalized in ways that directly respond to the ways the colonial neoliberal paradigm harms Indigenous bodies.

5.2 Informing the "Why?"

Why are school food programs operationalized by community organizations? In considering the histories of their organizations as well as their own personal motivations, many facilitators thoughtfully link their personal motivations to structural realities. Staff and volunteers are largely motivated by the existence of childhood hunger, but they do not isolate this hunger as natural, inevitable, or individual. Rather, they knowingly participate in a band-aid solution to address hunger that they know is rooted in systems of income inequality, inadequate social services, and a lack of government intervention. Additionally, they feel their own intervention is necessary not only because of the immediate urgency of hunger, but also because of its many consequences, including unequal learning outcomes, adverse behaviour, and long-term health impacts. By addressing hunger, many participants felt that they were mitigating these additional factors. Several participants expressed that food work was not the only element of the organization. Many felt that they also had an important role in raising awareness and advocating for change by speaking to corporate and community organizations, and by staying attuned to the broader movement for a national school food program.

For many of the research participants, socially constructed gendered expectations were deeply engrained in their motivations to get involved with a school food organization. As many of the staff and volunteers explained, they had children in school themselves and wanted to address the reality that other people's children were going to school hungry. For several volunteers, their children had grown up or their husbands had passed away, and they were looking for a way to continue caring for others. For many, they had either retired from a caring career or had by now made a career out of working for a school food organization.

Less explicit than gender relations were the ways facilitators related to their work racially. One board member expressed that racism and stereotyping toward Indigenous families is very prevalent in the city. She explained that, as a white mother, the food

choices she makes for her children are not scrutinized as closely as those of Indigenous families. She felt that school food programs could play an important role in getting food to all students without placing blame on the families or the children. Francine, an Indigenous women herself, was motivated to join Food for Kids because she "come[s] from the same background that these kids kind of came from" and knows "what they're going through." Francine had experienced how difficult it can be to be an Indigenous child in the colonial neoliberal paradigm, and felt that her work was mitigating at least some of these challenges by providing meals to Indigenous students.

How and why school food programs are operationalized, then, is inseparable from class, gender, and race relations that function at the intersection of the personal and the systemic. Importantly, the facilitators of these school food programs view their work neither as ideal nor permanent. Many of them have thought critically about the alternatives to the current model and the many possibilities for Canada's school food future.

5.3   Possibilities for Canada's School Food Future

The staff and volunteers have given considerable thought to the possibilities for the future of Canadian school food programs. In analyzing interview responses and field observations, the staff and volunteers of Regina School Food and Food for Kids recommend a school food future that is: (1) government supported, (2) universal, (3) educational. The benefits of government supported, universal, and multi-faceted school food programs have been argued extensively (Hernandez, 2018; Poppendieck, 2010; Rutledge, 2016), and it is therefore not my intention to repeat these arguments. Rather, it is to situate the insights of community-led school food facilitators in conversation with academics, and to show that these actors make important contributions to the existing conversation on the possibilities for a more just school food system. These insights will be crucial if we are to use grounded community-based knowledge to develop Canada's

school food future.

Many participants felt strongly that the government should be fully supporting school food programs. As was illustrated in chapter 2, there is an awareness that the neoliberal government has downloaded the responsibility for childhood hunger onto charities and individuals. Community-led school food program facilitators want the government to be doing this work. Rose articulated this best by saying, "we would like to put ourselves out of business if the federal government would say, 'oh we're gonna have a national school food program now.' Well good, we would be waving goodbye." As has been argued elsewhere (Poppendieck, 1998; Peck & Tickell, 2002; Riches & Tarasuk, 2014), these programs, in many ways, deepen neoliberal logics by further entrenching the neoliberal response. For many participants, this is not what they want to be doing. While some are more cynical than others, the possibility that the government can take on school food programs is highly desirable. According to Rutledge (2016), the shift to government-supported school feeding programs marks a distinct counter-neoliberal shift away from individual responsibility to collective responsibility. When done well, Rutledge (2016) argues, government-supported programs can also challenge normative gender roles by reducing the burden on women and by adequately compensating food work. The staff and volunteers of Food for Kids and Regina School Food articulated the many ways that their charitable model is precarious and limited. As a band-aid solution, facilitators know that they cannot address the root causes of hunger, but are merely treating the symptoms of a broader systemic illness. The government provides the most promising possibility for addressing not only childhood hunger through school food programs, but also changing the economic conditions that make childhood hunger so prevalent.

Following the desire for the government to take responsibility for school food programs is the call for these programs to be universal. In her critique of the eligibility-based system of free, reduced, and full-priced school food in the United States, Poppendieck (2010) argues that a universal program can provide all students with a

meal that meets a nutrition standard, can relieve all families of having to do this work themselves, and can relieve school districts of burdensome and expensive paperwork. When asked about the possibility of a universal lunch program, Glenda responded, "I know there's a lot of kids out there that don't need it, but it doesn't matter, there are kids that do. I would love to see it. I would love to see that happen." Glenda was also one of a few participants who pointed to other countries to make the case that there are models of national school food programs elsewhere, and Canada does not have to reinvent the wheel. Morgan had similar sentiments to Glenda, saying, "there's also a debate about universal versus kind of targeted programs, um, and I'm a firm believer in the universal program." Key benefits of universal programs, according to Morgan, are that, "right across the board, kids aren't getting the actual nutrients they need, so there could be some advantage to a national school food lunch program," and "with an economic downturn or an emergency, anybody at any point in time could need a social safety net of some support. And if there was a national school food lunch program there would be some sort of safety net." All children, these participants argue, benefit from a guaranteed, consistent source of nutritious food. Universal programs also ameliorate concerns with stigma, which several participants acknowledged was a worry in their targeted programs where only select students are served. In their recommendations for the formation of a national school food program in Canada, Hernandez and colleagues (2018) argue that, "universality is important because it preserves the dignity of all students (both those who can pay and those who cannot)" (p. 220).

Finally, staff and volunteers call for a national school food program that promotes community building as well as life skills. For those that facilitate community-led school food programs, their work is about much more than the food. They feel that the work they do now can educate students about nutrition, teach them how to prepare meals, and foster relationships among students and between students and staff. They argue that these outcomes can be accomplished to a greater extent through a government-supported universal national school food program. Academics would agree that effective school food programs have both personal and systemic benefits. According

to Hernandez and colleagues (2018), given that women continue to do the majority of food work, "it could be argued that integrating SFPs [school food programs] with curriculum and hands-on learning with regards to growing and preparing food could contribute to a more equitable distribution of food labour in households once participating children reach adulthood" (p. 215).

The argument that school food should be incorporated into the overall curriculum is a common one (Hernandez, 2018; Poppiendieck, 2010; Rutledge, 2016), and was echoed by research participants. Rose expressed that she would like to see a system that treats food "like it should be treated, an extremely important part of our lives." Morgan argued that "an ideal school food program would — the school would grow, harvest, the food themselves. They would have, you know, local suppliers potentially for the protein, or something like that. Um, and it's integrated full onto the curriculum, right?" Participants want to see a school food program that teaches children about nutrition, where food comes from, how to prepare it, and how to enjoy it together. Several participants also expressed that any national program must still be considerate of local needs and preferences, and should not be co-opted by corporate interests. This vision sets a much higher bar than having children simply not be hungry, but has greater consideration for children's relationships to food and to society.

5.4   In Conclusion: "It Shouldn't be this Hard."

When I mentioned to the "cookie ladies" that the United States has a national school food program while Canada still does not, the group was astounded. Nicole said that she was surprised because normally we think of Canada as being more socially progressive than the United States, so it is interesting that the United States has these programs and Canada does not. The room erupted with "that doesn't make any sense!" and "isn't that strange?" The reality, however, is that Canada has a long-standing history of placing the responsibility of feeding children on individual women, and has

now fully embraced a neoliberal paradigm that reproduces these gendered expectations through the roll-out of charitable approaches. The current reality that necessitates the "cookie ladies'" volunteer efforts is entirely consistent with Canada's history.

While staring at a full oven in a tiny community-centre kitchen, full pans of cheese biscuits waiting on the counter, Denise sighed and said "we're stuck." Charitable organizations are, in many ways, stuck. They get stuck by increasing need, by inadequate government support, by the pinched budgets of donors, by depending on volunteer labour, by limited infrastructure, and so on. When asked about potential opportunities for her organization, Francine immediately laughed and replied "oh yeah, a lottery! Yeah! Oh God, yeah, a lottery or something!" Only partially joking, Francine illustrates how desperately these organizations would need a miracle like a lottery win, if they were to do all of the work necessary to address all the need that they know exists. These organizations are stuck, forced into saying "no" to some schools and providing targeted programs to others, contrary to their own beliefs in the importance of universality.

Yet, despite Thatcher's proclamations, the facilitators of community-led school food programs can imagine an alternative to the paradigm of roll-back and roll-out neoliberalism. School food facilitators do see an alternative to neoliberalism, in spite of — or perhaps because of — working so fully within the neoliberal box. Their desires for a government-supported, universal, educational national school food program in Canada raise the crucial counter-neoliberal question: where is the state?

Given that Canada has yet to establish a national school food program, and instead relies on community members to facilitate the provision of food to children in need, it is crucial to understand community members' own perceptions of this work if the school food climate is to be thoroughly assessed and re-imagined. Understanding how and why community-led school food programs are currently operationalized is key to shaping a just counter-neoliberal Canadian school food future. As participants in this

study, the community members trying to feed hungry children revealed just how stuck they are, and shared exactly what must happen for school food programs to become "unstuck." Nicole perfectly summarized the reality of today's school food programs: "it shouldn't be this hard."

6   Appendices

6.1   Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. What is the history of the organization that you work with?

2. What are the primary operations and goals of your organization?

3. How did you first become involved with this organization?

4. Can you describe the school food element of your organization?

5. Why do you think school food programs are important in the schools that your organization works with?

6. What do you see as the strengths and achievements of your organization's work with school food?

7. What do you see as the challenges of your organization's work with school food?

8. What do you see as the threats to your organization's ability to successfully provide school food programs?

9. What do you see as potential opportunities for your organization to be able to strengthen or expand its work with school food?

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8 Vita

Education

Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York

Master's of Science in Food Studies, Expected Completion: May 2019

GPA: 4.0

Quest University Canada, Squamish, British Columbia

Bachelor of Arts and Sciences, May 2017

GPA: 3.85

Teaching Experience

Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York

Teaching Assistant, August 2017-May 2019

FST 403: The Human Right to Food and Nutrition

FST 102: Food Fights: Contemporary Food Issues

FST 306: Food Cooperatives

FST 307: Feeding the World: Global Agrifood Governance

Professional Work

North Central Community Association, Regina, Saskatchewan

Community Garden Coordinator, Summer 2016 & 2018

Publications

"Everything for Sale Here is Dead," Graduate Journal of Food Studies Vol. 5 No. 2

Conference Presentations

"'Together We Can Grow Community': Community Gardening in North Central Regina," ASFS/AFHVS 2018

"Lunch Money: Understanding Community-Led School Food Programs in Regina, Saskatchewan," GAFS 2018

Poster Presentations

"Rights or Wrongs: Concerns with Canada's Implementation of the Right to Food,"
Falk College Student Research Celebration 2018

"Lunch Money: Understanding Community-Led School Food Programs in Regina,
Saskatchewan," Falk College Student Research Celebration 2019

Awards

Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York

Certificate in University Teaching, 2019

Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award, 2019

Roseane do Socorro Gonçalves Viana Human Rights Award, 2019

Quest University Canada, Squamish, British Columbia

Classroom Citizen, 2016-2017

President's List, Four Semesters

Merit-Based Scholarship, 2013-2017

University Service

Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York

*Falk College Diversity and Inclusion Committee & Sub-Committee on Graduate
Assistant Training*

*Graduate Student Organization Academic Program Senator & Employment Issues
Committee Member*

Syracuse Graduate Employees United Organizing Committee

Food Studies Program Speaker Selection Committee

Fall 2017 Graduate Information Session

Professional Membership

Canadian Association for Food Studies, member since 2018

Association for the Study of Food and Society, member since 2018

Graduate Association for Food Studies, member since 2018