

ACCULTURATION IN A COMMUNITY GARDEN: THE SHIFTING ROLE OF A HMONG  
GARDEN IN EASTERN WISCONSIN

by

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## ABSTRACT

Sheboygan, Wisconsin is a small midwestern city that is home to a community garden that has been kept by a Hmong immigrant community for more than 30 years. This thesis uses a cultural geographic approach to present an ethnography of Sheboygan's Hmong community garden. This ethnography addresses convergent knowledge gaps in the literature on immigration in the United States, Hmong studies, and the political ecology of urban commons. It is presented that the interrelated processes of acculturation and neoliberalization have shaped the garden and those who use it. Acculturation is an important determining factor in how members of Sheboygan's Hmong community perceive the garden and the expansion of neoliberal policy in Sheboygan has been shaped by individuals' relationships with it. These relationships, as well as power relationships in Sheboygan, are explored in the narrative of an event that led to the garden's 2015 move.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

More people are immigrating today than ever before. With forces such as population growth, climate change, conflict, and many others driving movement, a 2016 US Census report predicts that this trend will continue into the future. The interaction of immigrant populations with dominant host societies is a source of public anxiety in many host countries (Brader et al. 2008). With immigration politics dominating news headlines and public debate in the United States, it is important for local and national policy to be based on a sound understanding of these interactions between immigrant and native communities.

Within the United States, studies of immigration processes have historically focused on large cities and the coastal and border regions (Christian 2008). However, small and midsized cities in the Midwest are home to growing immigrant populations, many of which exhibit unique patterns to those living in large cities (Christian 2008). This thesis will provide a case study of Sheboygan Wisconsin's Hmong population. The case study takes a place-based geographic approach centering on a Hmong community garden. Recent work in the field of geography has identified gardens as spaces of interest that may impact acculturation as well as the nature of neoliberalization. This is hypothesized to be true for Sheboygan, and a multidisciplinary geographic approach will test this hypothesis. The literature around acculturation, neoliberalism, and community gardens will be described further in this introduction.

### *1.1 WHO ARE THE HMONG PEOPLE?*

The Hmong are an Asian ethnic group originating from mountainous regions of Southeast Asia connected by similar language and cultural patterns. The group self-identify as “Hmong”, however, outsiders in their native countries have other labels for them, such as “Miao” in China and “Meo” in Thailand (Yang 2001). The Hmong are a “stateless nation”, and traditionally live(d) a seminomadic, agrarian lifestyle (Vang n.d.). Countries that are home to groups of Hmong include China, the United States, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar, with the greatest population of Hmong in China (Encyclopedia Britannica estimates the number of individuals to be around 2.7M).

### *1.2 HMONG IN THE US*

U.S involvement in Southeast Asia has led to the formation of a burgeoning community of Hmong within the United States, which is now estimated to host the world’s 4<sup>th</sup> largest Hmong population. Most Hmong living in the United States today were (or are descendants of those who were) forced to flee from Laos, along with an estimated 10% of the country’s population, shortly after the end of the United States “Secret War”. The Hmong were recruited by the US Central Intelligence Agency to assist in destroying North Vietnamese supply lines running through Laos. Hmong-Laotians faced persecution beginning in the mid-70s when a communist government took control of the country at the end of the conflict.

Immigration to the United States, mainly from refugee camps in Thailand, began under the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act (extended to Laotian refugees in 1976), continued under the Refugee Act of 1980, and has occurred in waves since that time. Immigration peaked in the year 1980 when 27,000 Hmong entered the country (Bulk 1996).

Immigration continues to this day, however, with a recent large influx of Hmong immigrants coming from the Wat Tham Krabok monastery in Thailand in the early 2000s (Grigoleit 2006). Hmong refugee admission to the US has utilized partnerships between the US government and nonprofit organizations, many based in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The most common primary destinations for Hmong immigrants have been California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. However, secondary chain migration has played a significant role in shaping the American Hmong community as well (Tapp 2017). The Hmong-American population was estimated by the US census to be 260,073 in 2010 (likely an underestimate due to factors common to many minorities in the US as well as Hmong-Americans identifying as Laotian) and are distributed across all 50 states and D.C. and Puerto Rico. This estimate represents a 40% population increase since 2000 after a 97% increase between the 1990 and 2000 censuses.

Acculturation in the Hmong-American community has led to a distinct generational stratification. Yang and Solheim identify three distinct generations of Hmong Americans: generation 1 (those who immigrated to the US after the age of 12), generation 1.5 (those who immigrated to the US between the ages of 3 and 11), and generation 2 (those who were born in the US or who immigrated before the age of 3) (2007). These generations are used throughout the literature on Hmong-Americans and generally used as a proxy for degree of acculturation.

This generational stratification offers the opportunity to observe the effects of acculturation processes within Hmong communities in real time. Studies have explored the effects of generational stratification on Hmong self-help organizations (Yang 2012), identity and language (Yang 2008), education (Peng 2015), healthcare (Lee 2013), and gardening (Miyares 1997). This thesis adds to this body of literature a case study from Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

### *1.3 HMONG IN WISCONSIN*

The distribution of Hmong in the United States has been shaped both through their primary immigration to locations in the US, largely influenced by NGO sponsors, but also through the process of secondary immigration. Hmong kinship relations and social structure have proved to be important motivators for secondary motivation. Families and individuals move to be reunited with extended family or hear of greater job or assistance opportunities in another part of the country from a trusted relative (Tapp 2017). One of these secondary movements of Hmong has been a wave of emigration from Fresno, CA (once the largest Hmong population center in the US) to the Midwest and other regions.

As noted by Mark Pfeifer in 2013, the 2010 census shows that 49% of Hmong in the United States were living in the Midwest region, while Minneapolis/St. Paul is now home to the largest Hmong population in the country. Wisconsin has also witnessed a sizeable Hmong population grow, as 4 of the 12 largest Hmong communities in the country are in the state. In total, more than 49,240 of these Hmong-Americans live in Wisconsin. This population represents nearly 1% of the population of Wisconsin, making the Hmong a visible and important minority in what is an apparently homogenous state.

The impact of the Hmong in Wisconsin has historically been greater than their numbers might suggest. This is exemplified through writing on the Hmong community of Wausau, Wisconsin. While Wisconsin's largest Hmong population resides in Milwaukee, a relatively large and cosmopolitan city, the second largest population resides in Wausau, a city of 39,000 that in the 1980 census was determined to be the most racially homogenous city in America. In the late 1980s and early 1990's the presence of a rapidly growing Hmong population had begun to cause racial tensions centered around a controversial school bussing policy (Mentzer 2014).

In 1994, this tension was described and ultimately linked to nationwide race and ethnic anxiety by Roy Beck in an article that would launch his career as a prominent voice in the anti-immigration movement.

Robert Mentzer's 2014 article in the Wausau Daily Herald is a response to Beck, in which he claims most of Beck's worries turned out to be false. For example, Mentzer claims that Wausau is now 11% Hmong (a far cry from Beck's impending takeover) and includes an interview with a Wausau native who was struggling as a Hmong high school student in 1994 who has since returned as a successful doctor, a metaphor for the growth of the Hmong community of Wausau. Gordon's 2016 interview with Hmong community leader Yee Leng Xiong reflects similar hopeful, if not triumphant, tones as Mentzer. Most importantly to this thesis, Coates' 2016 article describes the large Hmong garden kept by the Wausau Hmong community. Gardens like this have become a fixture across the state.

#### 1.4 SHEBOYGAN'S HMONG COMMUNITY



**Figure 1.1.** Hmong dancers perform at the Lao, Hmong and American Veterans Memorial at Deland Park in Sheboygan, May 30, 2016. Image courtesy of wuhl.com. The Memorial is a physical trace of Sheboygan's Hmong community.

Sheboygan is a mid-sized (49,313) and mostly white (81.6%) Wisconsin city like Wausau. Another thing Sheboygan shares with Wausau is that it is home to an “important center of Hmong population” (Pfeifer 2012). Sheboygan had an estimated Hmong population of 4,168 in 2010, ranking as the fourth largest in the state and twelfth largest nationally. Accordingly, the Hmong community of Sheboygan plays an important role shaping the city and within the broader Sheboygan community, typified by monuments such as the Hmong Veterans Memorial at Deland Park (pictured above). Sheboygan is an important center for the regional Hmong-American community as well, hosting large annual celebrations such as Hmong New Year and the Hmong Sports Tournament that attract participants from across the Midwest.

Lee and Green chose Sheboygan's Hmong New Year celebration as an occasion for their 2010 work studying the acculturation process of Hmong living in Southeast Wisconsin. A

survey called the East Asian Acculturation Measure (EAAM) was distributed to adults at Sheboygan’s Hmong New Year celebration. This survey tests the correlation between individuals’ acculturation with four possible models: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. These models describe ways acculturation may affect a person’s cultural identity and can be placed in the matrix shown in figure 1.2 below with dimensions for how connected an individual feels to their Hmong and American identities.

	<b>High connection with Hmong identity</b>	<b>Low connection with Hmong identity</b>
<b>High connection with American identity</b>	Integration	Assimilation
<b>Low connection with American identity</b>	Separation	Marginalization

**Figure 1.2.** Matrix representing the dimensions of acculturation described by Lee and Green. Integration was the most common among Sheboygan’s Hmong community.

The study found that the acculturation processes for participants most closely correlated with integration, that Hmong-Americans have adjusted to life in the US well, and that generation 2 and Hmong-Americans who can speak English are more likely to integrate and less likely to be marginalized. A correlation with integration means that acculturation in the Hmong community has tended to result in a greater sense of identity with both American and Hmong communities. Marginalization among non-English speakers means those individuals tend to experience a lower sense of identify with both American and Hmong communities. Lee and Green call for further mixed methods research on the acculturation process of Hmong-Americans and for the development of a standardized acculturation survey tailored more specifically to the Hmong.

## *1.5 COMMUNITY GARDENS*

The literature identifies community gardens as important spaces for immigrant populations' ability to reproduce and create cultural identities within host countries. In his 2011 work, Eizenberg claims that community gardens in New York City serve as a new form of commons. These commons (such as Latino "casita gardens") represent spaces where minority communities can reproduce their own cultural identities and practices. They also provide an opportunity to fight against the neoliberalization of the space occurring around them. Neoliberalism is an economic philosophy that manifests in different ways in cities. It is described in section 1.7 of this thesis. Community gardens as spaces of conflict and cultural reproduction are also discussed in works by Schmelzkopf and Holland (2002; 2004).

Augustina and Beilin investigate five gardens in a 2011 work and find that while the crop variety within plots does not reveal a gardener's cultural identity, the process of adapting to a host country's climate helps immigrants to form their identity in their new host country. This might suggest an instance where human-environment interaction rather than cultural interaction alone drives the acculturation. In a 2001 examination of three community gardens (one of them majority Hmong-American) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Kurtz notes the importance of garden institutions and how these spaces reflect and reproduce specific interpretations of community. It has also been found that young, generation 2 Hmong-Americans (those born in the US or who immigrated as infants) are less likely to garden due to greater degrees of acculturation (Miyares 2017). These studies identify different meanings of community gardens for different individuals.

Corlett et al. examine a predominantly Hmong-American garden in Sacramento, California in a 2003 work. This examination found that the garden was important for identity formation and helped to perpetuate cultural practices among participants because it served



similar functions as the tropical home gardens popular in the immigrant's native countries. Splitting the gardeners into two groups (younger and older), they found that older gardeners kept larger plots with greater varieties of crops than younger gardeners. They also found that older gardeners used the gardens to preserve their sense of identity and community while younger gardeners were motivated by the opportunity to produce cheap and convenient food. They note that the younger gardeners were not raised in agrarian communities, learning to garden from the older members of the community.

### *1.6 ACCULTURATION*

Acculturation is a term that has been used in many contexts and for many purposes, particularly in the field of anthropology, in the last century and remains a term with numerous, disparate, and even politically-charged meanings. This thesis will use a definition cohesive with Lee and Green's 2010 work in Sheboygan. In that study, the authors put forward a classic concept of acculturation, that acculturation is a "phenomenon which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield et al. 1936). However, Lee and Green use a survey that assumes a much more individualistic concept of acculturation (Barry 2001). Thus, acculturation should be defined in more explicitly individual terms.

In a place-based study of Hmong acculturation in California, Miyares describes acculturation as "a process by which immigrants or refugees learn to operate in the dominant culture of their host community by incorporating the new values, language, and modes of behavior into their personal culture" (1997). The definition more tightly fits the surveys

distributed by Lee and Green, which compare Hmong individual's cultural survey results to four different possible models of acculturation, these being assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. It is important to note that acculturation occurs for native individuals as well as immigrants, and the immigrant-centered nature of this introduction is because the acculturation process for Sheboygan's native population is beyond the scope of this study.

A final important note is that this work will make no attempt to qualify different models or degrees of acculturation as preferable or superior to others. While these questions may be relevant within the larger fields of immigration studies, they are beyond the scope of this work. Instead this thesis seeks to identify and describe the patterns present in Sheboygan and the effects they have on the landscape and community.

Acculturation has been well documented as a source of stress for immigrants. As such, the process is an important topic in Hmong-studies and has been linked to health outcomes, individual decision making, and other topics (Barry 2001; Franzen and Smith 2009; Lor et al. 2017). Understanding the acculturation process is an important step in serving Hmong, and other immigrant communities.

### *1.7 NEOLIBERALISM*

Neoliberalism is the dominant economic philosophy in the world that is based on market economics and the privatization of space. It is associated with political orientations that oppose social welfare and government regulation and promote private industry. The philosophy is so ubiquitous that is described as "a new planetary vulgate" (Bourdieu 2000). However, the implementation of neoliberal policy is highly path-dependent and uses local politics to remake political-economic space (Brenner and Theodore 2002). Peck joins Brenner and Theodore to

further stress the “creative destruction” of neoliberalism as it “actually exists”, where policies seek to destroy existing institutions and create private, commoditized economic space (2004). Neoliberalization has been conceptualized as a continuation of primitive accumulation through “a new round of enclosure of the commons” (Harvey 2003).

The path-dependent nature of neoliberalism as it actually exists means researchers must depend on descriptive studies of its impact and evolution in specific locations. Considering neoliberalism as primary accumulation, it is logical that descriptive studies would focus on open spaces that have been conceptualized as public commons. Indeed, recent work has focused on the interaction between neoliberalism’s creative-destructive forces and the public spaces of parks and gardens (Schmelzkopf 2002; Blomly 2004; Draper 2010; Eizenberg 2011; Ghose 2014; Granzow 2017; Pettygrove and Ghose 2018). In parks, the classic 1995 study by Mitchell describes the battle between UC Berkley and the public over the enclose of People’s Park. Graznow discusses the encroachment of neoliberalism into a public park in a small Canadian town as expressed in material changes.

Draper and Eizenberg identify community gardens as “open spaces” (commons) for individuals to resist the encroachment of neoliberalism. Schmelzkopf similarly argues that gardens in New York City represent resistance to “entrepreneurial governance”. Blomly found that a garden created as a neoliberal crime-prevention strategy evolved into a form of collective property. Ghose takes a similarly complex position, arguing that urban agriculture is used to reinforce neoliberal policies by alleviating the state of welfare responsibilities and restricting citizenship to those willing and able to participate while simultaneously creating social and cultural spaces for communities. Pettygrove and Ghose further stress the role of urban agriculture as a neoliberal tool of the Milwaukee municipal government. Clearly, the

relationships between the creative-destructive forces of neoliberalization and communal spaces of parks and gardens are complex and highly contextually dependent, symptomatic of actually existing neoliberalism as a whole.

The place-based and path-dependent nature of neoliberalism as it actually exists is apparent in the disparate (and sometimes contradictory) relationships scholars have identified between the commons of parks and gardens and neoliberal processes. These spaces have been used both to advance and resist the advancement of neoliberalism. In our example, the Aurora Plan represents the advancement of a neoliberal agenda by the SASD. The relationship each of the Sheboygan commons (the FoD and the HMAA garden) had with neoliberalism explains the reactions of their respective communities to the plan.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODS

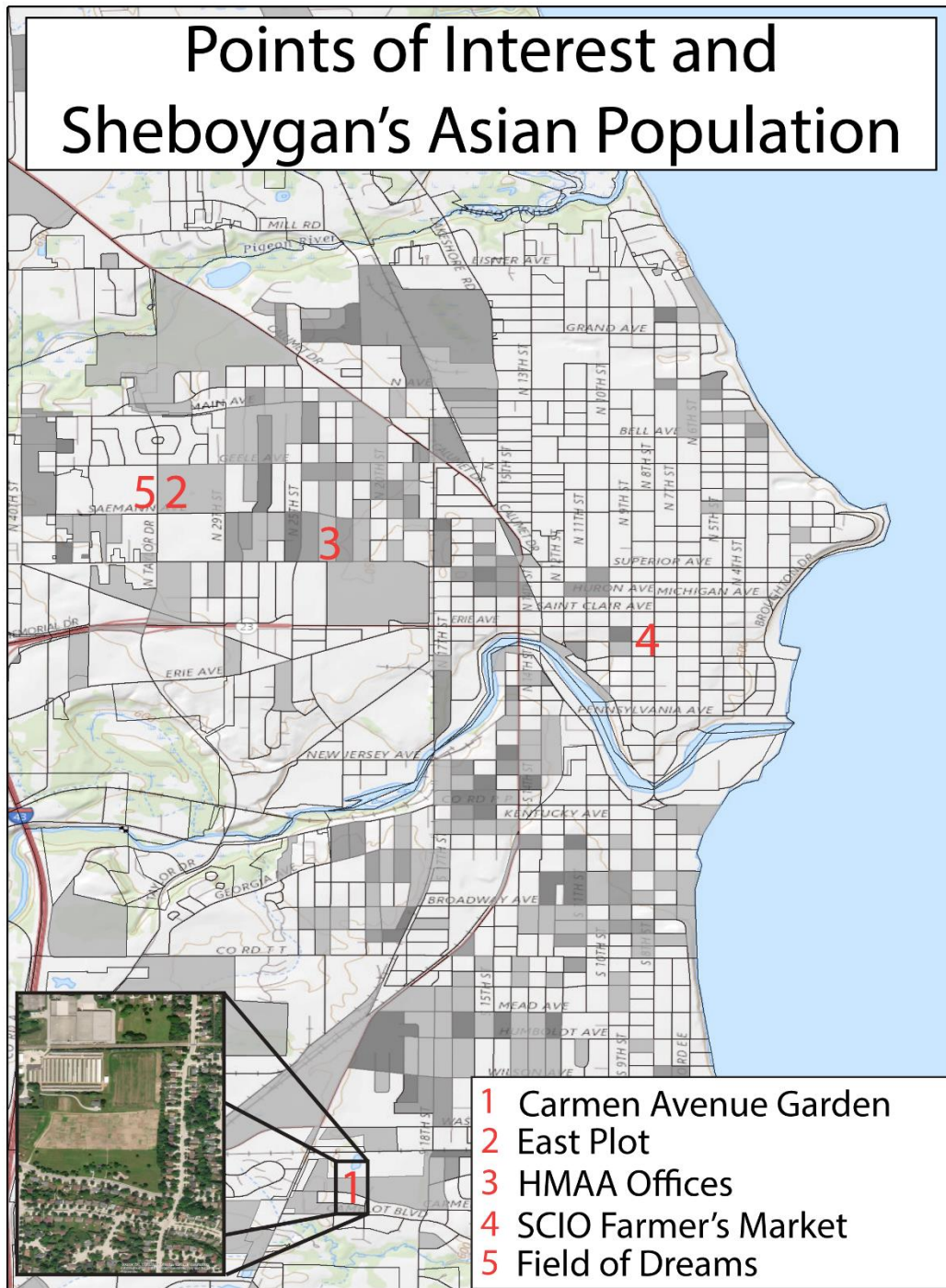
Work on this thesis sought to answer questions regarding the role of a community garden for Hmong-Americans living in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. This was done using a cultural geographic approach and ethnographic techniques such as direct landscape observation at the garden and related places in Sheboygan, 24 semi-structured interviews with members of the Hmong-community, and a review of primary source documents to craft an historical narrative about the garden. Previous work on Hmong gardens has used a similar geographic approach (Kurtz 2001). All of this was strengthened (and perhaps colored) by local knowledge gained during 10 years living in Sheboygan County.

The goal of the study was to address the following hypotheses:

- The Sheboygan garden plays (or played) an important role for Hmong immigrants, similar to the roles played by other gardens for immigrant communities in the literature.
- This role will be different for different Hmong-Americans, particularly those of different generations.
- Individuals have adjusted agricultural practices to fit a new life and environment in the US. This may have affected their overall acculturation process.
- Crop varieties and gardening practices will reflect the shifting role of the garden for Hmong-Americans.

- The garden moved in 2015 to a site that could be less desirable for several reasons, including neighboring a mink farm. This decision may have taken advantage of a vulnerable community.

Observation began in June and lasted through the end of July at sites that included the HMAA garden (the garden), the garden's former location on Sheboygan's North Side (East Parcel), the park across the street from the east parcel (the Field of Dreams), and Sheboygan's SCIO Farmer's Market (Farmer's Market). The east parcel was the site of the HMAA garden for more than 30 years until the garden's move in 2015. The Field of Dreams was at the center of the sequence of events that led to this move, and it was hypothesized that this episode would be revealing of the relationship between Sheboygan's Hmong community and the HMAA garden. Most vendors at the Farmer's Market are Hmong-Americans, and these commercial gardeners represent an important perspective for an understanding of the role of gardening in the Hmong community.



**Figure 2.1.** Field sites for this thesis included the East Parcel and Field of Dreams on the North Side of Sheboygan, the SCIO Farmer's Market held twice a week at Fountain Park, and the HMAA garden on Sheboygan's South Side.

Observation at these locations looked for traces left by the daily activities taking place there (Anderson 2009). Traces include structures, tools, crops, and the people using the spaces themselves. While the Farmer's Market began June 1st, Sheboygan experienced an unusually cold Spring in 2018 that pushed the growing season back an estimated 2 weeks according to the Market's coordinator. This delayed any meaningful observation of crop varieties or vendors at the Farmer's Market until late in the month of June. Once the Market began in earnest, crop varieties were recorded as well as demographic information on the vendors selling them, such as whether they were Hmong, selling alone or with a group, and their age group (child, adult, senior). Most demographic observations were estimated, although interviews with some vendors were conducted.

Photographs of a map used by the HMAA to plan the garden were captured. The map is a grid of rectangular boxes representing individual plots at the Carmen Avenue garden. Names of renters were penciled into each plot. These names were recorded into a spreadsheet to get an estimate of how many individuals participate in the garden, as well as how many plots each individual rent.

At the garden, observations were collected on garden activity, fencing, and crop variety. I suggest that the use of fences revealed a private motivation and mentality that stood in contrast with some of the more social and cooperative motivations often associated with community spaces. A survey of the garden was conducted by the investigator, during which photographs were taken of each discrete plot. Individual plots were defined as areas contained within a colored string or fencing units and sometimes combined multiple rental units. Data on the garden's layout, as well as crop variety within each plot, was collected. Crop variety was estimated by the investigator based on visual identification. No specimens were collected.



Garden plots were digitized in ArcMap using satellite imagery, survey information, and the HMAA planning map. Information on crop variety and the number of rental units were incorporated into a GIS and plot areas were calculated using the calculate geometry function in ArcMap. Correlations were performed between crop variety and both plot area and the number of individual plots. It was hypothesized that the number of plots rented would exhibit a stronger positive correlation with crop variety than plot area. Individuals who are more committed to tending their plots will likely also seek to maximize their gardening space by renting more plots, however, the irregularity of rental unit sizes means that plot area is difficult for individuals to control.

Following Gibb and Whittman (2013), interviews were conducted with members of the Sheboygan's Hmong community and local food system actors. A total of 24 interviews were collected averaging 20-45 minutes in lengths. Of these 24 interview subjects, 19 reported that they kept gardens and 15 kept plots at the HMAA garden. 17 subjects belonged to generation 1, three to generation 1.5, and four to generation 2. Interviewing began when I reached out to a personal contact in the Hmong community I had met while living in Sheboygan. Personal contacts were used to supplement convenience sampling at the garden and Farmer's Market with the goal of collecting a variety of perspectives, in terms of generation (because of its importance in the literature) and garden participation. Interviews were semi-structured, utilizing the following possible conversation prompts:

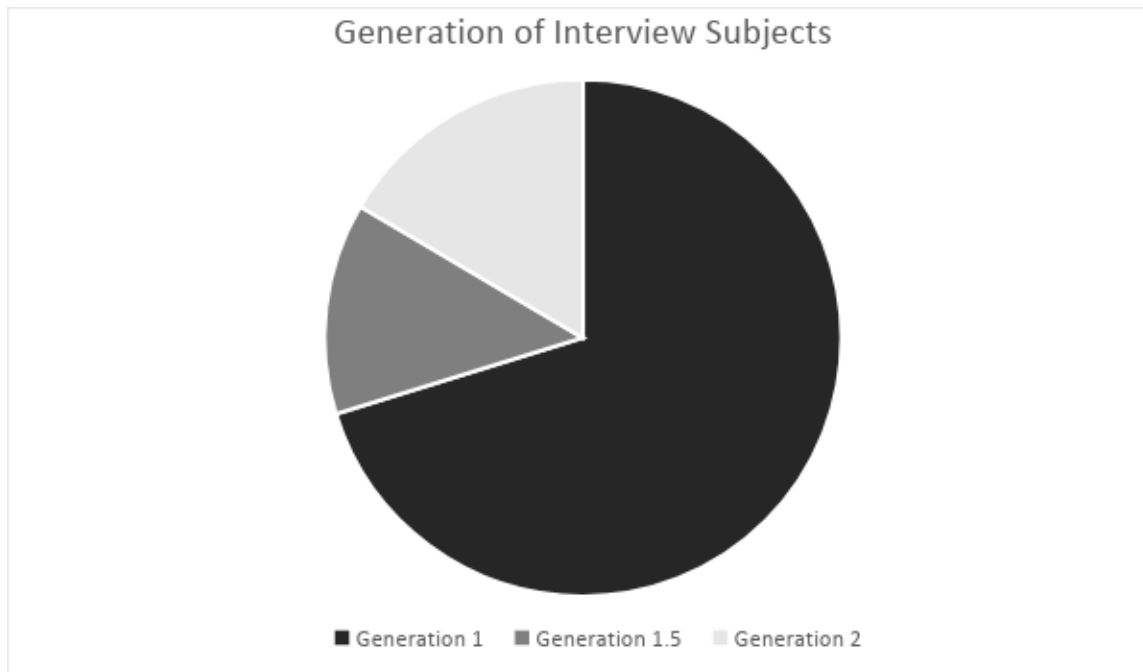
- At what age did you immigrate to the United States, or were you born here?
- Are you involved with the garden in Sheboygan? If so, how and for how long?
- What is your gardening routine like?

- How important is the garden to you? Do you consider it a profession, a hobby, or something else?
- What got you involved in the garden in the first place? How long do you plan on gardening?
- Do you work any other garden space, such as a lawn or farm?
- What sort of crops do you grow, and what are they used for?
- How do you get to and from the garden?
- What are your experiences like in terms of relationships with fellow gardeners/nongardeners?
- How have you had to adapt your gardening to fit Wisconsin?
- How did the garden's move in 2015 affect you?
- How did you feel about the garden's move when it happened? How have your feelings about it changed?
- Do your children garden? How do they feel about it?

Because interviews were conducted to be as open as possible, not all prompts were used in every conversation. This format was chosen to allow subjects to discuss what was important to them and capture perspectives as truly as possible. Interviews typically ranged in length from 20 to 50 minutes in length.

<b>Location</b>	<b>N</b>
Farmer's Market	6
HMAA garden	15
Other	3

**Table 2.1.** Number of interview subjects approached at different Sheboygan points of interest



**Figure 2.2.** Interview subjects by generation: generation is determined by an individual’s age at immigration.

The garden interview process began by reaching out to the HMAA on social media. I arranged to meet with a group leader at the HMAA office to discuss the garden. This interview laid the groundwork for much of the project, as besides providing information on how the garden was organized and advice on how to proceed, my HMAA source offered to volunteer their time and meet me at the garden to make introductions and act as an interpreter when necessary. Individuals were approached while they tended their garden plots, introduced to the project, and asked for an interview. This could have resulted in skewed results against individuals who were not at the garden when interviews were conducted but based on observation of age and sex characteristics of gardeners on other days, these results should still be acceptably representative of the garden’s users. These introductions and subsequent interviews were conducted in English, with interpretation when necessary. This interpretation was important, as many first-generation Hmong-Americans I encountered had limited proficiency as English speakers.

Interpreting by the HMAA volunteer helped at the garden, while Farmer's Market conversations took place either with no interpretation or with help from a family member. Vendors were approached at the Farmer's Market and asked for interviews. Subjects at the Farmer's Market included individuals from generation 1, 1.5, and 2, and interviews took place at the stalls they were keeping. Both at the Market and garden, interviews with individuals less comfortable speaking English typically involved more focused questions with shorter responses.

While conducting fieldwork, new information about the garden's 2015 move led to the development of hypotheses including:

- Differing attitudes among the Hmong Garden community and the Field of Dreams community regarding their common spaces influenced these outcomes.
- Power relationships in Sheboygan allowed for these different outcomes.
- The Aurora Plan represented an example of advancing neoliberalism.

A historical narrative of the Aurora Plan involving the garden was constructed using primary and secondary sources. These sources included social media posts and local news reports, mainly from the Save the Field of Dreams and Hmong Mutual Association Assistance community pages on Facebook and the Sheboygan Press respectively. Using social media pages offered unique perspectives on the episode. These sources were woven together using the author's experience as a native of the area.

The author identified individuals who were particularly active commenting and posting on the Save the Field of Dreams Facebook page and contacted these individuals through Facebook Messenger in order to identify the group's leadership. One member identified themselves as the page's leader and agreed to fill out a survey.

This survey was created by the author and was independent of the prompt questions used in interviews with Hmong subjects. The survey consisted of semi-structured prompts that asked the subject to discuss different motivations for objecting to the Aurora Plan found on the Save the Field of Dreams Facebook page, as well as questions about the individual's perceived effectiveness and tactics. The survey was given to add detail to the group's position as well as to contrast with interviews performed with members of the Hmong community.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS



**Figure 3.1.** This is an image of the original plan for the HMAA garden’s Carmen Avenue location drawn on satellite imagery, kept at HMAA headquarters. In 2018 the parking arrangement remained the same while there were six waterspouts, five more than in the plan.

Sheboygan's Hmong community garden sits on a 14-acre plot separated from Carmen Avenue to the South by a public park. On the North of the park sits a mink farm, to the East is a tree line that separates the garden space from a row of single-family homes, and to the West is an open field. There is a gravel parking area to the Southeast of the garden, which leads to a strip of unpaved road that skirts the eastern and northern edges of the trapezoidal field toward grass parking areas on the North side of the garden. North of this driving strip and along the tree line runs a strip of gardens that are outside of the garden's planned boundaries. It is unclear whether these plots are a part of the HMAA administered garden or who keeps them. The garden is situated in a neighborhood of single-family homes.

In early June, the start of the Sheboygan's growing season, the garden was a large expanse of plowed earth crisscrossed with the colored string held down by small wooden stakes. String sectioned off rectangular plots of dirt counted off to be roughly 20ft x 40ft at the garden's southern edge. Every spring the HMAA, the organization that rents the garden space from the SASD, hires a local farmer to plow the garden and surveys the area, using string to separate individual plots. Because the HMAA leases the garden for the growing season only, all markers that separate distinct rental units must be removed in the fall. The garden is resurveyed each year and gardeners receive new plots, meaning individuals may participate several consecutive years and never tend the same area twice.

The HMAA's planning map divides the garden space into 144 plots arranged in six rows of 24, with an extra strip along the Northern edge providing a total of 155 plots that are numbered from West to East and South to North. Recorded on the planning map were between 94 and 87 unique renters. A perfect count was difficult to obtain for reasons including inconsistent spelling, unclear handwriting, and names being scratched out and replaced with

others. This map has been in use for three years and has been edited by multiple people, some of whom use the Hmong spelling of gardener's names and others the English spelling (Yaj versus Yang, for example).

A survey of the garden revealed that the garden was divided into 110 discrete plots. The discrepancy between the number of renters, the number of planned plots, and the number of discrete plots at the garden could be due to several causes. One is that some individuals rent more than one adjacent plot and remove the string, making it difficult to survey how many plots were initially planned for. Another is that the HMAA survey was not exact, making plot sizes and shapes variable. Plots on the Southern edge of the garden are on average up to twice as large as plots on the Northern edge. It is possible that some plots were moved to the strip of gardens that run along the tree line to the Northeast of the garden, which was not surveyed. Some renters use multiple plots that are not adjacent to one another, making it impossible to unite them into a single unit. A final reason that the number of renters is fewer than the number of plots is that some people rent plots that are gardened for other people, as was described in interviews. Some Hmong-American adults rent plots for parents to garden. This could lead to one renter providing space for multiple gardeners and thus more discrete plots.



May 14, 2018

**LAND RENTAL AGREEMENT**

It is hereby, understood and agreed by and between the Sheboygan Area School District and the Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, Inc., that the school district will rent, for **garden plot purposes only**, the property located north of Optimist Park off of Carmen Avenue. The property consisting of approximately seven and seven tenths (7.7) acres will be rented to the Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, Inc., for the period of May 1, 2018, through the 2018 growing season ending on or about November 1, 2018, at the rent charge of \$308.

The Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, Inc. is to pay these charges to the Sheboygan Area School District by June 1, 2018.

The lessee, at the request of the lessor, shall remove any water systems that have been installed at the termination of the lease if the lessor requests the removal.

The lessee shall be responsible for the removal of all garbage and refuse from the site on a timely basis, both during and at the conclusion of the growing season.

Cher Lue Yang shall represent the lessee. All problems and complaints related to the lessee's use of the property described will be referred to Cher Lue Yang for resolution.

Mr. Yang may be contacted at the following address:

2304 Superior Avenue  
Sheboygan, WI 53081  
(920) 458-0808

This agreement entered into by the Board of Education of the above-mentioned school district and the Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, Inc.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Mark Boehlke  
Asst. Superintendent

Date

5-14-18

Cher Lue Yang  
Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, Inc.

Date

6/4/18

payment received  
6-12-18  
\$312.00 1041

**Figure 3.2.** The HMAA rents the space used for the garden from the SASD during the growing season on a yearly basis.

### *3.1 HMAA GARDEN AS COMMONS*

According to Elinor Ostrom, successful management of a common resource follows eight principles (1992). These eight principles are:

1. Define clear group boundaries.
2. Match rules governing the use of common goods to local needs and conditions.
3. Ensure that those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules.
4. Make sure the rule-making rights of community members are respected by outside authorities.
5. Develop a system, carried out by community members, for monitoring members' behavior.
6. Use graduated sanctions for rule violators.
7. Provide accessible, low-cost means for dispute resolution.
8. Build responsibility for governing the common resource in nested tiers from the lowest level up to the entire interconnected system.

This sort of institutional approach to commons management has been used to describe systems other than private property that successfully govern a variety of resources. Conceptualizing the HMAA garden as a common resource, and the HMAA as its governing Institution can help explain the relationship between the garden community and their shared space.

The HMAA meets or attempts to meet, each of Ostrom's principles to different degrees.

1. The organization draws group boundaries by determining who rents individual plots and maintains a committed group of stakeholders by guaranteeing those who rented spaces for the previous growing season first access to space for the next year.
2. The HMAA sets rents in order to provide the necessary infrastructure (water, plow) to continue operating the garden.
3. HMAA leadership also said they have considered holding a vote among garden participants to determine whether new rules should be enacted.
4. The HMAA works with the SASD to ensure garden space is leased for each growing season.
- 5 and 6. The organization also controlled what types of behaviors were acceptable and issued citations for violators, as can be seen from a post on the HMAA Facebook page from October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015 that reads "Gardeners at Optimist Park are required to clean up the garden area.... We

will inspect the plots. If your area is not cleaned up, you lose your deposit and will not get a plot next year.”

7. Gardeners could negotiate with the HMAA if they were not satisfied with their plot’s size or productivity. Leadership described situations where individuals were given discounted rent or let out of their leases.

8. There doesn’t appear to be any tiers in the garden’s institution, likely due to the small scale of the garden operation.

Even with these regulations, gardeners were still given the freedom to grow any crops by any means and for any purpose within their plots.

The HMAA keeps a waitlist of people who would like to rent a plot. Its length was not disclosed by garden management, but multiple gardeners who were interviewed revealed that they had been on the list before the garden’s 2015 move. The waitlist begs questions about who has access to garden space. Individuals who rent plots one year have first access to rent them next year, effectively shutting out new gardeners from using the space. Management suggested two possible solutions had been considered for this issue 1) renting more garden space in the form of the East parcel or 2) holding a vote among gardeners limiting the number of spaces any one person can rent. There were no concrete plans to enact either of these solutions, however, and the SASD had previously denied requests to once again rent the East Parcel.

### *3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY*

A 2015 Sheboygan Press article described how gardeners were initially wary of the Carmen Avenue location (Thiel 2015, February 27). Gardeners were concerned that the nearby mink farm could have a negative effect on the soil quality or that the land might be otherwise

less productive. Additionally, mink farms are often odorous. The smell omitted by a mink farm has the potential to make spending hours working outdoors less satisfying or even impossible for people tending HMAA garden plots.

However, these worries have largely been unsubstantiated. Concerns over the soil quality at the new location dissipated when gardeners learned that the plot had been worked as a cornfield by a local farmer before being sold to the city of Sheboygan. Gardeners unanimously reported satisfaction with the productivity of their plots when asked (plot sizes, however, were another issue). Some low-lying areas of the garden, easily identifiable as patches of lei surrounded by carefully manicured gardens, experience flooding that makes them untenable. Garden management confirmed that individuals renting these plots were either moved to more suitable locations or received their rent money back. Odor from the nearby mink farm was not as severe an issue as hypothesized either. The investigator perceived a notable odor only once during 12 days of observation at the HMAA garden. No gardener brought up a concern over the smell as a during interviewing. These two facts suggest any smell from the mink farm is either too infrequent or not intense enough to be a serious concern.

### 3.3 SHEBOYGAN'S FARMER'S MARKET



**Figure 3.3.** Two shoppers approach the tent of a Hmong-American vendor at Sheboygan's Farmer's Market on a Saturday afternoon. It is estimated that more than 80% of vendors who sell produce at the Sheboygan Market are Hmong-Americans.

A Farmer's Market organized by the Sheboygan County Interfaith Organization (SCIO) is held on Wednesday and Saturday mornings throughout the growing season at Fountain Park in downtown Sheboygan. According to the SCIO website, between the Sheboygan Market and another location in Sheboygan County, the Farmer's Market hosts more than 100 local vendors who sell a variety of local produce, food, and other goods. The garden is a popular attraction in Sheboygan and regularly attracts crowds of several hundred people who pack the park. A majority of vendors at the Sheboygan location and nearly all those selling vegetables, in the Summer of 2018 were Hmong-Americans.

Many Hmong-American vendors were seniors from generation 1 or 1.5. However, stalls were often tended by multiple generations of a family. For example, one interview subject was a recent retiree and was one of the first Hmong to immigrate to Sheboygan when she was 7 years old (generation 1.5) in the mid '70s. This individual was working with her daughter-in-law, a woman in her 30's who belonged to generation 2 and did not garden herself. Another vendor, who declined an interview because she could not read English, was joined on some days by two of her daughters. One daughter explained that she was a college student in the area and she and her sister helped her mother sell produce and sometimes tend her garden but did not garden themselves. On Wednesdays, many adult vendors were replaced by children. Presumably out of school for the summer, it is their responsibility to watch the vegetable stand while parents or other family members go to work on weekday mornings.

Hmong-American vendors were identified selling a combined 43 distinct products throughout June and July. On July 12<sup>th</sup>, product varieties were recorded for 28 Hmong-American vendors, resulting in an average variety of 8.9 different crops per vendor. This produce was largely familiar to shoppers in Southeast Wisconsin, but there were some traditional Hmong foodplants for sale as well. One stand labeled produce in Hmong, but the rest used English labels.

### *3.4 GARDEN DEMOGRAPHICS*

The garden is not used equally by all segments of Sheboygan's Hmong community. Only one person interviewed was not a member of the Hmong generation 1. This woman was a member of generation 1.5, meaning she had immigrated to the United States as a child, and she tended a plot with her mother. According to garden management, other younger Hmong-

Americans rent plots for older family members as well, but no one else not of generation 1 was identified. Having immigrated to the United States after the age of 12, generation 1 Hmong are less likely to be fluent in English. This was true in the garden as 13 out of 15 individuals interviewed used at least some Hmong language interpretation.

Many of the individuals keeping plots were seniors, and even more were retirees. One man who was interviewed explained that he and his wife began keeping their plot after he retired from working in a factory. The aging demographics of the garden were summed up in interviews with non-gardeners as well, as said by the HMAA leader who acted as my interpreter “The garden might not be here much longer. Look at the people here. My generation doesn’t have time [to garden]. My kids won’t want to.”

Sex is another characteristic unequally represented at the garden. Only four of the 15 gardeners interviewed were men. Furthermore, of these four men, only one was tending a plot unaccompanied by a wife or other female family member. This trend was sustained on observation days when interviews were not performed. Three of the women interviewed had other people working with them as well, bringing the total number of gardeners observed working plots on interview days to 19 women and 5 men. The garden roster obtained from the HMAA planning map shows a plurality of female renters, although this is confounded by the facts that many of the renters rent for family members rather than themselves. Time of day did not appear to have much effect on the garden’s demographics, as women and seniors formed a plurality during each visit to the garden. When asked why he thought so many more women than men participated in the garden, one generation 1.5 man who did not garden himself responded: “I don’t know, I guess we have other things we like to do.”

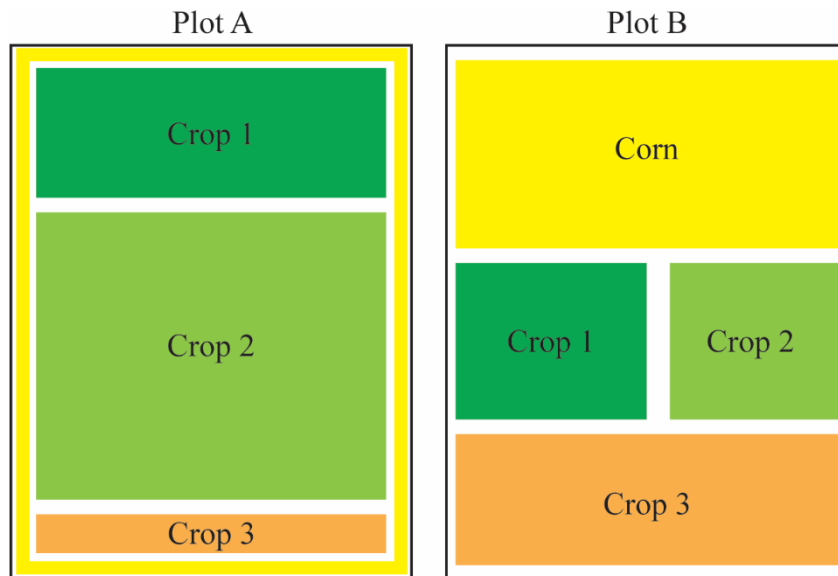


**Figure 3.4.** Estimated usage of the garden by certain segments of the Hmong community based on the parties of interview subjects (n = 23). Of these gardeners, 79% were female and 96% were Generation 1.

### 3.5 PLOTS AND TRACES

Traces within garden plots suggest various, and sometimes contradicting, attitudes among users of the HMAA commons. Most plots were open, with nothing more than the colored string denoting their borders separating them from their neighboring patches. However, some gardeners chose to adopt strategies for enclosing their plots. One of these strategies, used in 31 plots, was to plant a single row of corn around all the edges of the plot, using the crop to create a makeshift hedge. One gardener who planted their corn in this fashion explained that he did it “for privacy”.





**Figure 3.5.** 28% of garden plots employed layouts similar to plot A with corn planted around the perimeter as a makeshift privacy hedge. Plot B offers an example of a more typical and less private garden layout.

Other gardeners went so far as to build fences around their plots. Fences were constructed using metal or wooden stakes surrounded by ropes or sometimes chicken wire. In the most extreme case, one gardener who provided an interview had a wire fence with a gate that was secured with a heavy padlock. Inside the fence, corn was grown around the perimeter of the plot. When asked about this the man explained that the plots “were not precisely surveyed” and constructing the fence helped to prevent any conflict between him and his neighbors over garden space. This was the only plot that had any form of lock.



**Figure 3.6.** Image of a garden plot employing both a fence and corn grown for privacy.

Despite no other plots having any real security measures, many contained belongings such as gardening implements, chairs, and even some children's toys. One gardener interviewed explained that she brought a hose that she left at her plot for neighborhood use. Her plot was located near the center of the garden, at least 30m from the nearest water spout. Knowing that carrying watering cans (the typical way of irrigating plots at the garden) that distance would be a challenge for her neighbors, she allowed them to share her hose. She explained that she enjoyed cooperating with her neighbors to grow their produce, and even kept an eye on the plot immediately to the East of hers that was rented by a very old woman who struggled to make it to the garden.

This hose was not the only community resource gardeners brought to the garden. Other hoses could be seen between plots, and there were water barrels scattered around the garden. One man explained that he and his neighbors worked together to keep the water barrel next to their plots filled, which made it easier for them to water their crops. He was a jovial person who described how the social aspect of the garden was very important to him. He enjoyed seeing other people keeping their plots, and the company he felt while he was there.

### *3.6 MOTIVATIONS OF HMAA GARDEN PARTICIPANTS*

Interview subjects at the HMAA garden shared various motivations for keeping their plots. Vendors at the Farmer's Market were also asked why they chose to grow and sell food. Individuals who did not garden themselves discussed why they chose not to (and often speculated on why others did). The major motivating factors individuals reported were to have organic produce, to grow produce that cannot be found in stores, for exercise, to save money, to make money, to socialize, and because it is exciting to watch crops grow. Significantly, only one

gardener mentioned that preserving their Hmong culture was a reason for gardening. These motivators can be grouped into the more general themes of health, finance, and culture. This section will discuss different perspectives on each of these motivating themes identified at the garden.

The most popular responses people gave for why they garden, were related to their health. 10 out of 15 (67%) interview subjects at the HMAA garden said they did it for exercise. This was the most common motivators people gave for keeping their plots. One man who is a first-generation Hmong-American and had kept a garden in Ohio and Green Bay, Wisconsin before moving to Sheboygan explained that gardening is an important way to stay healthy because it lets you “get sweaty”. Other gardeners reported that keeping their plots got them out of the house and allowed them to “move their bodies”.

The other most popular motivation gardeners offered was to have organic food to eat. 10 out of 15 people expressed that they wanted to have fresh food that was grown without pesticides, fertilizers, or other chemicals. The absence of these materials even appeared to be a point of pride for some gardeners, as one woman beamed as she pointed to the soil of her plot and explained “it is important to have food without chemicals. I don’t use fertilizer, see!” She claimed that most people in the HMAA garden felt this way. She expressed her frustration when asked whether her four children gardening. “I wish they did. It is healthier to eat food without chemicals. But they would rather go to the grocery store.” She shared her produce with them anyways. This woman was not the only gardener to regret their children choosing not to, or not knowing how to garden.

The next set of motivators were economic. Seven out of 15 (47%) of HMAA gardeners interviewed said they did it to save money. Interview subjects, regardless of their own gardening

activity, tended to conceptualize choosing to participate in the HMAA garden as a dichotomous decision between gardening and working. One can either grow their own produce at the garden, or they can work and shop at the grocery store. Said a generation 1 man who does not garden “my children do not, and probably will not, want to garden. They would rather go to the grocery store like any other American.” Another woman who kept a garden said “My children do not know how to garden. They would rather work at a factory and buy their food.”

However, while saving money was a popular motivation for gardening, only one person interviewed reported that they sold their produce. Everyone else reported that they grow food for personal or family consumption only. This data was somewhat surprising, given the prevalence of Hmong-American vendors at the Sheboygan Farmer’s Market and the suggested dichotomy between working and gardening.

Interview subjects outside of the HMAA garden community identified making money as a more important motivation than the gardeners who were interviewed. One generation 1 woman who did not garden who said gardening was “an important source of supplemental income” for some Hmong, while a generation 2 woman suggested that gardening was an important money-making opportunity for those without English or other job-skills. The idea of gardening as an alternative for those without job opportunities was not shared by other interview subjects. One generation 2 Hmong-American who was working with a family member as a vendor at the Farmer’s Market even took offense to this notion, and so it was not brought up in further interviews.

Only one gardener explicitly mentioned continuing their Hmong culture as an important motivation for keeping a plot at the HMAA garden. However, other responses and behaviors indicate that the garden may play a cultural role for participants. One of these is the social aspect

of the garden. Several gardeners indicated that one of the reasons they enjoyed working at the community garden was, in fact, for the community. As noted above, some gardeners shared community resources and found joy in helping their neighbors. One interview subject said that they had made many friends by participating in the garden and getting to know the people keeping the neighboring plots.

The small number of people reporting a cultural importance of gardening could be due to the perceived mundane nature of so called “cultural” acts (sharing produce with a cousin might seem insignificant to a Hmong gardener but is evidence of gardening being used to maintain kin relationships). It could also be because individuals are uncomfortable being labeled as “other” or subjects to study and so do not wish to have their everyday activities described as “cultural”, something that may be perceived as othering.

Gardening also plays a cultural role by allowing gardeners to assert important kin relationships. Interview subjects at the garden and those who did not garden agreed that growing food was something passed down from generation to generation for the Hmong. One generation 1 woman explained that her parents taught her how to garden and that she had taught her children. Beyond the idea of carrying on a family tradition, gardening apparently offers an opportunity for individuals to reinforce clan relationships that are important for Hmong social structure. While conducting interviews, the HMAA leader who was acting as my interpreter received two bags of produce from a cousin who kept a plot. Other gardeners brought up sharing crops with family members in addition to using them for personal consumption. One interview subject, a school teacher who does not garden herself, mentioned that she occasionally receives produce from former students when she visits the Sheboygan Farmer’s Market with a smile on her face.

Gardeners also explained that they were motivated to garden in order to grow produce that cannot be found in grocery stores. Examples of these unique crops provided by gardeners include traditional Hmong crops such as mustard greens, Thai peppers, ground chilis, and what my interpreter called “Asian-style tomatoes”. The HMAA garden allows some Hmong-Americans to eat food they are accustomed to that may not be available in American supermarkets, but these are not the only foods grown at the garden.

MOTIVATION	PERCENT REPORTING
EXERCISE	67%
ORGANIC FOOD	67%
SAVE MONEY	47%
SELL PRODUCE	7%
SHARE FOOD WITH RELATIVES	20%
GROW FOOD NOT IN STORES	20%

**Table 3.1.** Motivations reported by HMAA gardeners for keeping their plots (n=15)

### *3.7 CROP VARIETY AT THE GARDEN*

Crop variety in HMAA garden plots ranged from 1 to 22, with an average of 7.44 unique crop species grown per plot. Crops reported by gardeners who were interviewed are shown in table 3.2 below. The popularity of these crops is thought to be representative of the garden at large, as corn and cucumber were grown in a majority of plots during the 2018 growing season. One crop that was identified by the investigator but now reported by any interview subjects was mustard greens.

<b>Crop</b>	<b>Percent Reporting</b>
Asian style tomatoes	13
beans	20
cabbage	13
cantaloupe	7
carrots	7
cilantro	27
corn	53
cucumber	67
eggplants	7
green beans	20
green onion	47
ground chilis	7
lemon grass	13
peppers	33
pumpkins	7
radish	13
red pepper	7
squash	27
sweet peas	7
Thai peppers	7
tomatoes	13
white radishes	7
zucchini	7

**Table 3.2.** Crops reported by gardeners interviewed at Sheboygan’s HMAA garden (n = 15).

Gardeners were asked whether they grew different crops in Wisconsin than they had grown in Southeast Asia. These subjects generally reported that the only major difference was that rice, a major staple crop in Laos, does not grow in Sheboygan’s climate. Several gardeners claimed they did not grow any different species at the HMAA garden than they had grown in Asia. While gardeners reported growing similar species in Sheboygan as they had prior to immigrating, they explained that they grew different quantities of food. One gardener explained that “in Wisconsin, food is grown to save money. In Asia, people grew food to survive.” Other gardeners also explained that they raised animals in Asia, something they do not practice in Sheboygan.



Descriptive statistics were run on 102 garden plots, excluding seven that were untended and/or wild. Average variety of garden plots was 7.44 crop species per plot, with a standard deviation of 4.03. Average plot area was 523.48 square meters, standard deviation 295.04. High standard deviation among garden plots can in part be explained by a large range in size between small, single rental unit plots and plots made up of multiple larger rental units. On average, plots were made up of 1.49 rental units with a maximum of four. Crop variety exhibited a strong positive skew, while area and number of rental plots each were moderately positively skewed.

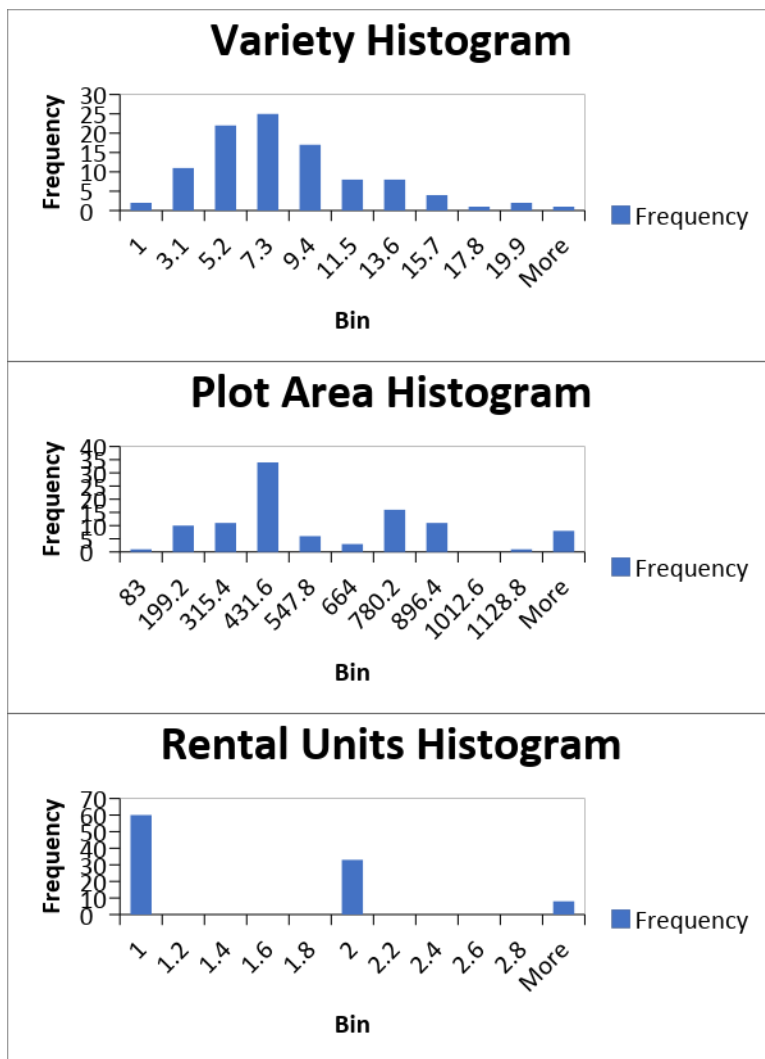


Figure 3.7. Histograms of crop variety, plot area, and number of rental unit datasets

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<i>Variety</i>	
Mean	7.44554
Standard Error	0.40085
Median	7
Mode	6
Standard Deviation	4.02858
Sample Variance	16.2295
Kurtosis	1.43255
Skewness	2
Range	21
Minimum	1
Maximum	22
Sum	752
Count	101
Confidence Level(95.0%)	0.79529
	3

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**Statistics describing garden crop variety**

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<i>Plot Area</i>	
Mean	523.475
Standard Error	29.3576
Median	410
Mode	345
Standard Deviation	295.041
Sample Variance	87049.2
Kurtosis	-0.12928
Skewness	0.79683
Range	5
Minimum	1162
Maximum	83
Sum	1245
Count	52871
Confidence Level(95.0%)	101
	58.2448

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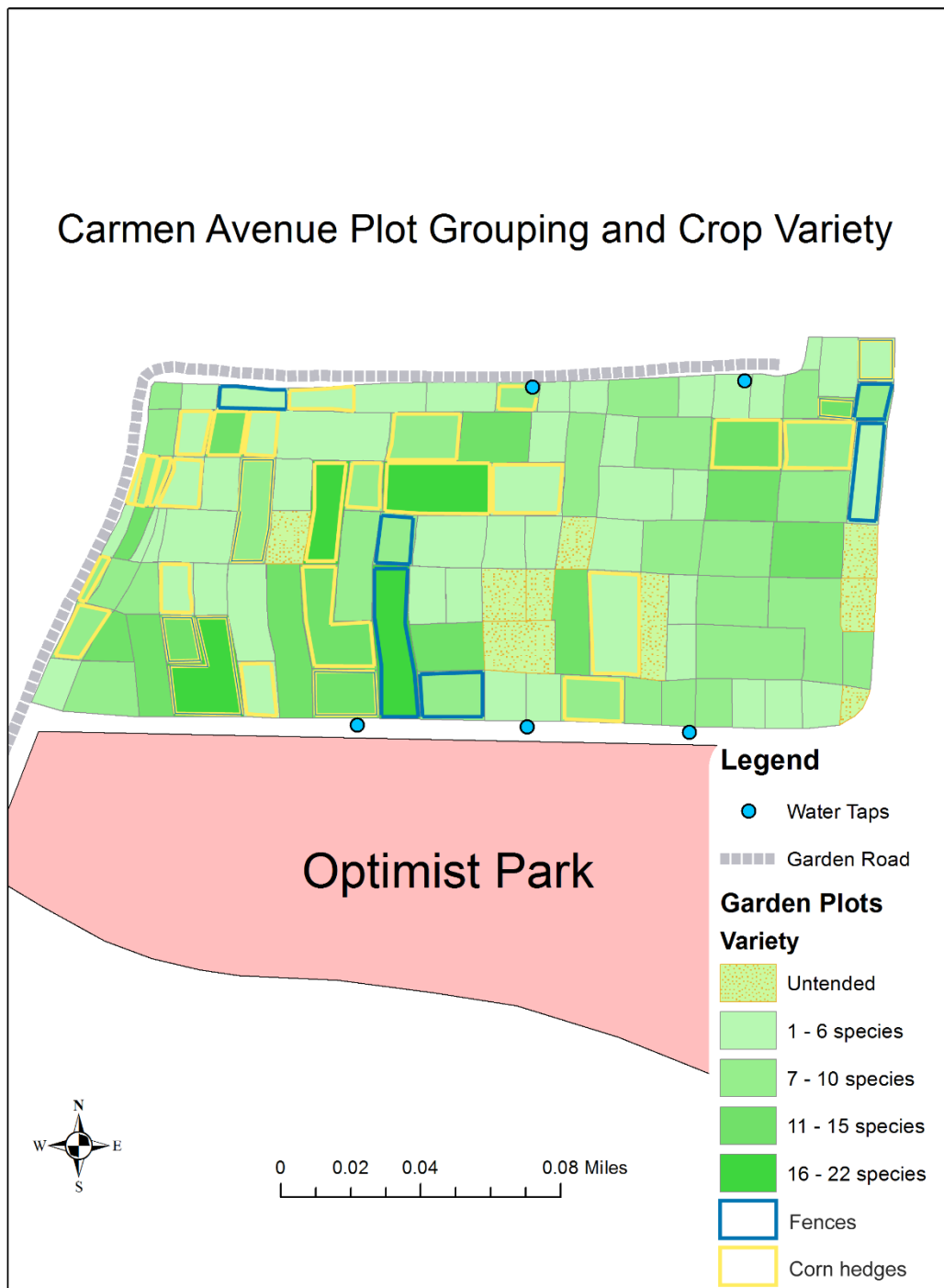
**Description of lot area data calculated using ArcMap**

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<i>Number of Rental Units</i>	
Mean	1.48514
Standard Error	0.06389
Median	1
Mode	1
Standard Deviation	0.64208
Sample Variance	0.41227
Kurtosis	-0.10785
Skewness	0.98129
Range	2
Minimum	1
Maximum	4
Sum	150
Count	101
Confidence Level(95.0%)	0.12675
	6

**Table 3.3.** Descriptive statistics of crop variety, plot area, and number of rental unit datasets

A Pearson’s correlation coefficient of 0.48 was reported between plot area and plot variety. The number of plots rented and crop variety exhibited a Pearson’s correlation coefficient of 0.56. Both area and number of plots were weakly positively correlated with crop variety. Gardeners with more space generally grew a greater variety of crops, which suggests that either those with greater access to space have a greater opportunity to grow what they like, or that individuals who want to grow a greater variety of crops rent more space. The former implies that unequal access to space is a significant challenge that the HMAA and Sheboygan’s Hmong community face, while the latter suggests different motivations of gardeners at the HMAA space. The degree to which these hypotheses are true could be the subject of future research.



**Figure 3.8.** This map colors plots based on their crop variety, with colored borders describing which, if any, privacy members gardeners utilized.

### *3.8 SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL RELATIONS AND THE COMMONS: THE HMAA GARDEN'S 2015 MOVE*

A review of primary sources and local news reports reveals that the Aurora Plan was a controversial saga of headline news, editorials, and town hall meetings for the people of Sheboygan. Major events in this saga are summarized in Figure 3.10 below. The plan was announced on February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015 by letter from the SASD and received almost weekly press coverage for the next 6-months (Thiel 2015, February 11). The Sheboygan Press covered major events connected to the plan while serving as a forum for those who supported or opposed the Plan to share their opinions by publishing letters to the editor.

Aurora initially proposed to purchase the plot of land that held the Field of Dreams for \$2.5M, while also pledging \$5M to fund the construction of new athletic facilities to replace the FoD (Thiel 2015, February 11). The land would be used to build an \$86.4M outpatient surgery center and office space that would act as an extension to Aurora's preexisting facilities just over a mile away. Of the money for new athletic facilities, \$2.3M was earmarked for building fields on a large piece of property owned by the SASD on the South side of the city. There were plans for upgrading existing facilities elsewhere in the city. FoD's main replacement though, was to be built across the street from the new facility on the East Parcel, home to the HMAA's community garden.

According to an interview with HMAA leadership, SASD offered the HMAA a lease on a new, somewhat larger piece of property 5.4 miles to the South between six months and a year before the Aurora Plan was announced. The new site was a 7-acre field separated from the road by an existing park. Aurora offered to provide \$25,000 for the construction of a gravel parking area at the new garden site (Thiel 2015, February 27).

The SASD initially planned to hold a vote on the Aurora proposal the day after announcing it to the public, but the vote was instead delayed 2 weeks (Smathers 2015, February 24). During this time, Aurora and the SASD held meetings to discuss the plan with the public and people on both sides, including SASD superintendent Joe Sheehan, wrote letters to the editor of *The Sheboygan Press* to argue their side (Sheehan 2015, February 21). Benefits of the plan expressed by the SASD, Aurora, and city politicians were economic, including increased tax revenue, job growth (including attracting young professionals), and helping the school district's bottom line (Heck 2015, February 23).

The February 9<sup>th</sup> proposal was not the end of the Aurora Plan saga. February and March saw common council and school board meetings attended by vocal opponents of the Plan, and opinions from both sides published (Smathers 2015, April 15; Ott 2015, April 19). On April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015 neighbors of the FoD sued the SASD, alleging that illegal closed meetings were held prior to the board's vote on the Aurora Plan, and that the board had already decided to sell the park before opening for public comment (Smathers 2015, April 24). These allegations were accompanied by complaints made to the county Attorney General that two city Alderman who voted on rezoning the area had conflicts of interest that should have barred them from participating.

In May, the SASD hit a snag when the DNR required them to acquire a permit to fill in wetlands to construct the replacement fields on the East Parcel (Thiel 2015, May 13). This issue would not be resolved until September when the DNR accepted a modified proposal where the SASD would shorten one of the soccer fields on the East Parcel, reducing the amount of affected wetland to below 10,000 square feet (Thiel 2015, July 9). In October of 2015, the SASD

received final DNR approval to build their replacement fields on the East Parcel (Thiel and Smathers 2015, October 9).



**Figure 3.9.** Diagram of the Aurora Plan as it stood in the Fall of 2015. Retrieved from [www.sheboyganpress.com](http://www.sheboyganpress.com), courtesy of the Boldt Co.

This was preceded by a unanimous vote from the Sheboygan commission to approve CUPS for the 49,000 square foot surgery center on the FoD site in August, along with several other city and state permitting steps required to proceed with the Aurora Plan (Thiel 2015, August 12). In October of 2015, the SASD hired a construction firm to begin excavation on the East Parcel (Thiel 2015, October 21). Only a couple days later, on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, a judge demanded a halt to work on the Aurora Plan as it may affect the still pending lawsuit against the SASD (Smathers 2015, October 23).

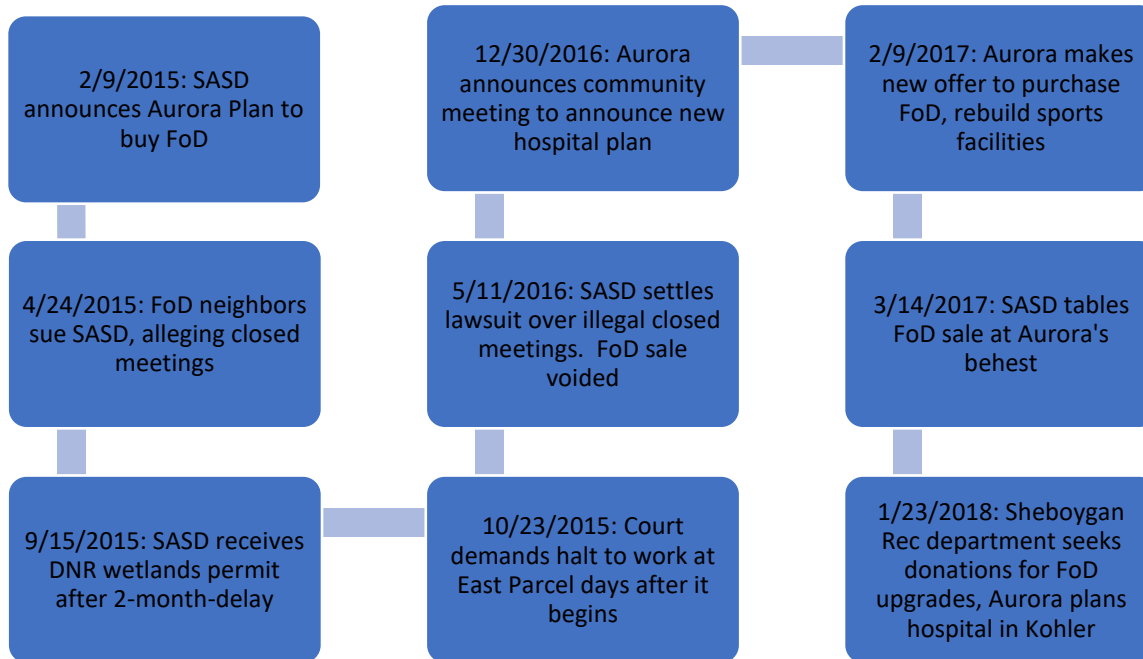
The lawsuit would continue to stop progress on the Aurora Plan until the next year. The case was slowed in late August 2015 when the first of an eventual 3 judges recused himself from

the case due to conflicts of interest (Smathers 2015, August 24). On March 15, 2016 the SASD offered a settlement in the FoD case that would void the sale, but this was rejected (Ulatowski 2016, March 15). The case was finally settled in May in a deal that not only voided the sale but required SASD board members to attend a workshop on open meetings rules (Ulatowski and Smathers 2016, May 11).

The Aurora Plan returned to headlines in December 2016 when news broke that Aurora was considering constructing a new hospital on the FoD plot (Bock 2016, December 9). On December 30, Aurora announced a community meeting where they would share their plan for a new hospital, although they would not disclose whether the plan would involve the FoD (Bennet 2016, December 30). In February 2017, Aurora again offered \$2.5M for the FoD while this time offering \$2.33M for new athletic facilities (Bennet 2017, February 9).

The SASD planned a board vote on the new Aurora offer on March 14, but in a surprise move Aurora asked them to table the issue just hours prior to the vote (Bennet 2017, March 14). This would be the end of the FoD Aurora Plan, as in April of 2017 Aurora announced plans to build a new hospital in the neighboring village of Kohler (Bennet 2017, April 11). In January 2018, the Sheboygan Rec department began calling for donations to upgrade facilities at the Field of Dreams, a final sign that the fields were there to stay (Koehler 2018, January 23). An understanding of how the Aurora Plan unfolded and the strategies adopted by parties on either side reveals the social environmental and political economic systems underlying the struggle.





**Figure 3.10.** Timeline of major events in the Aurora Plan saga

### 3.9 FIELD OF DREAMS COMMUNITY'S REACTION TO THE AURORA PLAN

News reports and social media sources reveal that both the HMAA garden and Field of Dreams communities initially reacted poorly to the plan. A 2015 *Sheboygan Press* article describes a deluge of over 40 distressed phone calls received by HMAA management from community gardeners, and the HMAA themselves made a Facebook post asking people to be patient regarding the transition (Thiel 2015, February 27) (HMAA 2015). After this initial reaction, however, there is no coverage of resistance to the Aurora Plan from the Hmong community.

The coverage tells a different story about the Field of Dreams community however, who remained an active adversary of the Aurora Plan for years. Resistance to the plan organized in a movement called “Save the Field of Dreams”. Members were active in their opposition to the Aurora Plan for more than two years; writing editorials in the *Sheboygan Press*, attending public meetings and forums, and publicly demonstrating. A lot of this activity is shared in the

Facebook community that shares the Save the Field of Dreams name, linked to a webpage for the movement. The community was founded the day after the original Aurora Plan was announced February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and continued to post on a weekly basis through early April 2017, meaning it was an active community for the entire Aurora Plan saga. The community had 522 members on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018.



**Figure 3.11.** Save the Field of Dreams protesters demonstrate outside of Aurora Clinic in Sheboygan, WI (courtesy of Save the Field of Dreams Facebook community)

Members of Save the Field of Dreams present a bevy of arguments against the Aurora Plan through various posts, writings, and other mediums. Generally, these arguments can be separated into four broad categories: 1) NIMBYism, 2) economics, 3) environmentalism, and 4) anti-neoliberalism. These four categories of arguments can be seen in a public access television

program aired March 25, 2015 that features 5 community members discussing their opposition to the Plan (Braesch et al.). Some themes presented in the early video were developed further by opponents of the plan while some faded in popularity, but these four categories neatly sum up Save the Field of Dreams positions.

NIMBYism refers to a “not in my back yard” position, where an individual chooses to protect their local interest over the advancement of larger-scale development (Anderson 2009). Some arguments made in the tv program based on a NIMBYism include that there are 15 other suitable locations in Sheboygan for Aurora to build new facilities (including 3 that they owned), that other businesses had chosen to divide their facilities between the South and North sides of Sheboygan while Aurora was expanding to build a second facility on the North side, and that there was no assurance given that the new development would not be something undesirable, such as a hospital or even a psych ward. A fixture in editorials both for and against the Aurora Plan, these arguments do not focus on the social or economic effects of building Aurora’s new facility, but rather its location.

The next category of argument employed by the Save the Field of Dreams community is economic. In Braesch et al.’s tv program, it is pointed out that Aurora offered a higher amount for the FoD plot than the land was appraised at. It is suggested that the land was undervalued. Economics was highly controversial for Sheboyganites. As has been discussed, supporters of the Aurora Plan were primarily motivated by the positive economic impact it would have on the community, while opponents claimed the land was being undervalued and that the Plan would cost taxpayers.

Environmentalism was also a prominent theme for members of the Save the Field of Dreams community. The tv program only brushes on environmentalism, with individuals

mentioning the contamination and expanding wetland in the East Parcel. Editorials, like the March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 one by Alizee Desmoulin, argue that the Aurora Plan represents a threat to the nearby Maywood environmental park because increase traffic would lead to infrastructure projects that would build on park land.

The final category of arguments presented in the February tv program and used throughout work done by members of Save the Field of Dreams is anti-neoliberalism. These types of arguments specifically object to the Aurora Plan because it represents the enclosure of public space. In the tv special, community member Renee Rusch says the SASD is “setting a terrible precedent for the city” if they allow green space to be converted into private property. This anti-neoliberal sentiment was a commonly and persistently used argument by StFoD, as can be seen in letters to the editor published from 2015 to 2017 (Harmelink October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015; Desmoulin February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017). In her February 2017 letter to the editor, Debra Desmoulin referred to the Aurora Plan as “irrational commercial growth”.

Evidence of the FoD community’s struggle against the Aurora Plan is well archived in local newspapers and social media posts. There were also many Sheboyganites who saw the plan as a great opportunity for the city. Examples of these view-points can be seen in letters to the editor: John Revelis argued that the new Surgery center would attract young professional people to Sheboygan, Robert Heck described the plan as “best for majority of citizens”, and Joseph Voelkner said it was “a tremendous opportunity” (2015, April 20; 2015, February 14; 2015, March 31).

After contacting multiple members of the Save the Field of Dreams Facebook page through Facebook Messenger, one individual responded and identified themselves as the current leader of the group. They agreed to fill out a survey about the Aurora Plan and their connection

to it and the Field of Dreams community. they explained that they had been living in the neighborhood for almost 20 years when they received an email from the SASD announcing the proposed sale of the Field of Dreams. They attended a meeting held by SASD and Aurora to explain the plan and joined the protesters. While not the founder of the Facebook group, this individual eventually became the leader of the group.

Anti-neoliberalism was the primary motivation cited by this individual for opposing the Aurora Plan. Responding to the prompt, “Describe the importance of stopping the Aurora Plan to you”, they open with “... I was not going to allow a big corporation, with the help of our School Board and the City Council, to destroy a community-conceived-and-funded park for Aurora’s profit.” While they do offer secondary motivations that fall in to each of the other three categories, anti-neoliberalism drives them, as well as other members of the community’s, objection to the sale of the FoD.

### *3.10 GARDEN COMMUNITY’S REACTION TO AURORA PLAN*

Interview and observation data help explain why the HMAA garden community’s reaction to the Aurora Plan was so different from that of the FoD community. When asked about the move in interviews, gardeners consistently reported having either neutral or positive feelings about the move. Some explained that while they were initially wary of the move, these were pacified when they learned their new space had previously been worked as a corn field, assuring them the soil was productive. Other gardeners benefitted from the move, as they had been on the waiting list to receive a plot at the East Parcel and were able to begin keeping their plots at the new, larger Carmen Avenue garden. One member of HMAA leadership explained that the SASD sat down with HMAA leadership to discuss the garden’s move between a year and 6

months in advance, and this was enough to convince them their space was not in danger. Said this same HMAA leader, “we knew the land belonged to the School District. They can do what they want with it, we were just happy to be able to keep our garden.”

Furthermore, gardeners expressed more private, economic motivations for using their common space than the FoD community did. Some gardeners and other community members identified the garden as an important source of income (either supplementary or primary). Several Hmong American vendors at the Sheboygan Farmer’s Market considered gardening to be their primary profession. One generation 1 Hmong-American claimed that gardening was an important economic opportunity for the older generation without marketable job or English skills, describing agricultural activity as an alternative to factory work.

This entrepreneurial motivation was not unique to otherwise unemployed individuals. Discussions with Hmong-American vendors at the Sheboygan Farmer’s Market showed that some gardeners send their children to sell their produce on days when they are at work. Gardening is used as an important source of income for many individuals in the Hmong community, and motivations are often commercial whether an individual has other work opportunities. The third most common motivation cited by Hmong gardeners at the Carmen Avenue garden was to save money, only beaten by having fresh food and getting exercise.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to describe the role of a community garden kept by the Hmong community of Sheboygan, Wisconsin. This description will contribute to a growing body of knowledge for immigrants in small Midwestern communities, a body of knowledge that can fill a knowledge gap around community gardens that is identified in previous ethnographies of Hmong communities. Data collected during this project addresses the following hypotheses:

1. The Sheboygan garden plays (or played) an important role for Hmong immigrants, similar to the roles played by other gardens for immigrant communities in the literature.
2. This role will be different for different Hmong-Americans, particularly those of different generations.
3. Individuals have adjusted agricultural practices to fit life in the US. This may have affected their overall acculturation process.
4. Crop varieties and gardening practices will reflect the shifting role of the garden for Hmong-Americans.
5. The garden moved in 2015 to a site that could be less desirable for several reasons, including neighboring a mink farm. This could have been predatory decision to take advantage of a vulnerable community.
6. The Aurora Plan represented an example of advancing neoliberalism.
7. Differing attitudes among the Hmong Garden community and the Field of Dreams

8. community regarding their common spaces influenced these outcomes.
9. Power relationships in Sheboygan allowed for these different outcomes.

Conclusions can be drawn regarding the cultural significance of the garden within Sheboygan's Hmong community, crop variety and gardening practices, and the implications of the garden's 2015 move.

#### *4.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GARDEN: DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES*

1) Results of this study suggest the Sheboygan Hmong community garden does play an important role for many immigrants, similar to other gardens identified in the literature. For participants in the HMAA garden, the Carmen Avenue location is a space where they can lead a healthy lifestyle both physically and economically. Gardening allows individuals to get outdoors and move their bodies. It also allows them to eat foods that are fresh and grown without chemical pesticides or fertilizers. Eating produce grown this way was important for many garden participants, suggesting a shared idea about healthy eating shared amongst the garden community. Growing food also helped individuals save money at the grocery store, although gardens were a supplementary source of food. Very few gardeners indicated that they sold their produce; the HMAA garden is used primarily for subsistence, rather than commercial, agriculture.

HMAA garden participants did not report gardening to be explicitly culturally significant. However, it does offer a way for gardeners to assert important kin relationships. It also provides individuals with produce that they are familiar with, that is not available in local grocery stores. Growing food is something that has been passed down from generation to generation of Hmong,



and older Hmong-Americans in Sheboygan continue to use it to live out their day to day lives at the HMAA garden.

Further evidence of the role of the HMAA garden for some members of the Hmong community is the conceptualized dichotomy between choosing to work a full-time job and tending a plot at the HMAA garden. Members of all three generations of Hmong-Americans interviewed and both gardeners and nongardeners expressed this view. It is likely that this dichotomy is at least in part due to the important role gardening plays for the individuals who keep plots at the HMAA location in their daily lives and their identities. Growing food is what they do on a daily basis, it provides for them and their families, and it allows them to use skills they have learned from past generations.

This dichotomous conceptualization was identity and ideal driven for gardeners, and economically driven by non-gardeners. Gardeners explained that their children would rather work and buy food at the grocery store “like any American”, while non-gardeners suggested gardening was preferable to “working in a factory”. Interview subjects of generation 1.5 and 2 suggested that employment opportunity is a factor in individuals’ decisions to garden. However, other interview subjects rejected this idea, and multiple individuals interviewed at the garden and Farmer’s Market either were engaged in or were retired from full-time employment.

2) Results of this study confirm that the role of the garden is different for different individuals. The garden space’s significance was not perceived in the ways listed above by interview subjects who do not participate in the garden. These individuals tended to place a greater importance on making money by selling produce than gardeners themselves. This economic focus was further stressed by the idea that gardening participation was driven by

opportunity. Nongardening individuals insinuated that gardening, while hard work, is a good opportunity for those without English or job skills.

Level of acculturation may be an important factor in shaping these perceptions of the garden. Acculturation can be estimated using the proxies of generation and English proficiency, and these were higher for individuals who do tend plots at the HMAA garden than those who do. Acculturation was also the reason the HMAA leader who assisted with translation suggested the garden would not be around much longer. Their generation does not have time to garden and the next generation will not want to. Part of adjusting to life in Sheboygan means giving up growing food, at least at the scale practiced at the HMAA garden.

These findings are consistent with Lee and Green's work in Sheboygan (2013). Lee and Green suggest that integration, a model of acculturation where an individual increasingly identifies with both the culture of origin and their new host culture is most common among Sheboygan's Hmong. However, English proficiency is a determining factor for how individuals experience acculturation. Lee and Green report survey takers who do not speak English experience acculturation that fits a model of separation, where individuals identify with the culture of origin but feel disconnected from their new host society, more closely. These results help explain the garden's demographics. Generation 1 individuals who are less proficient in English identify less with the "new, American" way of life, instead placing their identity in traditional Hmong activities that include growing food.

3) Gardeners at the Sheboygan garden have changed their agricultural practices to life in the United States. The scale and types of agricultural activity are restricted by space and time. Rice does not grow in Sheboygan's climate and food is grown as a supplement rather than as the main source of gardeners' diets. Few people raise animals. The growing season is different and

shorter, and crops need to be watered much more frequently. Results of this study do not confirm or reject the hypothesis that these adjustments have had an impact on the gardeners' acculturation process.

4) Crop variety results were similarly mixed. Some gardeners do grow produce specifically because it is familiar to them and they cannot find it at the supermarket. Other plots grew identifiable Hmong crops such as mustard greens. However, many plots (and Farmer's Market stands, for that matter) were filled with vegetables that are not unfamiliar in Sheboygan. Some of the gardeners who tended these plots report that they grow all the same things, except rice, in Sheboygan as they had in Southeast Asia. Crop variety and gardening practices reveal the complex patchwork of motivations and personal histories of the Hmong-Americans keeping plots.

5) The garden's move from its original location at the East Parcel to its Carmen Avenue location in 2015 did not represent an example of environmental injustice. Regardless of whether unequal power relationships were a factor in the Hmong community's garden moving, the Carmen avenue location is equally suitable for the garden's purposes. Gardeners reported that the soil was of a good quality (despite initial concerns), and the nearby mink farm did not emit a sever odor. Furthermore, the Carmen Avenue location is larger than the East Parcel, allowing for more individuals to have access to garden plots. However, the possibility of unequal power relationships in Sheboygan contributing to the Aurora Plan narrative suggest environmental justice may be a concern.

#### *4.2 THE GARDEN'S MOVE*

6) The goals and motivation expressed by the Aurora Plan represent the advancement of neoliberal agenda by the SASD. From the school district's perspective, the FoD and the HMAA garden each fit the definition of a commons. The Field of Dreams was community founded, built, and used. It was and remains open for public use and plays an important role supporting the institutions of youth sports in Sheboygan. Garden space was and is rented by the HMAA from the SASD for using a relatively informal annual lease for roughly the value of the taxes due for the property. The garden is governed by the HMAA Institution. Neither space was used by the SASD commercially prior to the Aurora Plan, instead they were set aside for community use and benefit.

The SASD and its supporters sought the economic benefit that would come from privatizing the common space of the FoD. While it included plans to replace the commons being enclosed, the Aurora Plan should be seen as an example of the "new wave of enclosures" described by Harvey. This enclosure was perceived differently by the communities around each of the commons.

There are many factors that could influence each community's reaction to the Aurora Plan and why they contrasted so drastically. For example: a more thorough analysis of the four categories of arguments employed by the Save the Field of Dreams campaign might reveal different attitudes, motivations, and perspectives between the communities. For instance, the NIMBY attitude expressed by FoD neighbors may be due to a greater sense of ownership of public spaces than the Hmong gardeners felt and feel at the HMAA garden. Environmental justifications could be indicative of differing models of environmental interaction between the FoD and Hmong communities.

7) While these hypotheses are purely speculative based on the data presented in this paper, different relationships with neoliberalism in these common spaces is supported; and can explain why each community reacted differently to the Aurora Plan. As discussed above, the literature identifies commons as having highly complex and sometimes contradictory relationships with neoliberalism. This is true of the HMAA garden and FoD.

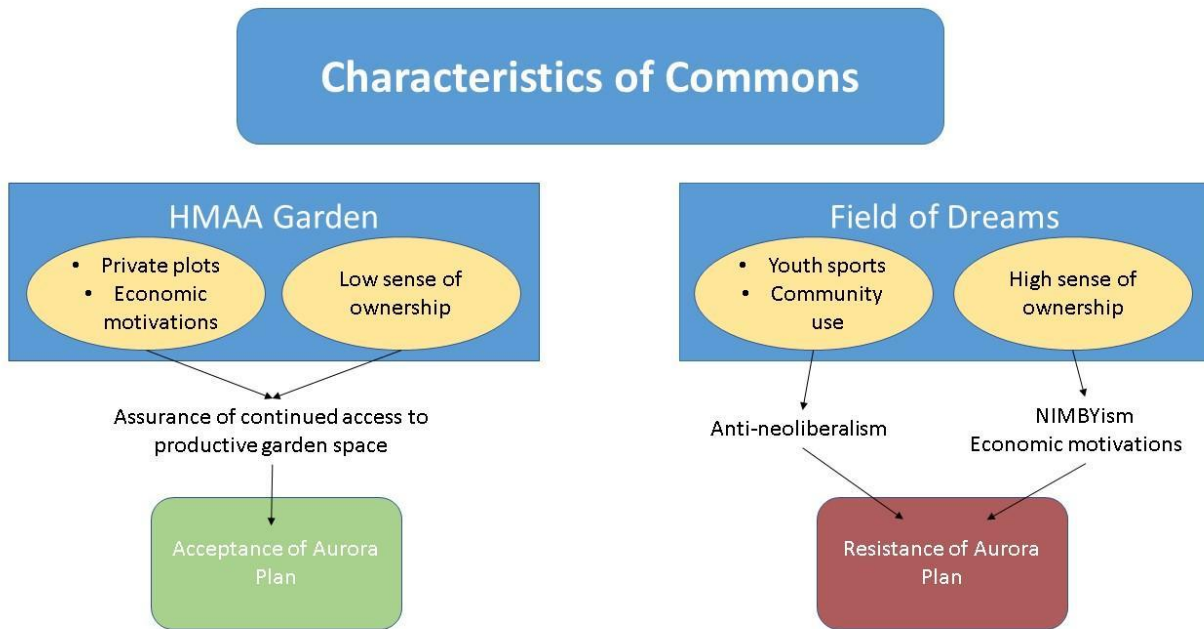
Despite its existence as a common resource, HMAA garden plots were kept by individuals for individual benefit. The HMAA saw the land as the private property of the SASD and not community property. These attitudes stand in direct contrast with Save the Field of Dreams members' ideas of their park as public space. Save the Field of Dreams members saw the Aurora Plan as an attempt to enclose their purely public space to establish a private space used for private profit. One community used their commons for neoliberal private purposes, while the other saw it as community property for community benefit.

When confronted with a neoliberal plan to move their garden space, HMAA gardeners and leadership were unphased (once they were assured they would continue to have garden space with suitable soil, that is). Individuals were comfortable with the fact that the land beneath their garden belonged to the SASD and they were only allowed to use it on an annual basis. This neoliberal attitude toward the private ownership of space permeated the garden, as individuals rented their own individual plots from the HMAA and were often motivated by individual and neoliberal pursuits.

FoD users did not harbor these neoliberal motivations. The facilities did not serve any type of commercial importance and were free and public to use. The institutions present in the space were youth team sports, a fitting analogy for the communal space. When the SASD announced its plans to sell this space to Aurora, it represented a philosophical as well as physical

change for the FoD community. A space that was owned and accessible to everyone would be made private and used for corporate benefit.

8) Data collected during this thesis cannot confirm whether power relationships were a factor in the garden's move. While gardeners were initially wary of the plan, no organized resistance similar to Save the Field of Dreams materialized. Garden leadership explained that the SASD presented their plan for a new garden space well before the move, which quelled any concern from them. A study of where Hmong community gardens are located and how each location was selected could offer an interesting environmental justice study.



**Figure 4.1.** Conceptual model of contrasting reactions to the Aurora Plan of the HMAA garden and FoD communities

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND FUTURE WORK

The primary motivation for this case study was to contribute to fill converging knowledge gaps in the fields of Hmong Studies, immigration studies, and socio environmental relations around the precise role and function of garden spaces kept in many cities around the country. Information gathered does contribute to a growing understanding of immigration and acculturation processes in small midwestern US cities. It also addresses a need identified in previous ethnographies of Hmong communities for a precise study of the role and function of community gardens kept in cities across the United States. Results are comparable to previous work in community gardens kept by both Hmong and other immigrant and nonimmigrant communities in the US and other Western countries. Through identifying the Sheboygan HMAA garden as a commons, this thesis also contributes to an evolving literature that describes the relationship between common spaces, socio environmental concerns, and neoliberalism.

This study helps build on the results of previous work performed in Hmong communities in Wisconsin. In a 2008 work, Christian describes the distribution of Eau Claire, Wisconsin's Hmong community as "heterolocal", meaning the community is scattered across the city rather than enclaved. This is due to individuals relying less on proximity to define ethnic identity. Sheboygan's Hmong community exhibits a similar distribution. Christian also calls for a descriptive study of Hmong agricultural space. The acculturation process in Sheboygan's Hmong community has been previously described (Lee and Green 2010).

Results of this study offer the opportunity for comparison to previous work in community gardens. Corlett et al. found that two distinct age cohorts participated in a Hmong garden in California, and age was an important factor in determining crop variety in garden plots (2003). The older people at this garden grew a greater variety of crops and were more likely to grow nonfood crops. While age data was not collected during this study, almost everyone identified at the garden belonged to generation 1, and no nonfood crops were grown. 16 years and several thousand miles separate that previous study site and Sheboygan's HMAA garden, making it difficult to determine the source of these differences.

Miyares 1997 work in Minneapolis found that acculturation was an important factor in shaping Hmong's perception of space, and that Hmong individuals with a college education are less likely to participate in garden activity. Work in Australia found that crop variety at immigrant community gardens does not reveal much about the gardener's background, but the process of adapting gardening practices to a new environment can help spur the acculturation process (Augustina and Beilin 2011). Other work has described differing perceptions of gardens' cultural and economic significance within communities (Kurtz 2001; L'Annunziata 2010). L'Annunziata further describes the significance of continuity in a garden plot's location from one growing season to the next for developing a gardener's sense of ownership of their space. Results from this case study are consistent with these findings. Most participants at the HMAA garden belonged to generation 1, grew crops familiar to Southeast Wisconsin, and adapted gardening practices to a new lifestyle in the US. The garden appeared to play an important role for participants, and a lack of a sense of ownership over their plots could have been aided by never keeping the same space two years in a row.



The literature describes a complex, and sometimes contradictory, relationship between community gardens described as commons and neoliberal philosophy and policy. Work has described gardens as commons where individuals resist the neoliberal hegemony in the city around them (Eizenberg 2011; Schmelzkopf 2002). However, other studies find a more complex relationship between neoliberalism and community gardens, where neoliberalism is in fact a motivating factor in the establishment of commons (Blomly 2004; Pettygrove and Ghose 2018). The HMAA garden examined in this study fits into the latter group, with gardeners and other members of the Hmong community identifying private economic motivations for tending garden plots.

### *5.1 POLICY IMPLICATIONS*

Information gathered during this thesis has important implications for policy makers and individuals or organizations working with first generation immigrants. Sheboygan's HMAA garden, like other immigrant community gardens, allows participants to maintain and build identity in a new location. These gardens can be conceptualized as commons with social, economic, and health value to their communities. The Sheboygan garden also possibly serves as a place where cultural models for healthy eating are distributed. Gardens represent spaces that are fertile for intracultural dialogues, particularly for sharing ideas around healthy eating and lifestyles. Community gardens are already popular among Hmong communities in Wisconsin and across the US and given their important benefits for their communities, governments must continue to prioritize access to garden space.

Protecting community gardener's access to garden space will likely become increasingly difficult in small midwestern cities like Sheboygan in coming years. HMAA leadership

explained that the Sheboygan garden may not exist for much longer as current participants age and few young people express interest in gardening. If this is true, there may be pressure for the HMAA to discontinue their community garden, depriving new immigrants and older individuals without access to their own garden space of the opportunity to grow food.

## *5.2 FUTURE WORK*

A study of Hmong community garden locations across Wisconsin, or even the United States, may offer insight into the relationships between Hmong immigrants and their host societies. This thesis used newspaper articles and first hand accounts to draw an historical narrative of the HMAA garden's 2015 move. This move did not turn out to be an example of environmental injustice, and power relationships between Sheboygan's Hmong community and the SASD were beyond the scope of this project. However, a similar approach to studying the processes that have led to the establishment of other gardens in Hmong communities could be more telling. The Sheboygan garden, and many others across the US, were formed soon after the arrival of Hmong immigrants, and the location chosen for such facilities may offer insights into the rights to space offered to these newcomers.

Beyond potential historical environmental justice studies, this project revealed several opportunities for future work. The highly qualitative research design was descriptive perhaps even exploratory. Quantitative methods, such as focused surveying or more advanced botanical techniques, could produce more accurate and robust conclusions than data collected during this project. Additionally, methods from the field of anthropology could prove fruitful at the HMAA garden. Cognitive anthropology and ethno-botany in particular could more robustly describe the acculturation processes occurring at the Sheboygan garden.

As has been identified in the literature, the development of a general acculturation survey specific to Hmong-Americans is needed (Lee and Green 2015). Such a survey could lead to a more robust understanding of the immigration process Hmong have and are experiencing. This understanding represents an opportunity to fill a gap in immigration studies in the middle of the United States due to the distribution of Hmong-American in small and mid-sized cities across the Midwest. Surveying could be conducted regarding individuals' sense of ownership over space at the garden. As was discussed in the NIMBYism section above, different degrees of ownership of space may have shaped the reactions of the HMAA garden and Field of Dreams communities to the Aurora Plan. A better understanding of this sense of ownership could give useful insights into the acculturation process for Hmong-Americans.

Previous studies, particularly work by Corlett et al., have used more advanced botanical techniques to survey Hmong community gardens (2003). These results were combined with demographic data of gardeners to draw conclusions about the role of gardening for different age groups. Applying these techniques at the HMAA garden could add to the results and conclusions of this project.

Cognitive anthropology is a subfield of anthropology that borrows concepts from psychology to explain and describe human behavior. Cultural models are the central concept of cognitive anthropology, and the theoretical location of culture (D'Andrade 1992). Cultural models are groups of schemata that exist in the neural pathways of individual's brains that shape the way they perceive the world around them. These models can be shared among populations with a shared culture and can explain group and individual behavior (Dressler 2018). Cultural Consensus Analysis (CCA), a method used to identify and quantify the distribution of these

shared models (effectively mapping culture) and have been used in immigrant communities to research how these models are transferred (Copeland 2018).

Interview data from the Sheboygan garden revealed that eating organically and staying healthy were the main motivators for individuals to keep garden plots. These results are suggestive of a possible shared cultural model of healthy eating. Performing a CCA in Sheboygan's Hmong community could identify this possible shared model for healthy eating among HMAA gardeners. Correlating the degree to which individuals share this hypothetical model with information on generation, English proficiency, and amount of time spent living in the United States, could help explain not only unequal garden participatory behavior but also the acculturation process for Hmong immigrants. CCA could be performed to test for other models suggested by interview data, such as the importance of growing food, as well.

Previous descriptions of neoliberal motivations in commons have described a top down approach, where local governments designate the commons and use them to push neoliberal agendas (Ghose and Pettygrove 2014). However, this is not the case with the HMAA garden. Rather than government using the garden as a neoliberal tool, the HMAA gardeners themselves brought privatized organization and motivations to their common space, which can be conceptualized as advancing neoliberalism. Further investigations in to other cases of bottom up neoliberalism and how these attitudes take root may be worthwhile.

Furthermore, this paper provides a case study of the path-dependent neoliberalization process in Sheboygan. This process has been shaped in different ways by different communities. Future studies should focus on the reciprocal relationship between neoliberalization and acculturation processes, through which immigrant communities impact the advancement of the

neoliberal policies while their own cultural lives are shaped by neoliberal processes and philosophy.

Further ethnographies of Hmong community gardens are necessary to wholly understand the relationship between individuals and gardening. While the majority of produce vendors at the Sheboygan Farmer's Market were Hmong-Americans, a very small percentage of HMAA garden participants grew food to sell. Farmer's Market vendors identified several different locations around Sheboygan County where they grew food. An understanding of these gardens could lead to more general conclusions about Sheboygan's Hmong community. Furthermore, studies focusing on gardens throughout Wisconsin and the United States could result in a comparative study of Hmong gardening, communities, and acculturation in different communities. A comparative study of Hmong community gardens could further fill the research gap identified in this thesis.

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The 2 page judgment against and agreed to by the SASD School Board and administration is attached. In summary:

- All agreements done in violation of the law between the SASD school board and school administration with Aurora are null and void. So no agreement would then be in place currently, contrary to Aurora's implied internal email last week and the City's internal email.
- All future dealings around the public property, Field of Dreams, cannot be done in secret, must follow the law, must involve the public from the beginning, and no secret deals with Aurora Health Care Inc. and then presented to the public.
- Should a sale go through of the current park, the SASD School Board must protect the future park should Aurora or anyone want to buy and build over that park too.
- SASD school board members and senior administration must attend training regarding WI Open Meetings Laws. [Facebook post]. Retrieved from [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).

Save the Field of Dreams. (2017, January 11). Aurora's big reveal, BIG BUST

Aurora advertised a big reveal Monday night at Blue Harbor, they basically shared nothing and talked around the truth.

The “not-for-profit” corporation did reveal that it made record revenue for the second year in a row. Revenue from their patients due to higher volume and increased prices and also from taxpayers especially in 2014-15 largely due to Obamacare. So now they can use some of that revenue to build this new complex their hope is right next to St. Nicholas.

They also shared that supposedly our park is the ONLY piece of viable property in the whole Sheboygan area to build on. That land must be worth a heck of a lot more than below market value! What if our parks weren't for sale, then what? No answer.

[Facebook post]. Retrieved from [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).

Save the Field of Dreams. (2017, February 10). Aurora Corporation Proposal

What they fail to mention again is the millions this deal will cost the taxpayers. Are we going to once again make a decision without all the facts or sharing all the facts with the public.

- At a bare minimum the tax payers are in for \$3 MILLION Dollars to make this deal happen. Not including infrastructure costs the city would have to do.
- The Field of Dreams has to be worth much more than Aurora is paying for it.
- Aurora would get their nice new facility if they built on commercial land, “progress” would still happen but not at the taxpayers’ expense. The supposed new jobs, will happen wherever they build.
- We would still gain no new taxes no matter where Aurora builds.
- The kids don't give a darn about tournament grade fields, they play in our backyards, in our bumpy parks, in our streets (careful of the potholes).

According to the Rettler Corporation, landscape and architecture firm, who did a preliminary cost estimate over 3 years ago for the City/SASD...the taxpayers will be in for a minimum of \$3 MILLION dollars even with Aurora's "donation" to replace the soccer fields. (Attached)

In order for this deal to happen tax payers would have to put up this money because the Field of Dreams MUST BE replaced. There is a covenant on the Field of Dreams to be kept as a park for perpetuity based on the grant we received from the DNR for the development of local parks (Attached).

Another major concern is that Aurora is ONLY paying \$2.5 million for the land. The Menards property sold for \$5 million dollars in 2014 for 20.5 acres. The buildings on the property then had to be demolished and cleaned up for it to be built on. The Field of Dreams is 35 acres, at green state, and supposedly the last piece of viable property in all of Sheboygan to build on, and it's only worth \$2.5 million???

If we kept what we have and Aurora built on commercial property the taxpayers would be out NOTHING! Wonder where we could better use that money, roads, new city building, tax relief, removal of the garbage and wheel taxes.

Now make an informed decision. [Facebook post]. Retrieved from [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

Save the Field of Dreams. (2017, March 8). Last night at the school board meeting community members from all over the school district filled much of the South High School commons. When the school board president asked how many people were in favor of SAVING the Field of Dreams it appeared that well over 80% of the room raised their hands. When she asked who was in favor of selling the Field of Dreams to Aurora, all the Aurora executive hands went up.

School board members said they wanted to wait and see who turned up to the meeting last night and what their thoughts were about the Field of Dreams. Well there's your answer school board. [Facebook update]. Retrieved from [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).

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## APPENDIX

### 7.1 IRB certificate



**The University of Alabama  
801 University Blvd  
Tuscaloosa AL**

#### **NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH**

**DATE:** August 29, 2018  
**TO:** Misfeldt, James, Geography  
Sherman, Douglas, Geography, LaFevor, Matthew, Geography  
**FROM:** Graham, Jeanelle, MPH, Research Compliance Specialist, NM  
Expedited  
**PROTOCOL TITLE:** Acculturation in a Community Garden: The Shifting Role of a Hmong Garden in Eastern Wisconsin  
**FUNDING SOURCE:** NONE  
**PROTOCOL NUMBER:** 18-03-1018

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled: Acculturation in a Community Garden: The Shifting Role of a Hmong Garden in Eastern Wisconsin. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol. This protocol must be reviewed for renewal on a yearly basis for as long as the research remains active. Should the protocol not be renewed before expiration, all activities must cease until the protocol has been re-reviewed.

If approval did not accompany a proposal when it was submitted to a sponsor, it is the PI's responsibility to provide the sponsor with the approval notice.

This approval is issued under University of Alabama's Federal Wide Assurance 00004939 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under Committee's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please direct any questions about the IRB's actions on this project to:

Graham, Jeanelle

Graham, Jeanelle

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**Review Type:** EXEMPT  
**IRB Number:** 03



## 7.2 Interview guide

Interviews will be with an open structure, with the focus being on a participant's interaction with the community garden. However, certain demographic information must be obtained using the following questions:

- At what age did you immigrate to the United States, or were you born here?

Interview discussion will be spurred or carried on using the following questions:

- Are you involved with the garden in Sheboygan? If so, how and for how long?
- What is your gardening routine like?
- How important is the garden to you? Do you consider it a profession, a hobby, or something else?
- What got you involved in the garden in the first place? How long do you plan on gardening?
- Do you work any other garden space, such as a lawn or farm?
- What sort of crops do you grow, and what are they used for?
- How do you get to and from the garden?
- What are your experiences like in terms of relationships with fellow gardeners/nongardeners?
- How have you had to adapt your gardening to fit Wisconsin?
- How did the garden's move in 2015 affect you?
- How did you feel about the garden's move when it happened? How have your feelings about it changed?
- Do your children garden? How do they feel about it?

## 7.3 Online survey questions for Save the Field of Dreams leader

What is your connection to the Save the Field of Dreams effort? How did you get involved?

Describe the importance of stopping the Aurora plan to you.

Describe, in your own words, the importance of the following motivations for stopping the plan to you.

Preventing high traffic and noise associated with the new hospital

Aurora's offer undervalued the plot

There are better locations elsewhere in the city. Please add a few words about why.

Youth sports would be displaced and/or threatened

Community space should not be privatized.

The Field of Dreams represents 20 years of invaluable community history and should not be moved

Hmong gardeners should not lose the plots they've gardened for years.

The hospital puts adjacent wetlands and other valuable environmental resources, such as Maywood, at risk.

Any other factor that motivated you to resist the Aurora plan

To what extent did you participate in the fight against the Aurora plan? What specific actions did you take?

Do you feel as if your voice was heard? Talk about the response you received from the city, your city council, the school district and Aurora.

How do you feel about the Hmong garden's move across town?

#### 7.4 Consent form

**Study title:** Acculturation in a Community Garden: The Shifting Role of a Hmong Garden in Eastern Wisconsin

**Investigator:** James Misfeldt, graduate student, University of Alabama Geography Department  
You are being asked to take part in a research study.

This study is called Acculturation in a Community Garden: The Shifting Role of a Hmong Garden in Eastern Wisconsin. The study is being done by James Misfeldt, who is a graduate student at the University of Alabama. Mr. Misfeldt is being supervised by Professor Matthew LaFevor who is a professor of geography at the University of Alabama.

**Is the researcher being paid for this study?** This study is supported by the University of Alabama. Funding covers supplies, equipment, and mileage only. The investigator is **not** receiving extra pay for this study.

**Is this research developing a product that will be sold, and if so, will the investigator profit from it?** No, the investigator is not conducting the study to develop a product or make a profit. Results of the study will be used to write a thesis necessary for graduation.

**What is this study about? What is the investigator trying to learn?** This study is being done to investigate the role of the community garden in Sheboygan, Wisconsin to the Hmong

community living there. This is important because community gardens have been identified as important places for immigrants and immigrant communities, and a better understanding of this relationship might help inform future policy decisions.

**Why have I been asked to be in this study?** You have been asked to be in this study because of your connection to the Sheboygan Hmong community, the Sheboygan gardening/farming community, or your unique perspective on one or the other.

**How many people will be in this study?** There is not a predetermined number of participants in this study. Roughly 14-20 other people will be in this study.

**What will I be asked to do in this study?** If you meet the criteria and agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do these things: share some information about yourself (age, personal history) and give an interview about your thoughts, feelings, and involvement with gardening and the Hmong in Sheboygan. Interviews will not take long, most likely between 20 and 40 minutes. Interviews will be conducted on site at the garden or farmers market or in a public and agreed upon setting (e.g. coffee shop).

**How much time will I spend being this study?** Interviews will consist of an open discussion about your history and perspective on gardening and the Hmong in Sheboygan. Interview duration will vary based on this discussion but should last **between 20 minutes and 1 hour.**

**Will being in this study cost me anything?** The only cost to you from this study is your time and possible travel to an agreed upon interview location.

**Will I be compensated for being in this study?** You will not be compensated for being in this study.

**What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?** Little or no risk is involved in participating in this study. Interviews will focus on nonsensitive topics.

**What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study?** There is no expected direct benefit to participants in this study. It is the investigator's hope that this study may contribute to a greater understanding of immigrant communities, which could benefit society in the future.

**How will my privacy be protected?** Interviews will be conducted in a mutually agreed upon location. You will not be asked to participate in an interview when or where you are not comfortable.

As a participant in this study you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to. Another important note is that the investigator must report signs of spouse, child, or elder abuse if he observes them.

**How will my confidentiality be protected?** All interview data will be securely stored on the University of Alabama's UA Box storage system. No data will be kept on personal computers or shared with anyone outside of the investigator.

**What are the alternatives to being in this study? Do I have other choices?** The alternative to being in this study is not to participate.

**What are my rights as a participant in this study?** Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time. There will be no effect on your relations with the University of Alabama.

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board ("the IRB") is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to

time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being carried out as planned.

**Who do I call if I have questions or problems?** If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study right now, please ask James Misfeldt. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study later on, please call Mr. Misfeldt at 218-310-2902.

If you have questions about your rights as a person in a research study, call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University, at 205-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at <http://ovpred.ua.edu/research-compliance/prco/> or email the Research Compliance office at [rscompliance@research.ua.edu](mailto:rscompliance@research.ua.edu).

After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the University Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127.

I have read this consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions. I agree to take part in it. I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

I agree to allowing my interview to be audio recorded  
yes / no

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\_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Research Participant      Date

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\_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Investigator      Date

## 7.5 Observation guide

For this project observations will be collected at the Hmong community garden and the Sheboygan farmers market. Observations that will be recorded are as follows:

- Size of plot/market stand
- Number of gardeners
- Approximate age of gardeners
- Count of crop species being grown/sold

- Whatever details about crops that can be gathered (purpose, place of origin)

Optimally these observations will be supplemented by asking the gardeners or through full interviews.

## 7.6 Recruitment script

Hello, my name is James Misfeldt and I'm a graduate student at the University of Alabama geography department. I'm conducting a study on the Hmong community garden here in Sheboygan and would like to hear your perspective on it. Would you be willing to discuss your connection to the garden with me in an interview? Interviews will be short (most likely between 15 and 45 minutes), voluntary, and can be done right here on location.