

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Art**  
**Briar Schoon**

Will defend her thesis

**Youth Perspectives and Future Visions for Community Food Security:  
An Applied Approach to Participatory Research in Phoenix, Arizona**

Food security literature has a heavy emphasis on physical barriers, often utilizing spatial analysis or market-based approaches, but the human dimensions of food security often remain unexplored. This has resulted in a misunderstanding of the problem and inefficient interventions, as the contextual factors and lived experiences of residents are not considered. There are many barriers and opportunities for food security that are not spatially fixed (e.g. family relations, social capital) that may be important but are unrepresented in these types of studies. In order to capture these barriers and opportunities, community stakeholders need to play a fundamental role in the problem analysis and visioning stages. This study utilized community-based participatory research methods to engage an important stakeholder in the future food environment, youth, to 1) understand how the youth of Canyon Corridor describe their food environment, and thus capture contextual aspects of food security 2) adapt CBPR methods to engage youth in a visioning session to elicit their ideal community food environment and 3) determine if these applications of CBPR can empower youth of Canyon Corridor to mobilize towards a more secure food environment. This study found that while the youth participants did identify many barriers to food security (i.e. transportation, cost, cultural appropriateness, quality), this community also has significant strengths, particularly social capital, that allowed them to overcome what would be food insecurity. These findings contrast a previous geographical and market-based study in the area. Despite their conclusions on their food security, the youth did desire many changes for the future food environment and felt increased empowerment after the workshops. This research suggests the need for incorporating methods that also acknowledge the role of social and individual factors, along with the physical environment, when addressing food security.

Wednesday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
12:00pm  
WGHL 481

Faculty, students, and the general public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:

Hallie Eakin  
Seline Szkupinski-Quiroga  
Christopher Wharton