Centennial Honors College

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Podium Presentation

Food Alienation: Distributors, Producers, and Consumers in Macomb, Illinois

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Sociology and Anthropology

As Americans, most of us understand our food in a simple way: the food from the refrigerator comes from the grocery story, dinner comes from Mom, and the take-out sub comes from the Jimmy John's worker. However, as we all know, the food chain is much more complex. Food is an absolute necessity for human beings to live, yet we are becoming so separated from it that most children cannot decipher the pure forms of fruits and vegetables. Our connection to food is slipping away, and the future generations are at a very high risk of losing their link to their natural history. This paper is the culmination of the Anthropology coursework and individual research I have undertaken the last four years. This paper focuses on the Macomb community and addresses how we have become separated from our food. I analyze the food chain using Karl Marx's concepts of division of labor, capitalism, and theory of alienation. Together, these ideas will form a foundation to analyze the ethnographic research on the separation between distributors, producers, and consumers within Macomb's community. It will demonstrate that there is a separation, as well as map out specifically where and why it occurs. (200 words)