

Eating for Social Justice and Environmental Sustainability:
Attempting to Live Food Sovereignty

by

Kaitlyn Fraser

Bachelor of Arts (Honours), University of Manitoba, 2014

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Sociology

©Kaitlyn Fraser, 2017
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

Eating for Social Justice and Environmental Sustainability: Attempting
to Live Food Sovereignty

by

Kaitlyn Fraser
Bachelor of Arts (Honours), University of Manitoba, 2014

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Martha McMahon, Supervisor

Department of Sociology

Dr. William Carroll, Committee Member

Department of Sociology

ABSTRACT

Using personal narratives, this thesis theorizes the lived experiences of attempting to align one's consumption choices with the principles of food sovereignty in a place like Victoria, BC. First, to provide a detailed summary of the problem, a thematic analysis is used to identify and describe the tensions that arise throughout this journey. Second, drawing on institutional ethnography (IE), this thesis explores the various ruling relations that coordinate the (mis)understanding of the political potential of food sovereignty. By critically and reflexively analyzing my personal experience of engaging with food sovereignty I will suggest how others who are entering the study of alternative food initiatives can be more effective in their engagement with such movements. Furthermore, I suggest potential ways for those who have a relatively good understanding of alternative food movements to engage more effectively with others who share an interest in these initiatives, but who perhaps lack the accessibility to academic literature and/or the knowledge of how to participate politically in such initiatives. When we are able to see our shared interests and political connections, we are able to build political alliances. This then creates the potential for transformational change in the current industrial food system to one that is socially just and environmentally sustainable.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE	II
ABSTRACT	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	VI
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
PROVIDING CONTEXT: SITUATING MY JOURNEY	3
CHOOSING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY	9
ESTABLISHING THE PROBLEMATIC	10
SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS	13
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	15
HISTORICIZING THE FOOD REGIME	15
<i>THE TWO GREAT FOOD REVOLUTIONS</i>	16
<i>THE NEOLIBERAL, CAPITALIST FOOD SYSTEM</i>	18
FOOD SECURITY	20
THE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY COUNTERMOVEMENT	22
PUBLIC AMBIGUITY	24
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN	26
THEORETICAL APPROACH	26
<i>IDEOLOGY AND THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE</i>	27
<i>RULING RELATIONS</i>	29
<i>SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM</i>	29
<i>TRASCORPOREALITY</i>	31
METHODOLOGY	32
<i>DATA COLLECTION</i>	36
<i>DATA ANALYSIS</i>	38
Thematic analysis	38
Institutional/autoethnographic inquiry	39
CHAPTER 4: AUTO: THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE	42
META THEME #1: PRODUCT LABELLING	43
<i>THEME: CERTIFICATION LABELS</i>	45
<i>THEME: RETAIL OUTLET</i>	46
META THEME #2: WHAT IS/IS NOT FOOD SOVEREIGNTY	48
<i>THEME: JUST ANOTHER NICHE MARKET</i>	48
<i>THEME: WHO IS THE SOVEREIGN?</i>	50
<i>THEME: INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY</i>	50
<i>THEME: CONSUMER FOCUS</i>	52
<i>THEME: LOCAL</i>	54
<i>THEME: GLOBAL? INDIVIDUAL? BOTH?</i>	56

MOVING FORWARD	57
CHAPTER 5: REPRODUCING NEOLIBERAL SUBJECTIVITIES	60
IDENTIFYING THE RULING RELATIONS	60
INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY	61
CONSUMER ACTION	67
IDENTITY POLITICS	70
CHAPTER 6: RE-CONSIDERING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY	73
LOCATING RULING RELATIONS	74
PRIORITIZING THE POLITICAL	76
REACHING A WIDER AUDIENCE	78
LOCAL ORGANIZING: EXPERIENCING SELF AS A POLITICAL SUBJECT	79
ONTOLOGICAL SHIFT	80
DECOLONIZATION	83
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	84
REFERENCES	88
APPENDIX A	100

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A heart-felt thank you to my supervisors, Martha McMahon and William Carroll for supporting and encouraging me throughout this process. I feel honored to have had the opportunity to work under both of your supervision.

Martha, thank you for the numerous hours you devoted to help me develop and revise my research. I know that my first few drafts were rough (to say the least) and I am forever grateful that you stuck with me, and my research, to the end. Thank you for constantly reminding me to stop trying to put everything into restrictively defined boxes and for putting the pressure on when I needed it.

A special thank you to my family and friends who each supported me in unique ways throughout my studies. Mom, thank you for sending me money periodically for “special” grocery items; I always did my best writing when I had good food by my side. Dad, thank you for passing your green thumb on to me; your love for gardening has deeply inspired me to pursue this research. Ash, thank you for upping your threat game when it was necessary; having my nephew “disown me” inspired Chapter 5. Farkas, thank you for sending me all of the snaps of Theo and letting *me* do the talking on Facetime with him. Lara and Chris, thank you for providing a place for me to come to that I could feel at home in; you and your girls have made Victoria feel like home. Ashley, my classmate/ first friend in Victoria/ roommate/counselor/ motivator/ RB partner/ person, I would not have made it through grad school without you. Thank you for *everything*, I could not have asked for a better friend to have by my side.

And to Rea, you have given me the strength to endure anything life brings my way. I am forever grateful to you, and the life you’ve inspired me to live.

Personal narrative: *I became interested in the production of food after watching a documentary called 'Food Inc.' by Robert Kenner. I remember being shocked by all of the descriptions of the various aspects of the current food industry. The inhumane treatment of animals, the use of harmful chemicals, the legal action taken against small-scale farmers, the misleading advertisement strategies; they were all concrete examples of the terms I had learned throughout my undergraduate degree in sociology. What a great master's thesis topic, I thought to myself. Although I felt sick to my stomach after watching that documentary and confused as to my place within this industry, I was hopeful that I could use my time in graduate school to explore this topic in depth. I instantly had a sense of relief; while I didn't know exactly where I stood on these issues, I knew I would be able to use my background in sociology to better understand my connection to the issues raised in Food Inc. and how I might alter my purchasing behavior to respond ethically. Feeling hopeful I got off the couch and walked to the kitchen, opened up the pantry door and thought... so what am I supposed to eat now?*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The dramatic changes in food production in the last fifty years have inspired many scholars to take a critical look at how food shapes and is shaped by the political, cultural, and social. While food production and consumption is heavily theorized by academics, it is practiced by all; in order to survive, we must eat. Academic literature has been criticized for its intellectual jargon, dense scholarly writing, and failure to reach the general public (Pinker 2014; Neem 2016). Documentaries such as *Supersize Me* (2004), *Food Inc.* (2008), and *Cowspiracy* (2014) and bestselling books such as *Fast Food*

Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal (2001) and *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals (2006)* have shed light on the various issues resulting in and from the current industrial food system, bringing awareness to everyday consumers. After watching *Food Inc.*, I felt myself being drawn into the idea of alternative consumer practices; specifically, the idea that one could eat ethically. But what does eating ethically look like? Does it require eating organic food? Local food? Would I need to become a vegetarian? A vegan? I knew I felt a sense of pride when I purchased a product with the certified organic label on it or when I ordered the vegetarian option; I felt like I was doing the *right* thing. This feeling of doing the “right” thing however, was short lived once I exposed myself to the academic literature where I discovered that many of the social change strategies, framed in terms of the right consumer choices, so easily result in a reproduction of the very things one seeks to change (Guthman 2007a; Lavin 2009, 2013). That is, instead of being transgressive the focus on consumer choice can become absorbed into new forms of neoliberal self-governmentalities and reproduce that which it initially sought to counter.

In this thesis I attempt to make sense of some of the academic literature on local food and the meaning of food sovereignty in the Global North in the hopes of answering the persistent question of how we as individuals who must consume food daily, can consume in a way that aligns with our desire for social justice and environmental sustainability. For while the idea of food sovereignty rejects neoliberalism and moves the political focus away from individual consumption choices as the core of political expression, the reality is that every individual has to make consumption choices every day. Is this a contradiction at the heart of food sovereignty as critics such as Guthman

suggest? ¹Does attending to consumer choice around food inevitably depoliticize the intentions of eating ethically? I aim to explore how the social is organized such that I myself, a self-proclaimed foodie and graduate student researching alternative food movements, experience uneasiness with every food product that I purchase. By critically and reflexively analyzing my personal experience of engaging with food sovereignty I suggest how others who are entering the study of alternative food initiatives can be more effective in their engagement with such movements. Furthermore, I suggest potential ways in which those who have a relatively good understanding of alternative food movements can more effectively engage others who share an interest in these initiatives, but who perhaps lack the accessibility to academic literature and/or the knowledge of how to politically participate in such initiatives.

PROVIDING CONTEXT: SITUATING MY JOURNEY

I begin my thesis with a personal narrative describing my experience of watching the documentary *Food Inc.* When I first watched this movie I was a sociology honors student at the University of Manitoba. I was in the process of writing my honors thesis, a path analysis of problem gambling in young adults, a topic I had no real interest in. I regretted choosing this topic almost instantly. I felt so privileged to have had the opportunity to conduct my own research with the support of my professors, and I wished I had chosen a topic that I felt personally connected to. Unlike the feeling I had during

¹ I recognize that Julie Guthman was addressing the local food movement, rather than food sovereignty, when she suggests they tend to reproduce that which they seek to change. However, in the Global North the local food movement and food sovereignty are often conflated (albeit incorrectly).

my time researching problem gambling, I felt a fire within me after watching Food Inc. As I noted in my personal narrative, I was overwhelmed with the information I had been bombarded with throughout this one hour and thirty-four-minute film. I felt a strong desire to research the information further, as sociology had taught me to be critical towards everything. By critical I mean to challenge the dominant discourse and the implications such discourses have on differently situated people in society. Food Inc. sparked my interest around the food industry and the way food is produced, but I wanted more credible sources that supported these appalling accusations in a food system I participated in on a daily basis. What were sociologists saying about the food system? I applied for graduate school soon after watching this documentary and was accepted at the University of Victoria and the University of Manitoba. I wanted to spend my time in graduate school analyzing the food system in the hopes of, at the end, being able to feel confident in my knowledge of food that was healthy and ethically produced. I was motivated to question my consumption choices but I knew it would be difficult to do while living at home as I was not the primary grocery shopper or food preparer in my family. I knew if there were any a time to make a drastic change in such a common daily act like eating, this would be the time. I decided to carry out my graduate degree at the University of Victoria and moved to Vancouver Island so I could fully commit to critically analyzing and potentially altering the food I consumed.

Present day reflection: Reflecting back on this desired goal I see my neoliberal subjectivity; my focus on consumer action, the feeling of individual responsibility to protect myself from harmful food, my selfishness. I address these neoliberal tendencies in Chapter 5, but part of the process of identifying the ruling relations that coordinated my

understanding, or perhaps more accurately, my (mis)understanding of food sovereignty, was in actually attempting to live this idea of food sovereignty almost exclusively in my day-to-day life as a consumer rather than deconstructing what it means to be a consumer in a neo-liberalized market place. My experiences in doing so, have resulted in a change in the desired goal from being confident in the food I am eating, to knowing how we can come to realize ourselves as political subjects by engaging with food sovereignty. This change did not happen quickly and it took (mis)understanding food sovereignty for me to see myself as a political subject. I ask that my readers to be patient with me as I (mis)understand the political potential of food sovereignty, judge the worthwhileness of food initiatives on myself and my own wellbeing, express Eurocentric ideas, and privilege the privileged.

The perspective I came to this thesis with is that of a female, graduate student in sociology who has recently moved from Winnipeg, MB to Vancouver Island to research an alternative way of food consumption. The food I consumed for the first twenty-two years of my life was primarily chosen by my parents. Meat was a staple part of our daily dinners, and meals were most commonly planned around the specific meat choice. If we were having steak I knew potatoes and mushrooms would be made as well, if we were having pork chops I knew rice and a vegetable would be made, farmer's sausage was accompanied by perogies and onions. I rarely did the grocery shopping; my contribution was limited to suggesting food I enjoyed the taste of. For the most part, I felt that my family ate relatively healthy. We rarely ate take out or fast food and almost always had three food groups on our dinner plate each night; jokingly criticizing whoever made the meal if it failed to meet that guideline. After watching Food Inc., however, my opinion of

“healthy” food was challenged. The documentary talked a lot about the ill effects of genetically modified organisms and the use of steroids in animal farming, two things I knew very little about. I wondered how I would be able to tell if the “healthy” food I was eating went through these processes, and if it would still be considered a healthy option if it had been. Food Inc. also introduced me to the social injustices that were occurring as a result of the corporate food system. I was unaware of where the food my family ate came from- beyond the grocery store where it was purchased. I hated the idea of supporting large scale industrial farming which had pushed so many small scale farmers to sell their family farms. The food products featured throughout the film were those commonly found in supermarkets and restaurants across North America. I knew without a doubt that the majority of the food I consumed day-to-day was produced in the socially unjust, environmentally destructive, and inhumane way that was shown throughout the film.

The longing I have to establish a way of consuming that aligns with my moral and ethical views is driven by many desires. The first I believe to be my fear of being a hypocrite, a term used often to describe foodies (Johnston and Baumann 2010; Shugart 2015). Many of my views on social issues differed from those of my family and friends. I consider myself to be fairly outspoken on these opinions, but began feeling a lack of confidence when I considered how my day-to-day activities, such as consuming food, contradicted these beliefs. I came to detest capitalism and the idea of large corporations controlling societies, yet I regularly shopped at these large corporations. I disagreed with the labeling of the human species as superior to other species and was saddened and disgusted watching the slaughtering of animals, but I ate meat daily. It made me angry that farmers in other countries were being severely exploited to provide luxuries, such as

coffee, to North Americans, yet I started every day with a large double-double coffee from Tim Hortons. I wanted to embody these social beliefs in my day-to-day actions but was unsure of how to accomplish this. How could I justify calling myself a sociologist with a particular interest in food while drinking unethically produced coffee from an unrecyclable Tim Horton's cup?

The second aspect driving my urgent desire to gain confidence in my consumption choices is my desire to raise healthy, happy children. Children and child rearing have always been a prominent part of my life. I babysat from the moment I turned thirteen and worked part time in childcare throughout my eight long years of post-secondary education. I have, for as long as I can remember, wanted to be a mother. I feel the responsibility, before becoming a mom, of knowing the best way to feed my children. My knowledge gained from post-secondary education allows me to recognize the various structural inequalities- beyond the individual choices parents of these children make- that result in many children not receiving adequate diets. As someone who has access, both physically and financially, to what has been deemed "good" food, I am overwhelmed with a feeling of responsibility to seek out resources and gain knowledge of what exactly "good" food is. I feel as though as a result of my privileges, that I do have a responsibility to make "good" consumption choices.

In reading literature on consumption choices and motherhood, I came across Cairns, Johnston, and MacKendrick's (2013) work on how the neoliberal discourse of childhood places an individualizing responsibility on mothers to protect their children. The women interviewed in this inquiry offered various concerns that I myself have struggled with, which reinforce the difficulties that come with attempting to eat in a way

that supports notions of health, environmental sustainability and community support.

Cairns, Johnston, and MacKendrick (2013: 108) note:

Throughout our interviews and focus groups, we were struck by the extensive amount of time, energy and resources women devoted to purchasing and preparing foods for their children. Many participants described complicated shopping routines that involved researching food options online, then visiting numerous locations – grocery stores, farmers’ markets, speciality shops – and carefully investigating products by reading labels or inquiring with vendors. As Audrey stated, ‘finding out sort of where everything comes from is quite time consuming and involves a lot more work’.

Cairns, Johnston, and MacKendrick (2013: 98) refer to the organic child as an “idealized notion of a ‘pure’ child that is kept safe from the harmful impurities of an industrialized food system.” They found that “the ideals of the organic child were not simply integrated into the cognitive processes of day- to-day care-work, but were also interwoven with positive and negative emotions as part of women’s self-evaluation of their maternal competence” (Cairns, Johnston, and MacKendrick (2013: 98). The women interviewed associated their ability to mother with their perceived ability to feed their children with this organic child ideal. The authors quote various women’s experiences of attempting to feed their child to meet this organic ideal. These include reading product labels: “very frustrating and gross. And a little sad” (Cairns, Johnston, and MacKendrick 2013: 109), as well as a priority check between financial cost and health benefits: “it causes me a ton of anxiety because I think oh, you don’t want to run yourself into the ground financially for clean food but what do you have if you don’t have your health?” (Cairns, Johnston, and MacKendrick 2013: 109). One women also noted that she questions the legitimacy of the product information: “you’ll read conflicting stuff about organic too, right, about how some of it doesn’t really matter and some of it matters more depending on the fruit or the vegetable?” (Cairns, Johnston, and MacKendrick 2013: 109). “Marie tells the story of

reading ingredient lists on various brands of formula in the grocery store, and explains ‘because I was comparing four products it was really frustrating and hard to keep track of it all’. Marie describes how her husband became impatient, and asked ‘why are you taking so long to read through these?’” (Cairns, Johnston, and MacKendrick 2013: 110). The researchers found that the narratives provided by the women showed “how maintaining the organic child involves devoting just the right amount of time, money, knowledge and emotion to nourishing children, without becoming a ‘crazy’ mother obsessed with her child’s eating” (Cairns, Johnston, and MacKendrick 2013: 110). I find the experiences of these women commonly mirrored by mothers I interact with in my own life, and the fears I have of being a mother myself. While these experiences are centered around issues of health, I have further concerns of issues of social justice and environmental sustainability.

CHOOSING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

When I began reading academic papers on injustices in the current industrial food system, I quickly came across literature on food sovereignty. From my (mis)understanding at these early stages of my journey, for me food sovereignty was a credible framework, or model, for establishing guidelines for ethical consumption. While I found it difficult to fully understand the complexity of the idea, what I did understand I found to fit with my own personal desires for social justice and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, food sovereignty is a well-documented idea in academic literature and for reasons I discuss in Chapter 2, has come to replace the term food security in many contexts. My ultimate goal was to be able to base my decisions around “good” and “bad” food on how they fit with the principles of food sovereignty. Similar to

how Health Canada provides the public with a concise food guide based on nutritional content (The Canadian Food Guide), I wanted to be able to provide one based on food products that were socially just, environmentally sustainable, humane, and free from harmful chemicals/growth hormones/ GMO's etc. With a deeper engagement with the idea of food sovereignty, however, it became difficult to see how it could be used as a guideline for consumer choices around consumption.

I intentionally fail to define food sovereignty in my thesis for various reasons². One such reason is that food sovereignty is a fluid idea and movement and its meaning is different for different people. Instead, I focus on explaining what I understood food sovereignty to mean in the beginning stages of my research and how it has come to mean something quite different to me now. In Chapter 6 I re-consider the idea of food sovereignty, not as a consumption model but as a political movement, a fight for social justice, environmental sustainability and an effort towards decolonization.

ESTABLISHING THE PROBLEMATIC

The problem here, as I have come to know it through my lived experience, is the confusion I feel when I perform the daily task of food consumption- from the places I purchase groceries, to the brands of food I buy, to the labels I associate as “good” and “bad”. Much of the literature (Yiridoe et al. 2005; Hughner et al., 2007; Campbell, Mhlanga, and Lesschaeve 2013; Canadian Organic Growers 2011) suggests that many consumers experience confusion around what the “right” food to eat is, much of which

² I do provide definitions of food sovereignty in the literature review, but I am informed by such definitions and not constrained by them.

mirrors the confusion I have experienced in my attempt to live out food sovereignty. The personal narrative I offer of my experience of watching Food Inc. describes the first concrete example of when I experienced confusion around the food industry and the food I consumed. My understanding and reflections of that experience are of course riddled with my immersion in academia; however, the written words of my personal narratives are my explanation of the feelings and thoughts I had as an embodied being. The personal narratives I include throughout this thesis are descriptions of my lived experience as I experienced them. I am reminded, however, of what I learned in symbolic interaction many years ago to the effect that the words we use to explain ourselves, our motives, are better understood as properties of situations than of individuals. It is for this reason that Dorothy Smith's methodology of institutional ethnography has such resonance. She reminds us that capturing accounts of lived experience is not the end of the story but the place to start one's sociological work. In Chapter 4 I present a critical thematic analysis that summarizes the various tensions and confusions I faced while attempting to align my consumption choices with my moral and ethical beliefs around social justice and environmental sustainability. While this remains, for the most part, my personal struggle, that struggle is not the problematic I address. In Chapter 5, drawing on the research approach of institutional ethnography, I critically reflect on my initial confusions and tensions to identify how these experiences are socially organized. Campbell and Gregor [2002: 47] state, "the problematic in institutional ethnography is not the problem that needs to be understood as an informant might tell it, or as a member of an activist group might explain it." Establishing the problematic requires the ethnographer to ask questions that may not have been considered by others in their local actualities. IE (Smith 1987:

91) uses the problematic “to direct attention to a possible set of questions that may not have been posed or a set of puzzles that do not yet exist in the form of puzzles but are ‘latent’ in the actualities of the experienced world.” Establishing the problematic is part of the research process; the problematic was unknown at the onset of this inquiry.

It should also be noted that while I refer to my personal self and my daily actions as if they were completely separate from the political, I recognize that in the sociological sense, the personal is political. I still find it difficult however, to break free from a conventional understanding of politics. Kerkvliet (2009) in exploring the various forms of political action and showcasing everyday politics in peasant societies states:

conventional studies pretty much restrict their examinations of the control, allocation, and use of resources and values underlying them to the activities of state authorities and agencies, political parties and their supporters, elections, organisations and individuals lobbying or otherwise trying to influence government officials and policies, and to movements, rebellions, and revolutions challenging existing governments and states or proposing different ones (Kerkvliet 2009: 228).

A conventional understanding of politics has, in many ways, contributed to the challenges I faced attempting to understand the meaning of food sovereignty. The politics of the personal is something I struggle to utilize throughout my journey and has resulted in my use of personal in a mystifying de-politicizing kind of way.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

I invite my readers to join me in my messy journey of attempting to align my consumption choices with my ethical and moral views on social justice and environmental sustainability. In Chapter 2 I provide a review of relevant literature which includes a historical look at the food system, the development of food security as an idea taken up by activists in the Global North, the development of food sovereignty as an idea and goal among many of the same activists and groups, and public's ambiguity in consumption choices. Chapter 3 describes the theoretical and methodological frameworks of my thesis. In chapter 4, utilizing a critical thematic analysis, I establish an organized summary of the difficulties I faced when attempting to (1) understand the meaning of food sovereignty and (2) identify if and how I could consume in a way that aligned with the ideas of food sovereignty. The ideas, beliefs and reflections in Chapters 4 and 5 highlight the change in my personal and analytical perspective as a result of my experiences throughout this journey. The change is partly explained by being engaged in political action as well as honing my analytical skills and familiarity with the research literature. In addition, during the summer months of 2016, I began working with an organization called Meal Exchange, as the University of Victoria Real Food Campus Coordinator. I attended Meal Exchange's BC Retreat where I met students from across Canada who share a passion for improving food on post-secondary campuses. We heard from various speakers on a variety of different topics relating to the food system including small scale farming, Indigenous Food Sovereignty, aquaponics, and temporary agricultural migrant workers in Canada. We also toured various farms around Nanaimo,

helping with a few daily tasks on the farm as a form of sweat equity. It is in Chapter 5 that I critically reflect on my experiences, drawing on IE, to establish the problematic of my research. In Chapter 6 I conclude my thesis by offering suggestions for how those who are already engaged with alternative food initiatives, can politically engage others, to build momentum towards making these alternative food models dominant ones.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

I begin this literature review by providing a brief historical account of changes in agricultural production in the past one hundred years that are relevant for my study. With any account of history, it is impossible to claim that one perspective is *the* accurate account of what occurred. I have selected critical sociological analyses to provide this historical account, in order to highlight the social, cultural and environmental outcomes these changes have resulted in. In the first section I introduce the idea of food security and how its definition and objective have changed over time. I then provide an account of the development of the food sovereignty countermovement, including the perspective of those who initiated La Via Campesina. This section is limited, however, as my understanding of the food sovereignty literature itself has continued to evolve and has been a crucial part of the results of my research. Instead, I thread ideas presented in food sovereignty literature throughout chapters 4 and 5 as they relate to my own personal reflections and understanding of food sovereignty. I then proceed with a review of literature that addresses public concern and or confusion around consumption choices, much of which describe my own personal tensions around consumption choices as well.

HISTORICIZING THE FOOD REGIME

The way we in the Global North produce, distribute, consume, see, taste, touch food has drastically changed in the last 100 years. The historical account of these changes in the food system are necessary for understanding the potential and arguably the necessity for a food sovereignty model. The literature reviewed in this section is comprised of the works of various academic scholars who outline a similar account of changes made in the food system particularly since the Second World War. The common

story throughout this review was provided by Wayne Robert's (2013) book titled *The No-Nonsense Guide to World Food*. I also incorporate the work of other leading food movement researchers who hold a similar account of these changes. To begin, I outline the two great food revolutions as described by both Robert Albritton (2012) and Wayne Roberts (2013). I then proceed with an account of the effects that neoliberalism had on the changing food system

The Two Great Food Revolutions

There is consensus in the literature that the domestication of plants and animals (15,000 BCE to 5000 BCE) marks the first great food revolution (Albritton 2012). Contrary to previously used methods of hunting and gathering, domestication involved “the taming and shaping of the wild itself, presumably to better serve human needs” (Albritton 2012: 91). The domestication of plants and animals allowed for the settlement of extended families and the development of co-operative divisions in labor and the products (Albritton 2012). This initial style of farming allowed for an increase in food productivity, and led to a stable and growing surplus (Albritton 2012). This surplus allowed the global population to increase dramatically and changed social and economic structures drastically. People were able to peruse other interests- such as art, religion, and politics, create class stratifications and enforce laws, collect taxes and make war (Albritton 2012). Families who continued to pursue a life of farming relied on family labor and sustainable farming practices in order to be able to permanently settle and continue farming on that land for generations (Albritton 2012).

The second³ great food revolution can be attributed to the Second World War and changes in agricultural production, distribution and consumption that accompanied it (Albritton 2012). The wartime origins of the current food system help explain the logic behind the way food is produced, distributed, and consumed today. During the Second World War, 25 million civilians died from starvation and “a third of the world’s population faced starvation at the war’s end” (Roberts 2013: 33). Farmers in North America were able to significantly increase food production in order to feed soldiers abroad, arguably contributing to their victory in the war (Roberts 2013). The generation of people who lived through this time shared a common understanding of the centrality of food and the power it gives to nations who are, for various reasons, able to produce a surplus. During the 1950’s and 1960’s the ‘modernist’ viewpoint greatly contributed to the development of a capitalist food system. People were encouraging of Big Science after seeing its success during the war in the form of antibiotics, medicine, and increased food production (Roberts 2013). Modernism celebrated scientific reasoning and technological advancement that could free humans from nature’s rules (Robert 2013). The use of irrigation, chemical fertilizers, pesticides and patented hybrid seeds became prominent. Peri-urban farms concentrated on producing specialized food for sale as opposed to wide varieties of food, fibers, fabrics and fuels. People rapidly began leaving the farm and moving into cities, drastically changing the quality of rural life (Roberts 2013).

³ I focus on Albritton’s (2012) accounts of the two great food revolutions here but there are many other accounts of food revolutions throughout history. For example, some would suggest another food revolution occurred with the rise of the state and another with the rise of capitalism.

The Neoliberal, Capitalist Food System

The phase of capitalism that developed after the Second World War was influenced by the modernist viewpoint and the economic concept of mass production and mass consumption (Roberts 2013; Albritton 2012). The technological farming advancements that increased food production and reduced risk (weather, soil fertility, pests) made agriculture a viable capitalist led industry (Roberts 2013). Capitalist corporations began buying up family farms and used farming techniques that would allow for high yields within shorter time periods. (Robert 2013). Small-scale family farms were now competing in a global market against large capitalist corporations. Capitalist agriculture could afford and provide the petrochemicals needed for running giant high-tech tractors and combines, expensive pesticides, fertilizers and hybrid seeds (Roberts 2013). Furthermore, government subsidies benefitted larger farms and those producing certain crops such as corn; in fact, “ninety percent of all US farm subsidies go to only five crops: those producing corn, wheat, cotton, soybeans, and rice” (Roberts 2013). While modernist thinking changed farming practices it also changed how food was prepared in homes. Household food technology- such as electric refrigerators- allowed people to store large quantities of food for weeks at a time. Processed food such as the frozen TV dinners that could be placed in a microwave for only a few minutes became increasingly popular. With the rise of supermarkets came a depersonalized system where processors sold food to consumers. As the production of food globalized supply chains became longer and longer such that people no longer knew or had any connection with where their food came from. The connection between humans and food became deeply commodified and mostly organized by fewer and fewer large corporate retailers (Roberts

2013).

The capitalist style of farming resulted in a constant overproduction of grains in the global north, which was subsequently dumped into markets in the global south (Shattuck and Holt-Gimenez 2010). This “dumping” was portrayed as an attempt for the global north to “help” the global south through initiatives such as the Green Revolution, food aid, and food security. The “Green Revolution,” the leader of which, Norman Borlaug, received a Nobel Prize for supposedly saving the world from hunger paradoxically, it is claimed, has “*produced* as many hungry people as it fed” (Lappe et al. 1998: 61). Borlaug “personified the passion of modernist idealists who believed the problem of world hunger could be solved by growing more food” (Roberts 2013: 45). In her enlightening book *The Violence of the Green Revolution* Vandana Shiva outlines the various ecological and social devastations experienced in Punjab from the implementation of the Green Revolution. “Diseased soils, pest infested crops, water logged deserts, and indebted and discontented farmers” are a few of these ill effects noted by Shiva (2016: 12). Depending on one’s politics one sees the green revolution as a success in a war against hunger or part of the political economy of hunger.

The concept of food aid aligned nicely with the idea that the Global North needed to feed the world. Countries in the global South were largely self-sufficient in grain production until the Second World War (Roberts 2013). Instead of helping rebuild these previously self-sufficient local practices, the American government subsidized grain farmers in America and exported the surplus to countries it deemed in need of assistance (Roberts 2013). This created an avenue for the disposal of American surplus commodities, allowing markets to open for companies in the Global North. The disposal

of American surplus commodities also contributed to the colonial dependence on grain imports all while being framed as a generosity of America for providing food aid for the global south (Roberts 2013; Shattuck and Holt-Gimenez 2010). The dumping of cheap grain into the Global South has resulted in many local farmers being displaced from their land because they cannot compete with the low cost of subsidized grain from the Global North (Albritton 2012).

FOOD SECURITY

The problems with the modernist commitment to continuous economic growth were made clear in the 1972 report *The Limits to Growth*. This time period was characterized by a global harvest decline, famines and food shortages, drastic increases in wheat and oil prices, and a reduction in exporting from the global north (Roberts 2013). It was during this time that the term food security emerged in the global capitalist discourse (Roberts 2013). When first defined, food security was presented in a way that suggested it was aimed at addressing food shortages/famine problems and the global increasing price of food (Jarosz 2014). The dominant narrative was that various countries in the North were producing more food than they needed while countries in the South were plagued with famine. The FAO proposed a food security plan called the International Undertaking on World Food Security to address these issues. The ultimate goal of the proposed food security plan was to establish food reserves at regional and national levels, to provide food from food surplus areas (the North) to food deficit areas (the South), and to establish an early warning system for future food shortage disasters.

Jarosz (2014) outlines an important change in the objectives of food security described in the 1986 World Bank's report titled *Poverty and Hunger: Issues and*

Options for Food Security in Developing Countries. In the 1986 World Bank's report, emphasis is placed on food insecurity as a result of a lack of individual purchasing power stating that, "problems in food security do not necessarily result from inadequate food supplies, as is widely believed, but from a lack of purchasing power on the part of nations and of households" (World Bank 1986: v). Jarosz (2014) argues that this statement redefines aspects of food security from its original meaning. The objective of food security becomes focused on adequate personal income, markets, and ensuring the success of the globalized food system as opposed to its original objective of addressing international price stabilization and state-led entitlements (Jarosz 2014). Food security became neoliberalized, marketized and globalized -- putting emphasis on individual access to corporatized food systems (Jarosz 2014). The proposed solution for famine in food deficit places became providing market access and successful integration into the global corporate food system.

The definition of food security was once again redefined in 2001 by a document published by the Food and Agriculture Organization titled *The State of Food Insecurity*. In this document food security is defined as "a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO 2001). While this updated version of the food security regime appears to be a positive initiative for improving food access worldwide, it fails to address the social, political, and economic structures that have created and sustained these inequalities (Wittman, Desmarais and Wiebe 2010). But as Raj Patel (2009) points out – such definitions are agnostic as to how food is produced. That is, the definition of food security has nothing

to say as to whether the food is produced on plantations with exploitative work and destructive environmental effects or if it is produced agro-ecologically and fairly traded.

THE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY COUNTERMOVEMENT

Food sovereignty has been defined as “the right of peoples and nations to control their own food and agricultural systems, including their own markets, production modes, food cultures and environments” (Wittman et al. 2010: 2). Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) describe food sovereignty as a radical approach to the food crisis—one that “affirms the human right to food, but not simply through access to food (following the FAO’s definition of food security), but through the right of democratic control over food and food producing resources” (Gimenez and Shattuck 2011: 128). While perhaps most notably associated with La Via Campesina, food sovereignty has arguably existed as early as the nineteenth century during the collapse of the slave regimes⁴ (Tomich 2004; McMichael 2013). McMichael (2013:1) argues, “while the global agrarian crisis of the late-twentieth century precipitated the movement, it was part of a continuing crisis accompanying the long-twentieth century food regime and its competitive assaults on farming systems across the world.” The twentieth century food regime has displaced producers through processes of land grabbing and market dumping and has resulted in the advancement of the food sovereignty countermovement (McMichael 2013). The global peasant food movement, La Vía Campesina, emerged in the 1990’s as a direct rejection of the neoliberal agricultural policies (Desmarais, 2002). Formed by peasants and small-

⁴ “[I]n the nineteenth century, slaves fought for the right to maintain garden plots for subsistence” (Tomich 2004 cited in McMichael 2013: 1).

scale farmers, La Vía Campesina sought to include the voice of those who actually produced the food into the debate on agri-food and agrarian policy (Desmarais, 2002). As Paul Nicholson, one of the leaders of La Vía Campesina so clearly stated in 1996, “to date, in all the global debates on agrarian policy, the peasant movement has been absent; we have not had a voice. The main reason for the very existence of the La Vía Campesina is to be that voice and to speak out for the creation of a more just society” (Vía Campesina, 1996a: 10–11). La Vía Campesina formally established the alternative model of agriculture, known as food sovereignty, which has become a dominant discourse in food activism literature (Akram-Lodhi 2015).

While the fundamental goals of food sovereignty appear sometimes quite specific, it is a fluid idea and movement. Since first established, food sovereignty has expanded to include much more than agrarian reform for small scale farmers. It now includes the interests of other food providers (Desmarais 2015), and has gained traction within civil society, international studies, and through legislature put forth by governments in Ecuador, Bolivia, Mali, Senegal, Nepal, and Venezuela (Desmarais 2015; Haroon 2015). McMichael (2013) argues that the counter movement of the food regime is not simply a peasant movement. The problem asserted by La Via Campesina is one of displacement while the counter movement more broadly associates the problem with dispossession. Dispossession of land, yes, but also dispossession of historical knowledge and ways of life that are sustainable. According to McMichael (2013: 3), “the movement’s⁵ political calculus has been governed by the demands of the historical conjuncture, rather than a

⁵ “The movement” refers to the food sovereignty countermovement as explained by McMichael (2013).

conventional peasant demand for agrarian reform *per se*.”

PUBLIC AMBIGUITY

There is much evidence to support the notion that Canadians are becoming increasingly interested in food as it relates to health (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2010; Cairns, Johnston, and MacKendrick 2013; Holt and Reed 2006), social justice (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2010; Holt and Reed 2006), and environmental sustainability (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2010; Holt and Reed 2006). In the 2010 report by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, authenticity and sustainability were noted as two emerging trends in Canada. Authentic products were deemed to have “a certain quality, or level of purity, that takes them beyond the ordinary and implies a sense of trading-up” and “gives consumers a sense that they are acting in a responsible or ethical manner with their purchase” (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2010: 15). Furthermore, the annual growth of fair trade certified products in Canada is estimated at 48%, with an approximate retail value of \$116M in 2007 (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2010).

There is also evidence that Canadians experience a lack of clarity in what certain food labels mean, for example the difference between “local” and “organic” (Hughner et al., 2007; Yiridoe, Bonti-Ankomah, & Martin, 2005). As the Canadian Organic Growers Association (2011) notes, “sadly, ‘local’ and ‘organic’ have had the misfortune of entering our vocabulary as separate concepts and then getting jumbled into one, unclear concept”. Campbell, Mhlanga, and Lesschaeve (2013: 537) found that “twelve percent of consumers believed that local is organic, while 17% believed that

organic is local.” Furthermore, they found that, “nearly one out of three consumers believes that no natural pesticides are used in organic production, which for most all organic producers is completely false considering organic producers routinely utilize “natural” pesticides such as copper and Sulphur” (Campbell, Mhlanga, and Lesschaeve 2013: 537).

This literature shows a large group of people who value personal health and wellbeing, social justice, and concern for environmental sustainability, and see food as a venue for expressing these values. There is however, a lack of clarity on how food is produced and which food products can and cannot be deemed “ethical”. Throughout this thesis I hope to provide suggestions for how these people could be organized with others who share a common interest in consuming *differently* but perhaps who are differently situated in their understandings of the political potential of new food movements.

In the beginning stages of my research I saw this occurring through a “how to eat ethically” guide book. Now nearing the end of my research I see the need for a much more political form of action.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

THEORETICAL APPROACH

What inspires me about sociology is the ability it has given me to make sense of the various things that happen in my everyday life. Throughout my graduate degree I have questioned the potential that the discipline of sociology has for actually *addressing* the issues we so often speak of. What does addressing an issue even mean? While I admit I having no clear understanding of this, I always knew what *not* addressing an issue looked like; it looked like a professor, myself, and a handful of other graduate students sitting in a classroom debating what constitutes social reality and not going anywhere with the implications of our discussions. This describes the majority of my time as a graduate student, learning theory, learning about methodology, debating, discussing and listening. I didn't see the connections between my work as a grad student and my responsibility or ability to politically engage the world in which I live. Smith (1999:74) states “[t]he theories, concepts, and methods of the discourses in which we participate as intellectuals constitute the objectified standpoints through which we are related to the world as if we stood outside it.” While I acknowledge the importance of theory, this thesis is my opportunity to actually *address* an issue I experience in my everyday life as an embodied subjective self who can no longer step outside as an objective knower. It is this desire I have – to *address* the tensions I experience purchasing food – that organizes my theoretical framework and methodology.

My thesis is heavily inspired by an unconventional sociology, a sociology that rejects claims of objectivity and instead places importance on people's own experiences

and perspectives. I am heavily inspired by the work of Dorothy Smith in *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (1987) and *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (2005), as well as the various contributors to the book *Doing Everyday Life* (1994). The titles of these works say it all; a sociology for people based on experiences of everyday life and the problematics we encounter as we live out our day to day lives. Following Smith, however, I see everyday experience as a place from which to start, not the end point of description.

Ideology and The Social Organization of Knowledge

Social reality is understood as socially constructed such that “[e]veryday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by [humans] and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world” (Berger and Luckmann 1996: 19). From this point of view, understanding the social realities as individuals experience them as opposed to uncovering an objective reality is the role of the sociologist (Berger and Luckmann 1996). Although the emergence of what is called new materialism in sociology acts as a corrective to overly discursive accounts of realities and reminds us that the world is better understood as co-produced in a kind of embodied dialogical relationship of the social and the more than social, the insights from social constructionism are none the less very useful. Claiming that social reality is socially construct leads to the question of who constructs it? Who has the power to create ‘knowledge’ in a society is highly debated within the discipline of sociology. Who produces texts-books, television, and news media? Who frames social issues? Who creates social policies? How do some ideas become dominant while others remain subordinate? These debates are important to consider as they situate our understanding of knowledge production. Foucault (1982)

argues that power applies itself “to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him” (1982: 781). Subjects in neoliberalism are expected to be rational, knowledgeable and calculative humans capable and responsible for ensuring their own safety. The person entering the supermarket, for example, is assumed to have adequate knowledge to make informed decisions about the products they purchase. Within a neoliberal framework it is the individual consumer who must make ethical, healthy consumption choices. The current global corporatized food system is thus presented to us as a result of consumer choice. Neoliberalism has proven to be a powerful ideology, and one that orients society in a way that reproduces the current global corporate food system. Foucault in *Discipline and Punishment* poetically displays how powerful ideology is in our society today:

When you have thus formed the chain of ideas in the heads of your citizens, you will then be able to pride yourselves on guiding them and being their masters. A stupid despot may constrain his slaves with iron chains; but a true politician binds them even more strongly by the chain of their own ideas; it is at the stable point of reason that he secures the end of the chain; this link is all the stronger in that we do not know of what it is made and we believe it to be our own work; despair and time eat away at the bonds of iron and steel, but they are powerless against the habitual union of ideas, they can only tighten it still more and on the soft fibers of the brain is founded the unshakable base of the soundest empires (Foucault 1995: 102–103).

I see throughout my journey how powerful neoliberalism is at situating my understanding of the food system and my place within it. This leads me to engage in Dorothy Smith’s Institutional Ethnography (which I explain further later in this chapter) in order to understand how my understanding of an idea like food sovereignty is socially organized, as is the food I “choose” to eat.

Ruling Relations

Smith (2005: 13) defines ruling relations as “forms of consciousness and organization that are objectified in the sense that they are constituted externally to particular people and places.” They include “text-mediated and text-based systems of ‘communication,’ ‘knowledge,’ ‘information,’ regulation,’ ‘control,’ and the like” (Smith 1999: 77). Canadian society is largely governed by ruling relations; our activities are coordinated by various mediated-texts including laws, regulations, labels, certifications, policies etc. There are various forms of ruling relations that directly and indirectly coordinate the food system as we know it today; beginning with the planting of seeds and birthing of animals, to the time such food is consumed. Smith (2008) argues that making change has been made more difficult with increasing globalization resulting in power being fragmented and dispersed, not only in governments but in forms of governance. The World Bank, the World Trade Organization, the North American Free Trade Agreement, the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the Group of Eight (G8), and potentially the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), are all examples of forms of governance that have great influence over the food system and have very little, if any, accountability (Smith 2008). Uncovering these ruling relations and working within them is what allows subjects to make change from below (Smith 2008).

Symbolic interactionism

The three fundamental premises of symbolic interactionism as outlined by Herbert Blumer (1969: 2) include:

1. that, “human beings act towards things on the basis of the meaning that the things have for them;”
2. that “the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows;”
3. that “these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things [one] encounters.”

Grounded in lived experience, this inquiry argues that human action entails “ongoing (minded) construction or *reflective* enterprise as people take objects into account in formulating lines of action” (Prus 1994: 16). Endless factors affect how we approach grocery shopping; our location and proximity to food producers, the way our parents shopped, financial constraints, time restraints, taste preferences, our political identity etc. But equally influential are the political and economic order of our current society, the historical legacies, and forms of power that shape how we understand these various factors. All of these factors and the way we interpret, assess, and adjust to them influence the way we shop and the feelings of conflict we may experience in these situation. But framing all that is the political organization of food – what some call the food system – which coordinates the parameters within which we act and organizes what we understand as our choices, and which paradoxically we reproduce on a daily basis.

The epistemological stance employed throughout this inquiry is based on the acceptance that one can never step outside of the issue at hand as an objective, detached knower. On the contrary, this research is heavily grounded in the notion that the researcher is also a participant actively participating in the very thing I aim to study. The production of knowledge is situated in a particular time and place; how people view food

is different depending on the time (year), the place (country, province), and one's cultural beliefs. Haraway (1997: 304) argues that, "standpoints are cognitive-emotionally-political achievements, crafted out of located social-historical-bodily experience itself always constituted through fraught, noninnocent, discursive, material, collective practices." All of my actions, but specifically for the purposes of this inquiry, those actions taken in food consumption, are shaped historically, socially and discursively. As Smith (2005: 1) states, what results from an institutional ethnography "becomes a means of expanding people's own knowledge rather than substituting the expert's knowledge for our own." Therefore, the aim of this inquiry is not to establish the one right way to view food- I will not claim at the end of my thesis to have "uncovered" the one right way to consume food. I aim to explore if and how those residing in this one place and time, who view the importance of social justice, environmental sustainability and the right for communities to have their own food sovereignties, can consume food in a way that aligns with these views.

Trascorporeality

In one of my first drafts I noted that I was using a theoretical stance rooted in transcorporeality, the idea that the human and non-human worlds are interconnected. While my intent was to guide my inquiry with a trans-corporeality view of human and non-human relations, applying this became one of the general challenges throughout my thesis; detaching from the colonial relationship I have towards food. In the beginning stages of my research I was unable to maintain this perspective which itself reflects the power of the neoliberal understanding present in the Global North today. In Chapter 5 I address how the idea of transcorporeality can and should be a central feature taught in conjunction with new food movements. The idea of transcorporeality offers an alternative

way of understanding human and non-human entities than the understanding currently embedded in our global, capitalist, industrial based food system. As I explain in Chapter 5, this orientation towards human and non-human entities is a crucial aspect of moving food sovereignty initiatives forward.

METHODOLOGY

I have struggled with every aspect of this thesis, and methodology was no exception. Finding a methodology that suited my intentions for this inquiry proved to be much more difficult than expected. I found it perplexing to fit my research into one particular methodological framework. In a way, my research fits the criteria for autoethnography; I aim to theorize my personal experience living out food sovereignty in my day-to-day life. In another way my research fits the criteria for critical discourse analysis; I aim to critically analyze the current literature on food sovereignty. I also consider critical action research a relevant framework for my inquiry. Critical action research resists conventional, often rigid research practices that are guided by central agencies far removed from the local concerns they claim to study (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000: 572). On the contrary, as a researcher I am as immersed as I possibly could be in the local concerns I aim to theorize as my concerns and interests are the impulses to food sovereignty *I myself* have experienced. Grounded Theory lends itself as a potential methodology as does Institutional Ethnography. The uncertainty I have experienced in confidently choosing a methodological framework to guide my inquiry mirrors the uncertainty I have experienced in my quest for adequately participating in food sovereignty initiatives.

This disconnect between theory and practice is evident in every aspect of my academic life; not only in my experience of acting out an idea of food sovereignty but also in settling on the methodology used to guide this very issue I wish to explore. It is with this lived experience of attempting to squeeze my inquiry into a neatly shaped methodological box that I argue for the use of a modified methodological framework combining institutional ethnography and autoethnography.

My research is twofold—I immerse myself in the recent literature on food sovereignty and then attempt to take this knowledge and apply it to my day-to-day consumption choices. Throughout this process, I use personal narratives to provide a grounded analysis of impulses to food sovereignty as lived experience. As Dorothy Smith states, “the situated knower is always also a participant in the social she is discovering. Her inquiry is developed as a form of that participation. Her experiencing is always active as a way of knowing...” (Smith 1999: 6). I have found myself feeling a unique attachment to my current inquiry, as the line between researcher and personal self becomes non-existent. Even as I write these words, I am surrounded by my food consumption decisions and can feel the lack of confidence I felt when I purchased the food that fills my cupboards. As an academic with endless access to peer-reviewed articles on the effects of the current food industry, I still found myself confused on how to eat “differently”. Finding myself in this position, as both a researcher and a participant, has led me to justify the use of personal narratives throughout my thesis.

While there is literature that argues how bringing one’s own subjectivity, thoughts, feelings, and experiences into the research results in biased, self-indulgent work (May 1993; Charmaz and Mitchell 1997) there is a great deal of literature that argues

how not bringing these issues into our research maintains a bifurcation between the world academics experience and everyday life (Holt 2003; Alder 1990; Taber 2012; Smith 1986; Ellis 1999). Taber (2012) argues that problematizing researchers' subjectivity through an analytical auto ethnographic lens allows us to challenge this bifurcation and connect our own everyday lives with the subject matter we research (Taber 2012). This is further solidified by Ellis (1999: 669) who claims that autoethnography "connects the practices of social science with the living of life." I feel that I have a unique perspective at which to critically engage with the idea of food sovereignty, and one that will contribute to support building strategies for those pushing for an alternative food model to the current industrial model dominating the world today. I offer a connection between those who know food sovereignty well and those who concern themselves primarily with consumption choices as their method for resisting the current food system. It took this journey for me to start to appreciate the "deeper" meaning of food sovereignty and its political and transformational potential and how I am situated in relation to it. What I hope to contribute from my inquiry are points of entry in consumer based settings where people can be more political engaged in food movements.

I am inspired by Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography as a method of inquiry. Institutional ethnography is "a method for realizing an alternative form of knowledge of the social, a form in which people's own knowledge of the world through their everyday practices is systemically extended to the social relations and institutional orders in which they act" (Smith 2005: xii). The way that I understand food and the relationship I have to it are organized by ruling relations, "forms of consciousness and organization that are objectified in the sense that they are constituted externally to

particular people and places” (Smith 2005: 13). I am a sociologist and I am a subject. My personal narratives reflect the way I experience the world of food consumption. These reflections at times may embody and reproduce the ruling relations that have shaped these experiences, and sometimes not, for although I am a consumer (a participant in this inquiry) I am at the same time a sociologist. At other times my personal narratives may not show awareness of the ruling relations that organize my experience. It is by critically and reflexively analyzing these personal narratives as a sociologist that I aim to understand how my experiences of uneasiness with my consumption choices are shaped and organized socially, culturally and historically.

There is a good body of literature, documentaries, blogs etc. explaining the negative health consequences, social injustices, and environmental degradation resulting from the global corporate food system. There is also a lot of academic literature on food sovereignty, which outlines a new way of organizing food politics in Canada to produce socially, culturally, environmentally sustainable appropriate food. What there is not a lot of information on is how we, people living in this time and place, can participate in food sovereignty and build momentum towards achieving it. How do we bridge the gap between the current industrial food system and the adoption of an alternative approach to food such as food sovereignty? Acknowledging that there is no one “right” way to eat, I argue that using a combination of institutional ethnography and autoethnography, my experience of attempting to live out food sovereignty can provide valuable suggestions for others who wish to engage with food sovereignty.

Data Collection

Being cautious and aware that I was unsure of what methodology I would ultimately settle on, I assumed from the onset that everything had the potential to be data and thus journaled my personal experiences throughout the entire process. Therefore, data collection began when I first began reading food sovereignty literature in the summer months of 2014 and the last personal narratives used in Chapter 4 were written in August 2016. Beginning with my thoughts after watching the documentary *Food Inc.*, the personal narratives noted throughout this thesis are comprised of various every day experiences varying from activities such as grocery shopping, food talks I attended, and reflections on literature I read. I will reflect on the feelings of confusion and frustration I experience as I navigate the tensions between the need to feed myself and the lack of confidence I feel with every food purchase that I make. When I first approached the academic literature on food sovereignty I was looking for a deeper understanding of what food sovereignty was and what it was not. I was also looking for specific guidelines on how to purchase food in a way that aligned with the principles of food sovereignty. I made notes throughout this process, specifically the questions and confusions I found. My personal narratives will be used as entry-level data consistent with institutional ethnography as explained by Campbell and Gregor (2002).⁶ DeVault and McCoy (2006: 20) explain this open-ended aspect of the process of data collection in Institutional Ethnography:

Institutional Ethnographies are rarely planned out fully in advance. Instead, the process of inquiry is rather like grabbing a ball of string, finding a thread, and then pulling it out; that is why it is difficult to specify in advance exactly what the

⁶ “Entry-level data is about the local setting, the individuals that interact there and their experiences” (Campbell and Gregor 2002: 60).

research will consist of. Institutional ethnographers know what they want to explain, but only step-by-step can they discover whom they need to interview or what texts and discourses they need to examine.

This inquiry strongly adheres to an inductive qualitative approach to research in which the findings are “grounded” in the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In classic grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1994) the researcher begins the research process with an open mind as oppose to “descending on the field of inquiry armed with a body of theory, and allowing that theory to colour the data” (Hyde 2000: 83). In this sense I am following a grounded theory methodology. The meaning of theory and its purpose in research varies across disciplines and researchers, thus, theory for the purpose of my inquiry is understood as “process; that is, theory as an ever-developing entity, not a perfect product” (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 32). While this thesis does not claim to be ‘pure’ grounded theory, it is heavily guided by the practices of this approach, specifically Charmaz’s constructivist/interpretivist branch of grounded theory. For instance, “simultaneous involvement in data collection and data analysis” will shape the procedures I use for my data collection (Charmaz 1996: 31). Unlike quantitative methods that begin with data collection and sequentially follow with data analysis, I will be collecting and analyzing data simultaneously. In Chapter 4, using these personal narratives and margin notes, I provide a grounded analysis of impulses to food sovereignty as lived experience. The question that guided the data in Chapter 4 was how can food sovereignty be lived out on a day-to-day basis in a place like Victoria, BC; however it is important to note that new questions, thoughts, and understandings emerged as I continued to read literature and lived out my day-to-day life.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis

Throughout my journey I documented personal reflections in a research journal and made margin notes as I introduced myself to the existing literature on food sovereignty. I proceeded to code these reflections, as one might code field notes, and have used them to establish themes that reflect the tensions and confusions I experienced while attempting to live out food sovereignty. Themes can be described as “a pattern found in the information that at a minimum describes and organizes the possible observations or at a maximum interrupts aspects of the phenomenon” (Boyatzis 1998: 168). My initial themes were:

- product labelling,
- what is/is not food sovereignty and
- privilege of the Global North.

In the spirit of true inductive research, my themes are modified as I reflect on my initial observations through the conceptual resources that come from a deeper analytical and political engagement with the real meanings of food sovereignty (see Table 1). I further refined these themes and finished with the following meta themes (MT) and themes (T):

- (MT) Product Labelling
 - (T) Certification labels
 - (T) Retail outlet
- (MT) What is/is not food sovereignty
 - (T) Just another niche market

- (T) Who is the sovereign?
- (T) Indigenous Food Sovereignty
- (T) Consumer focus
- (T) Local food
- (T) Global? Individual? Both?

Institutional/autoethnographic inquiry

I have combined elements of institutional ethnography and autoethnography throughout Chapter 5 to re-analyze my experience, allowing me to identify how the social organizations shape my understanding of food sovereignty. *Why* do I feel these tensions? *Why* is it so difficult to take an idea I learned from an academic standpoint and apply it to my everyday life? The research approach of autoethnography “seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*)” (Ellis et. al. 2011: 273). The purpose of such research is not to make generalizing statements from our results, but to contribute to “continuing a conversation and thus to encourage multiple perspectives, unsettled meanings, and plural voices” (Ellis and Bochner 2006).

“Autoethnography shows struggle, passion, embodied life, and the collaborative creation of sense-making in situations in which people have to cope with dire circumstances and loss of meaning. Autoethnography wants the reader to care, to feel, to empathize, and to do something, to act. It needs the researcher to be vulnerable and intimate. Intimacy is a way of being, a mode of caring, and it shouldn’t be used as a vehicle to produce distanced theorizing. What are we giving to the people with whom we are intimate, if our higher purpose is to use our joint experiences to produce theoretical abstractions published on the pages of scholarly journals?” (Ellis and Bochner 2006:433).

The personal narratives I provide throughout my thesis, I would argue do offer insight into the lived experience of attempting to align consumption choices with one's moral and ethical views on social justice and environmental sustainability. However, my analysis of such narratives are more in line with an institutional ethnography. This has placed me in a position to not fully define my methodology as either an institutional ethnography nor an autoethnography but a combination of them both.

Institutional ethnographers “find the generalizing and standardizing process *in* the ethnographic data, in people's local practices, including language” (Smith 2005: 135). When people explain their experiences, their dialogue is already deeply organized in language (Smith 2005). Analyzing the language people use to explain their personal experience allows us to discover the social organization and social relations that organize this experience. The way I explain my tensions and confusions around food sovereignty throughout my thesis but particularly throughout Chapter 4, offer insight into the (mis)understanding of food movements. Smith (1990: 121-122) states, “the investigation of texts as constituents of social relations offers access to the ontological grounds of institutional processes which organize, govern, and regulate the kind of society in which we live, for these are to a significant degree forms of social action mediated by texts.” It was only in this re-reading of the academic literature on food sovereignty, and my own personal narratives that I was able to identify a potential place for engaging others in alternative food movements more effectively.

The analytical findings that have resulted from this methodology provide new insight into the progress of new food movements and potential ways to engage more effectively with such movements. It offers suggestions for how those interested in new

food movements and/or ethical eating and those who teach food movements can more effectively engage with each other. Ellis (in Ellis and Bochner 2006: 433) in explaining her attempt to explain what analytical autoethnography means to her states:

I guess my fear is that analytic autoethnography may be an unconscious attempt by realists to appropriate autoethnography and turn it into mainstream ethnography. Once they diffuse the power of autoethnography by watering it down and turning it into something it was not intended to be, then journals such as *Contemporary Ethnography* can feel justified rejecting autoethnographic work simply because the author has not privileged traditional analysis and generalization.

I share a similar fear as Ellis in my attempts to act on my desire for social justice and environmental sustainability in my day to day consumption choices. However, I fear being the one who unconsciously turns ethical eating into something it is not. The fear of consuming in such a way that reproduces the very things I wish to change. Utilizing institutional ethnography and autoethnography, however, has allowed me to address why it is I approached this research with a consumer focused lens in the first place.

CHAPTER 4: AUTO: THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

In this chapter I provide a summary of the tensions, confusions, and questions I experienced during the initial stages of attempting to live out food sovereignty on a day-to-day basis. As someone new to the study of food movements, I had a lot of reading to do on what had already been studied and what was needed to be studied still. Instead of attempting to become an expert on food sovereignty, I decided to admit my ignorance. I knew that I could offer a more honest piece of research by problematizing my experience of attempting to align my consumption choices with who I felt I had become throughout my post-secondary education in Sociology. Throughout this chapter I reflect on my neoliberal subjectivity through my personal narratives and how I made sense of food sovereignty early on in my research. I have then gone back to these reflections and inserted another layer of present-day reflections utilizing the knowledge I have gained throughout my journey. The results presented in this chapter are based on the general questions I had asked myself at the beginning of my exploration. These questions include what exactly is food sovereignty in a place like Victoria, which is far from the geographical origins of the term, and how can food sovereignty be lived out on a day-to-day basis here? And, what are the challenges that emerge when attempting to do this? It is important to note that the ordering of themes is not a reflection of the order in which I experienced each tension/confusion. I experienced each tension/confusion differently; some I experienced simultaneously, some I either intentionally or unintentionally neglected soon after experiencing them and then was reintroduced to them at a later time throughout the journey. The themes I present in this chapter, establish a summary of the problems I encountered from the standpoint of myself, a female graduate student living in

Victoria.

Present day reflection: *I characterize my thesis as uncharacteristic; it's a journey, it is both self-development and the development of political conscience and responsibility around food (Young 2003), it is messy; and these next two chapters reflect this. At this stage of my research I had a limited understanding of food sovereignty. I had read a handful of journal articles written by Canadian scholars and had a baseline understanding of La Via Campesina. My personal narratives, margin comments, and overall mindset reflects this limited knowledge and reading them back now, I cringe at some of the ideas I had at this stage of my research.*

META THEME #1: PRODUCT LABELLING

One of the major tensions noted in my personal narratives centered on product labelling. I had learned a lot about product labelling in a nutrition course I had taken in my undergrad. The major lesson was to ignore the “buzz” words companies used such as, half the fat, natural ingredients, reduced sodium, etc. The professor told us that everything we needed to know about the healthiness of the food we consumed could be found in the ingredient list and the nutritional facts table. This knowledge was challenged, however, when I became interested in more than just the *nutritional* healthiness of the food I was consuming. I had read and heard a lot about genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and was confident that consuming food that had been genetically modified was bad for my health. From my understanding at this stage of my research, products that said they were organic meant that they had not been genetically modified. Therefore, for me, organic food products were seen as the healthier option

compared to those that were not labeled as organic. I am not alone in this thought; most studies have found that perceived health benefits is one of the primary reasons people purchase organic foods (Hughner et al. 2007). The Canada Organic Trade Association (2013) report that organic food and beverage sales have almost tripled between 2006 and 2012 and that “58% of Canadians [buy] organic products every week.” British Columbia is reported to have the most developed organic market with organic products accounting for nearly double the market share of those in other provinces (Canada Organic Trade Association 2013). Clearly others, like myself, believe there are benefits of some kind to consuming organic food.

Present day reflection: *In the beginning stages of my research I was very fixated on product labelling and certifications. This reflects my early understandings of food sovereignty as consumer action. To me, the organic certification reflected the healthiness of the specific ingredients/product of interest and the lack of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) within such products. I wanted organic products because of the potential ill effects I felt that genetically modified products could have on my body. I was also very interested in other certifications, mainly in regard to the treatment of the producers, the environmental effects caused by the production the product, and the humane treatment of animals (for animal products). This individualistic consumer focused response to problems in the food system is a far cry from Iris Marion Young’s notion of political responsibility. It had not occurred to me that my responses should be political more than consumer action. I am now aware that certification itself is a kind of neoliberal governance that does not address the structural issues of the problems that certification seeks to govern. Few within the food sovereignty movement, for example,*

would see certification as more than a potentially useful strategy but also one that can equally potentially reproduce colonial relationships. I now see that my early fixation with organic certification shows my superficial understanding of the problematic of my research. In the following chapter I establish the problematic and the limits of exclusively focusing on consumer action.

Theme: Certification Labels

At first I had thought that a certified organic label was simply a positive step towards transparency in the food system. Logically it seemed that products with the certification were organically produced and products without certification were not. My confidence in the organic certification label was challenged, however, after reading an article by McMahon (2013: 415) where she notes that “achieving retailer driven food-safety standard certification can be very costly and often inappropriate for many small scale farmers.” This led me to question products that did not have the certified organic label. Are these products not organically produced or have they been produced organically and have, for whatever reason, not acquired an organic certification. And does organic production methods equate to food sovereignty? Does the organic label just tell consumers that this product was produced from a company that can afford to label their product as organic? These questions made it difficult to commit to purchasing products with a certified organic label because I was unsure if it really was the best decision. One day while at Thrifty’s, I questioned what the lesser risk would be when purchasing something like honey. Would it be more of a risk to purchase honey with the certified organic label from a large corporation like Walmart, and support a corporation which

pays their workers a low wage, or to purchase honey without the certified organic label at a local food store, to avoid supporting large corporations but risk the product containing harmful chemicals from inorganic pesticides? I walked out of Thrifty's that day without any honey. Figuring out what I should eat is way more complex than I had thought.

My understanding of third party certifications became more and more confusing the more I was exposed to them. I came across dozens of different certifications, sometimes even asking me, the consumer to attend to the differences between them and to choose. Should I choose coffee that is socially just, bearing the fair trade certification, or one which is best for the environment with the bird friendly certification? I am asked to trust the legitimacy of each certification party; are they all credible? What are their standards? How strict are they with ensuring that producers are meeting these standards? More deeply, however, could the issue be that the whole project of private agri-food governance and the voluntary nature of such governance puts social justice and environmental destruction in the hands of consumers and their consumption choices? Early in my thesis research my field notes show me that I was not there yet.

Theme: Retail outlet

A common occurrence throughout my year of attempting to live out food sovereignty has been the battle between prioritizing the certification of the product and the location the product is sold at. When I initially started buying products that were certified organic, I didn't change the retail outlet that I shopped at. I primarily shopped at large retail outlets like Thrifty's, Walmart, and Costco and found it easy to find certified organic options at these places. While the organic option was always a bit more expensive, I felt

good buying it, like I was making the right decision. As I continued my research, however, I found conflicting information on whether organic products were better than products that were not certified organic.⁷ If I was going to be paying more money for the organic product I wanted to be confident that it was the “better” choice.⁸ If I purchased a certified organic product from Walmart, for example, who was benefitting from my purchase? The people who put their labor into producing this product? The employees who work for the company that sold this product to Walmart? The Walmart employees? While the product itself is arguably in line with my desired consumption choices, by being certified organic, I have little knowledge of where it came from or who produced it. I began to find it contradictory to purchase certified organic products from retail outlets that themselves reproduced a corporate dominated, socially unjust and ecologically unsustainable food system – even if the specific product was labelled organic. This confusion appeared to be an issue for another student who was in attendance at a talk I attended at the University of Victoria by Mary Alice Johnson. In one of my personal narratives I write:

Today I attended a talk by Mary Alice Johnson, a farmer, seed saver, and educator on Vancouver Island. Someone in the audience asked Marry Alice what she thought about a food product with the organic label being sold at Walmart? This question struck me right away because it was a question I have asked myself so many times while grocery shopping. If a product is organically produced, does it matter what retail outlet it is purchased at?

⁷ One of these reasons being the example noted in the above theme.

⁸ Here, when I refer to the “better” choice I am referring to the choice that is more in line with my views on social justice and environmental sustainability.

The same could be argued for products that are certified as Fair or Humane, however, I was not aware of the importance of these certifications at this stage of my research and therefore did not experience this same confusion around these certifications. By the time these certifications became of interest to me, I was much further along in my research and had a different view on certifications in general, which I discuss in detail in the following chapter.

META THEME #2: WHAT IS/IS NOT FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Throughout my initial reading on food sovereignty literature, many of my margin notes centered on confusion on deciphering what exactly food sovereignty was. Food sovereignty was chosen as the movement of interest for my thesis because of the general framework with which it appeared to be based on. Those who spoke of food sovereignty addressed social issues which were important pieces of consideration I wished to include in my own consumption choices. I was interested in eating “healthy” food but I was also as interested in eating in a way that aligned with my moral and ethical beliefs. The next stage of aligning my consumption choices with the principles outlined by food sovereignty was to establish what exactly food sovereignty was. This need I had for clarity on what was and was not food sovereignty, only led to more confusion.

Theme: Just Another Niche Market

Even before I started this research I had been changing my choices of food to better reflect my developing commitment to food sovereignty. One of my main concerns in changing my consumption choices has been the fear of being considered a hypocrite by

others. In foodie culture, it is sometimes hard not to “jump on the bandwagon” of new fads. In my experience as a sociology student I had been conditioned to critically analyze everything. This prevented me from “jumping on the bandwagon” of new food fads, but it has also prevented me from changing my food consumption choices. Sociological analysis can sometimes leave one disempowered and immobilized by its focus on overwhelming powers, on global corporations, and the determinism of structure. But also my own fear ⁹of aligning my consumption choices with those of food sovereignty, wrongly, has been one of the strongest preventers of self-change. Much of the literature that I had read on food sovereignty noted that it was easy for food sovereignty to be interpreted and reworked into something it was not initially meant to stand for. For example, Desmarais (2015: 159) notes, “as food sovereignty is institutionalized, there is a greater potential for usurpation and depoliticization by powerful interests who can reshape its meaning and dilute its goal of social transformation.”

Present day reflection: Ironically, as a result of my understanding of what food sovereignty meant in this initial stage of research, this is exactly what I was doing: I was depoliticizing food sovereignty and diluting its goal of social transformation. I think this clearly shows my lack of understanding of food sovereignty in these initial stages.

This raises the question, what is the “true” goal of food sovereignty? How can the general public decipher between these “true” meanings of food sovereignty and those put forth by “powerful interests”? Can food sovereignty really be ‘operationalized’ simply as local food or organic food or ethical food? How can we make sure we don’t fall into a

⁹ The fear I refer to here is the fear of falling into a food fad that actually reproduces the very things I wish to change.

reworked version of food sovereignty when we attempt to practice it in our day-to-day lives? These issues became more frequent themes in my field notes/research diary as my research developed.

Theme: Who is the Sovereign?

Another tension noted in margin notes was who or what was the sovereign in food sovereignty? Edelman (2014: 974) notes,

Food sovereignty proponents have been remarkably vague about who or what is ‘the sovereign’ in ‘food sovereignty’, with different organizations and theorists either disagreeing, ignoring the issue entirely or shifting over time between pointing to the nation-state, a region, a locality, or ‘the people.

This theme became more common and pressing as my research developed. It seemed idealistic for all communities, and all cultures within each community, to have control over their food systems. Whose needs should we be including in our decisions around food consumption and how can we know what their needs are? If the sovereign consists of those living on Vancouver Island, then it would make sense for me to focus my purchases on food that has been produced on the island. However, if the sovereign consists of the country of Canada then it would seem best to purchase food that thrives in each province. Or perhaps the actual idea of sovereign is too mired in histories of kings and queens and state formations.

Theme: Indigenous Food Sovereignty

One of the major tensions I have considered throughout this journey was the importance of including Indigenous Food Sovereignty in this inquiry. This tension has

been in my field notes/ margin research notes from the beginning. My first contact with Indigenous food sovereignty was an article written by Grey and Patel (2015). While reading this article I made a margin note questioning whether or not it mattered if the food I consumed was local and/or organic if it was grown on indigenous land by non-indigenous peoples for the consumption of myself, a non-indigenous person. I placed this thought in the “beyond the scope of this research” section, deeming it too large an issue to address adequately within the constraints of this inquiry. I felt the need to reconsider this decision, however, after listening to Abra Brynne discuss the need to decolonize the food system. In one of my personal narratives I write:

I'm feeling discouraged. I know I can't explore every issue throughout my thesis but I can't ignore the need to include how colonization shows itself in our current food system. It is so clear that decolonization must happen within our food system before food sovereignty can occur in Canada. It looks like I will need to extend my timeline

The need to include indigenous food sovereignty within my inquiry was further solidified after I attended a talk by Dawn Morrison, (the founder, chair and coordinator of the B.C. Food Systems Networking Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty). I realized indigenous food sovereignty could not remain in the “beyond the scope of this research” section and needed to be addressed before any other tension could be explored.

I am struggling to place Indigenous food sovereignty in my work. I know that it is not beyond the scope of my research, but it feels like a thesis topic in and of itself, and one I am not qualified to address. After listening to Dawn speak of what indigenous food sovereignty means to her and the working group on indigenous

food sovereignty, it seems that aligning my views on indigenous food sovereignty with my consumption choices would require moving to my family's indigenous land of Scotland or England. I am a settler of so called Canada, consuming food, primarily, that has been grown on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples.

It is with this reflection that I begin to answer my initial research question: (how) can food sovereignty be lived out on a day-to-day basis in a place like Victoria, BC? For me, based on my understanding of food sovereignty, it seemed that I could not successfully consume food in a way that aligns with my beliefs, if I remain in Canada. But surely food sovereignty doesn't mean people have to choose between starving, immigrating or not caring about their food choices. No – I think I need to look more closely at the meanings of food sovereignty.

Theme: Consumer Focus

Another theme in my field notes/ research reflections was that of the 'consumer'. After reading literature on food sovereignty, it seems quite clear that this movement challenges neoliberalism, which is a main reason for why I have selected it as a movement to examine and analyze my consumption choices with. Tensions arise however when I attempt to model my consumption choices around a movement that rejects neoliberalism and the emphasis on consumer choice. The reality is that everyone makes individual consumption choices on a daily basis.

Present day reflection: As humans living in a time of globalization, capitalism, and neoliberalism, I recognize that there is indeed little choice around food products. The
--

food system has created a situation in which our decisions are largely between brand a or brand b, both of them produced by the same corporation in much the same way. I feel however that my privilege and the way I am situated within the food system do provide legitimate choices in consumption decisions. I recognize that this is not the case for most people but my focus for this research is on my own individual experience. I truly believe that I could sustain myself without engaging with the global, corporate food system.

There are several small-scale farms on the island that I have access to and could directly purchase produce and meat from. With the mild weather and all year long growing season, committing to only consuming seasonal fruits and vegetables is much more realistic on the island than it is in Winnipeg. Sustaining myself partially with food I acquire without exchanging for money is also a realistic option. This summer I acquired various fruits from volunteering with the Fruit Tree Project. The Fruit Tree Project is a program run by LifeCycles—a non-profit organization that aims to connect people to the food they eat. As a volunteer, I was able to pick and keep unwanted fruit from people's backyard trees. To my knowledge, there was no added labour, money spent, or time spent to producing this food; most homeowners did nothing to their fruit trees yet fruit was produced. By consuming this fruit, I was able to purchase less fruit from a market based source such as Thrifty's. Consuming in this way would be challenging but I do see it as being a feasible option for myself. Regardless of making this argument, I acknowledge that consuming in this way will not change the structural injustices associated with the global, corporate food system which is ultimately what food sovereignty could achieve. If anything, it reasserts my privilege.

DuPuis and Goodman (2005) argue that localization by itself ultimately supports neoliberal governmentality by encouraging people to be in control of their decisions, taking emphasis off *government* and away from the politics of food. From the perspectives of scholars, I understand this argument and agree with it to an extent, however, as an individual my reality is myself, as an individual, making consumption choices on a daily basis. Yes, my decisions are shaped by food policy put forth by governments, but without being able to change these policies before my next meal, I am forced to make consumption choices based on these current policies. If responsibility shouldn't be placed on the individual consumers, then whose responsibility is it to provide the means to fulfill the basic human right to food? The government? Does the nutritional content of this food matter? Does the treatment of the producers of this food matter? Again I ask myself, how can I make consumption choices in a way that aligns with the ideas of food sovereignty? And is this the important question?

Theme: Local

I noticed instantly when I moved to Victoria that the idea of buying local was prominent. I did the majority of my shopping at Thrifty's which is owned by the same company as Sobeys is in Winnipeg, because it reminded me of shopping back home. Thrifty's however, promoted local products far more than Sobeys did in Winnipeg, displaying the slogan "We pick BC first, because local matters" throughout the store. I found this intriguing and decided to look more into what Thrifty's defines as local. Looking through the list of products and farms that Thrifty's has on their BC local list, it became quite clear that the emphasis was on local *suppliers* as opposed to local

ingredients. When I think of eating local I think of eating fruits and vegetables and meat that have been grown/ raised on one of the many farms located on Vancouver Island. It seems that what Thrifty's sees as local are products produced by local businesses who do not necessarily get To me, this did not satisfy my desire to eat locally their ingredients locally.. What I felt was truly eating local was going to street markets and buying produce directly from farmers. For me, standing at the Moss Street Market on Saturday morning felt like I was participating in some version of food sovereignty. I felt an unwavering trust with the people selling their produce in this place. I wasn't concerned about harmful pesticides or genetic engineering. When I exchanged money for items in this space I felt like I was on the right track to living out food sovereignty.

I continued to read literature on localization in the food movement and came across many areas of concern. Allen (1999: 121) for example argues, "[t]he focus on local action may also distract attention from the larger-scale dynamics of food insecurity. While problems of food insecurity are manifest at the local level, they are not necessarily caused at the local level but are rooted in larger, often global, political economic structures." I knew that consuming local produce wouldn't change these structures directly, but does this mean as an individual that purchasing local isn't important? Another area of concern around local purchasing centered on migrant workers in Canada. During the conference I attended in Nanaimo I was fortunate enough to attend a talk by Byron Cruz, a member of the Sanctuary Health group. Byron talked about the severe injustices experienced by several of the ten thousand temporary migrant workers who come to BC each year to work on farms. It was unbelievable that the living and working conditions of many of these migrant workers, were occurring here in Canada. Many of

these migrant workers are denied basic human rights by their employers and are silenced by the fear of being sent back to their home country without the financial gain they need to support themselves and their families.

After listening to Byron's stories of the migrant workers in Canada, I am left wondering if buying local produce from BC is a good choice. Was I supporting a farm who was denying some basic human rights of their migrant workers when I purchased produce grown in BC?

Perhaps we need to go out and see exactly where our food comes from. We need to talk to the people who grow it because yes, we may be supporting a farm that oppresses migrant workers when we buy local BC produce. Does it come down, once again, to establishing some sort of connection to the food we consume, and to those who produce it?

Theme: Global? Individual? Both?

My understanding of food sovereignty as it was presented in the literature was as a political, transnational agrarian movement. I wondered if an individual, like myself, could act out food sovereignty on a day to day basis? My margin notes show the frustration I felt while trying to take the ideas presented in food sovereignty literature and apply them to my every day consumption choices. Akram-Lodhi (2015:579), concludes his piece *Accelerating Towards Food Sovereignty* with the following:

The objective of transformational global movements for food sovereignty is a livelihood-enhancing, climate-friendly food system that does not exclude anyone from food because it is available to all as a fundamental human right. This article has discussed a number of pathways that could accelerate movement towards food sovereignty. The foundation would be pro-poor, gender-responsive redistributive land reform, accompanied by extensive restrictions on land markets and the

promotion of surplus-generating agroecological farming directed towards localized food systems. The reconstruction of a redistributive state is necessary to this, as a means of restricting local and global land, labor and product markets, as well as providing public goods and access to adequate forms of social provisioning. Cumulatively food sovereignty requires challenging the class power that is expressed in and through the corporate food regime by constructing a broad democratic alliance of peasants, smallholders, fishers, indigenous peoples, urban workers and underserved food communities prepared to confront the power of capital in the food system by fostering alternative modes of organizing production and consumption in ways that contain elements of de-commodification and the re-regulation of markets on the basis of public need. The foundation of such a challenge must be the construction of a new common sense around food production and food consumption, which would elaborate shared identities and common interests, and thus allow agrarian and non-agrarian citizens to fully claim their individual and collective rights by establishing notions of democracy rooted in democratic economies, social and ecological justice, and the need for harmony between humans and nature.

In my Margin response I write: Oh is that all?? This is why I am doing this thesis because I can't do this as an individual. Is all I can do as an individual consumer to simply 'vote with my dollar'?

MOVING FORWARD

My position as an everyday food consumer and an academic with access to literature on food sovereignty allows me to explore ethical consumption from both an insider and outsider perspective. As an everyday consumer, it seemed that there were truly ethical choices and faux ethical choices and those who had researched these options could decipher between the two. I figured leading researchers on food sovereignty must be confident about their food choices. They would know if buying organic food was worth paying the extra dollar for, as if the idea of "worth" would be uniformly measureable once I had acquired such knowledge. The more literature I read, the more I came to realize that food sovereignty was much more of a political project than a

consumption one. As this chapter has demonstrated, I found it nearly impossible, correction – I found it totally impossible to consume food in a way that aligns with my moral and ethical views and my desire for social justice and environmental sustainability. Rather than think I was weak willed or hypocritical or just not trying hard enough, I realized I needed to develop a better analytical and political understanding of food sovereignty and what I was really trying to do. Even if we could consume food in an entirely ethical way, would this accomplish food sovereignty and result in the social justice and environmental sustainability we desire? This understanding reoriented my attention to exploring ways, other than through consumption choices, we could contribute to the establishment of food sovereignty as the dominant food model. In exploring alternative modes of action, I began to see the ruling relations that coordinate my understanding of what it means to eat ethically and why we feel the need to eat ethically¹⁰. I was led to question my social positioning and how this coordinated my desire for wanting to align my consumption choices with the ideas of food sovereignty.

In the following stage of analysis, guided by Pillow's (2003: 176) suggested questions, I consider "how does who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel affect data collection and analysis?" I admit, it was only in wrestling with the confusions and tensions I experienced of attempting to live out food sovereignty, that I was able to see the relevance of such questions. It has been in critically investigating why I approached this research in the way I did (with a consumer focus), that I am able to see

¹⁰ While I focus here on how the ruling relations coordinate my *understanding* of what it means to eat ethically, it should also be noted that they coordinate my actions as well. The type of food available at grocery stores, for example, are largely controlled by capitalist firms. The relationship between myself and the store clerk is organized by the material exchange between buyer and seller...

who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel. At the onset of this thesis I was unaware of several ruling relations that coordinated my understanding of food sovereignty and oriented myself towards consumer action. The difficulty of being able to clearly distinguish between who I think I am and who I am and how various ruling relations coordinate my understandings are highlighted throughout this thesis. The various and complex properties of neoliberalism are impossible to summarize within the scope of this thesis, however, in the next chapter I address how some enduring themes of neoliberalism are present in my experience of attempting to eat ethically. These enduring themes have been noted by various scholars and include (1) Consumer action, (2), Individual Responsibility, and (3) Identity Politics (Gray 1996; Eagleton-Pierce 2016).

CHAPTER 5: REPRODUCING NEOLIBERAL SUBJECTIVITIES

In this chapter I explore the analytical findings that have come to the forefront as a result of my sense of failure at attempting to eat ethically. I begin by critically and reflexively analyzing my initial confusions and thoughts of food sovereignty and how they express three aspects of neoliberalism. These themes include; (1) Consumer action, (2), Individual Responsibility, and (3) Identity Politics. Each of these shaped my understanding of what it means to eat ethically and contributed to my (mis)understanding of food sovereignty.

IDENTIFYING THE RULING RELATIONS

Without a deep understanding of the meaning of food sovereignty, I saw it offering a framework for guiding ethical consumption as its goals echo the views commonly expressed by ethical eaters—social justice and environmental sustainability (Johnston, Szabo, and Rodney 2011). Throughout this research I have unintentionally offered support for much of the literature that argues that “ethical eaters” (1) assist in establishing private agri-food governance (Guthman 2007a; Lavin 2009, 2013), (2) depoliticize food movements (Guthman 2007a; Lavin 2009, 2013), and (3) reassert privilege and strengthen class boundaries (Johnston and Baumann 2010; Alkon and McCullen 2010). I illustrate these throughout my personal narratives in Chapter 4. While I approached this research with what I thought were the best intentions, a further critical reflection of my motives suggests otherwise. It is not my intent to suggest that ethical eaters eat ethically intentionally for solely personal gains, we are a product of our environment and the current globalized, consumer society greatly influences our understanding of what it means to be an ethical consumer. Drawing from Dorothy

Smith's institutional ethnography methodology I further explore the various ruling relations that coordinate our (mis)understanding of the political potential of food sovereignty. These reflections offer potential sites for strengthening the political potential of new food movements, such as food sovereignty, by addressing others (mis)understandings.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

The rationality of consumer society is built on the irrationality of its individualized actors (Bauman 2001: 17).

Food Inc. showed quite clearly how multinational corporations (Monsanto), large food companies (Tyson, Perdue, Con-Agra, Monfort, ibp, Smithfield etc.), regulatory agencies (FDA), and various government policies (farm bills, libel laws, subsidies) have created and maintained the current globalized industrial food system. Various suggestions were given throughout the film of how viewers could respond to the horribleness of the food system that was presented, however, most if not all suggestions were individual actions. At the end of the documentary the following message appears:

You can vote to change this system three times a day. Buy from companies that treat workers, animals and the environment with respect. When you go to the supermarket, choose foods that are in season. Buy foods that are organic. Know what is in your food. Read labels. Know what you buy. Buy foods that are grown locally. Shop at farmer's markets. Plant a garden (even a small one). Cook a meal with your family and eat together. Make sure your farmers' market takes food stamps, because everyone has a right to healthy food. Ask your school board to provide healthy school lunches. Tell Congress to enforce food safety standards and reintroduce Kevin's law¹¹. You can change the world with every bite.

These suggestions position viewers as consumers, suggesting consumer action as

¹¹ *Kevin's Law gives the USDA the power to shut down plants that repeatedly produce contaminated meat (Food Inc. 33:46).*

solutions. Throughout this research, however, I have come to see the importance of addressing issues in the food system from a more than consumer standpoint. This is not to say that consumer choice has no value in making change but that we need to reach beyond consumer based actions to political action¹².

It is well documented in the literature that liquid modernity, through deregulation and privatization, is associated with the idea that freedom is no longer a collective social project but an individual task (Bauman 2000). The feeling of individual responsibility to feed ourselves and our families in a healthy way as I myself was inclined to do after watching Food Inc. is captured in Greco's (1993) explanation of prudential subjects' "duty to be well." Greco (1993: 361) writes:

Each individual thus acquires a personal preventive capacity in the event of his or her illness, a preventive capacity structured around the possibility of self-transformation and, before that, of self-knowledge. If the regulation of life-style, the modification of risky behaviour and the transformation of unhealthy attitudes prove impossible through sheer strength of will, this constitutes, at least in part, a failure of the self to take care of itself- a form of irrationality, or simply a lack of skillfulness...

This explanation of the prudential subjects' duty to be well corresponds quite seamlessly with my views at the beginning stages of my journey. Documentaries such as Food Inc. promote the importance of self-knowledge, which became my first desired outcome; I wanted to be confident in my knowledge of the food I was consuming and to be able to say I eat this because—Or I don't eat this because— The personal aspect of Greco's

¹² I am still grappling with the idea of being a political subject and what constitutes a political action from a non-political action. For now, when I refer to political action I am referring to (1) collective action with organizations participating in alternative food systems (as opposed to the industrial food system). Here in Victoria these include Young Agrarians, Farm Folk City Folk, Life Cycles etc. (2) Identifying political connections and building/strengthening these connections. For example, if you are a post-secondary student, establishing communication between local farmers and the food services on campus. (3) Accepting political responsibility, as suggested by Young (2003).

“duty to be well” is also evident throughout the messages of Food Inc. After watching the film, it was *my* desire to know how to feed *myself* that drove my research in the hopes of being able to share my knowledge and help others yes, but ultimately I felt that it was *my* responsibility to attain this knowledge. Finally, as my journey progressed and my desired outcome failed to be met, I felt a personal failure. I did not feel that government policies had failed the farmers who were being sued by Monsanto for crop contamination, I felt that I failed by not seeing organic produce as worth the extra few dollars when selecting it at the grocery store. This displays how my desire to consume ethically was driven not by my political self and my desire to address social injustices and the assaults on the environment, but by a feeling of individual responsibility to “make the right decisions” which end up being largely for my own benefit.

Reading the above paragraph, and seeing the amount of times I refer to “myself” confirms how much this quest to eat ethically was about me. I touch on this more in the Identity Politics section.

O’Malley (1996) explains how in neoliberalism it is the neoliberal subject that must determine what constitutes a problem and what problems are significant enough to call attention to. What we as neoliberal subjects come to view as problems is largely influenced by the ruling relations. For example, according to Beagan and Chapman (2012) “healthy” has become a dominant discourse around food as presented by the media, government websites, health educators, and the food industry. They argue that “healthy eating is currently one of the dominant discourses – if not *the* dominant

discourse- concerning food (Beagan and Chapman 2012: 137). This is no surprise when we take a critical look at the messages provided by the various health agencies in Canada. Health Canada's goal for example is "for Canada to be among the countries with the healthiest people in the world" (Health Canada 2016). To achieve this goal Health Canada "[c]ommunicates information about disease prevention to protect Canadians from avoidable risks and [e]ncourages Canadians to take an active role in their health, such as increasing their level of physical activity and eating well" (Health Canada 2016). Both of these place the responsibility on the individual; it is the individual who must read the provided information, reduce their risk of disease, increase their physical activity and eat well. The problems of the industrial food system, as portrayed by Health Canada appears to be people's failure to inform themselves and to live a healthy lifestyle. There is no acknowledgment of the structural injustices, of the corporate dominated nature of the agri-food sector and how the State and large corporations contribute to the reproduction of these injustices, or of how eating industrially produced foods might be detrimental to our health.

While structural injustices are expressed throughout *Food Inc.*, the film falls short of promoting ideas for structural transformation. One of the suggestions as noted above was to read labels. Not only is this suggestion another example of an individual responsibility based solution, Guthman (2007) argues how certification labels can unwittingly and at times wittingly assist in accomplishing one of neoliberalism's political economic strategies: private agri-food governance. This is a kind of a-political devolution, by placing regulatory control in the hands of consumers, although sociologists would see this as corporate rather than consumer control (Guthman 2007a).

Guthman explains “by choosing what sort of ethical products to buy or not to buy, consumers are making regulatory decisions about ecological and public health risk, working conditions and remuneration, and even what sort of producers of what commodities should be favored in the world market” (Guthman 2007a: 472). In the context of a neo-liberal food regime of course it is not really the individual consumer who should be held responsible for making these regulatory decisions, nor will these decisions equate to fixing the environmental and social destruction that the industrial food system has created. However, developing consumer political consciousness is one of several place from which to start.

More deeply, though, is the problem not that the whole project of private agri-food governance allows for a voluntary nature of such governance where social justice and environmental destruction are reduced to a matter of consumer choice and voting with one’s dollar? Is the problem that individual consumers “choose” to buy unethically produced products or that justice for others is reduced to consumer choice for relatively privileged people? When I and others adopt responsibility as our own rather than a collective political or public responsibility and obligation, we reproduce ourselves as neoliberal subjects. In doing so, we take responsibility off of the State, corporations and others who benefit from structural inequalities and place it on individual actors. We absorb these issues as personal issues, removing political agency from ourselves and discouraging the creation of collectives to rectify the structural inequalities that create these issues in the first place.

Messages such as those stated by Health Canada, and consumer action suggestions made in Food Inc. discourage us from realizing our political agency and

collectivity, because problems are seen as individual struggles that require individual knowledge gaining and decision making. Even having been educated on the structural injustices associated with the food system, my focus on knowledge gaining and consumption choices throughout my journey shows how powerful neoliberal ideology can be at hailing subjects. I struggled (and still do) to break from my neoliberal self and direct my actions towards initiatives that actually have the power to create change.

Although in an earlier section, utilizing work by Young (2003), I argued against individual responsibility, those who relatively benefit from the industrial food system, do have some responsibility in its reproduction. Young (2003: 17) argues that “agents have forward looking responsibilities to take action to help undermine structural injustices not on the general grounds that right thinking people should be concerned about harm and suffering wherever it occurs, but on the more specific grounds that we are connected by our own actions to the processes that cause injustice for others.” This understanding of responsibility allows us to take a critical look at our desire to eat ethically. Young (2003) argues that political responsibility requires the acknowledgement that structural injustices are a product of many actions by many actors. These actors may or may not intend these unjust consequences resulting from their actions, but they do, nonetheless result in reproducing structural injustices. This understanding that our actions contribute to structural inequalities has been an awareness that I have had throughout my entire journey; I am a Sociology MA student after all. I know that I am partly responsible for the production and reproduction of the social structures that produce hunger, malnutrition, colonization, unpaid labor etc. This alternative way of viewing responsibility however, allows us to differentiate between the actions we take that do and

do not have the ability to transform structural inequalities. For example, our individual consumption choices, whether completely ethical or not, may contribute in some small, well-intentioned way, but alone will not transform structural inequalities.

Present day reflection: When I reflect on the experiences I had throughout this journey and how they hook into Young's explanation of political responsibility, I am reminded of my visit with Byron. Young's claim that, "[p]ersons who benefit relatively from structural inequalities have special moral responsibilities to contribute to organized efforts to correct them, not because they are to blame, but because they are able to adapt to changed circumstances without suffering serious deprivation" (Young 2003: 18). Byron explained how fighting for social justice in Guatemala resulted in the death of many of his friends and said, "social justice has a price, it doesn't come for free." Byron's friends had literally died from their political action and here I am, I have spent a year debating with myself on what label was more or less credible, if buying local was better than buying organic, and fearing the entire time that I was committing to a way of consuming that didn't actually reflect my moral and ethical beliefs. As someone who does benefit relatively from structural inequalities in the food system and who experiences no real suffering as a result of changed circumstances, I agree with Young that I do have a responsibility to contribute to organized efforts to correct them. But altering my consumption choices alone, is not enough!

CONSUMER ACTION

When people asked what my thesis was about if I responded with "Food

Sovereignty” I got blank stares, but if I responded with “the buying local campaign” people became very interested in hearing more about it. It is easy to find social change projects that call on consumers to alter their consumption habits. Buy Local, the Slow Food Movement, the 100 Mile Diet to name a few. Guthman’s (2007) critique of food labels however, addresses the shortcomings of such consumer based movements as they tend to reproduce neoliberal subjectivities. Guthman (2007) argues that certification itself is a kind of neoliberal governance that does not address the structural issues of the problems that certification seeks to govern. Few within the food sovereignty movement in the Global South, for example, would see certification as more than a potentially useful strategy but also one that can equally potentially reproduce colonial relationships. My personal narratives prove exactly Guthman’s (2007) point, that my focus on what the “right” or “ethical” food choice was, reproduced my neoliberal understanding of food sovereignty and limited my ability to see its political potential. Various examples of this are present in my personal narratives summarized in Chapter 4. After watching Food Inc. I note that I was confused *as to my place within this industry*. My confusion in regard to my *place* within this industry was solely as a consumer; what kind of consumer I currently was (unethical), and what kind of consumer I desired to be (ethical). It had not occurred to me that my place within this industry could be as something other than a consumer and that my responses should be focused on political action more than consumer action.

Why are we so quick to respond with consumer based solutions when confronted with unjust systems? And, if they don’t create the transformational change needed, why are they so commonly promoted? Various times throughout Food Inc. consumer choice

was posed as a solution, or at least as a way to contribute to a solution. During his interviews, Gary Hirshberg stated “when we run an item past the supermarket scanner, we’re voting for local, or not, for organic, or not” and in referring to Walmart’s decision to sell rBST free milk claimed it was, “individual consumers [that] changed the biggest company on earth.” Troy Roush, one of the farmers who was interviewed stated, “we farmers are going to deliver to the marketplace what the market place demands... people need to start demanding good wholesome food from us, and we’ll deliver.” But what does demanding good wholesome food look like? Does it mean boycotting, boycotting, and only shopping at farmer’s markets? Who and or what determines demands in the marketplace?

While the purchasing of certain certified products, such as Fair Trade coffee, can have a lesser impact on the negative outcomes of the dominant industrial food system, many scholars (Princen et.al. 2002; Johnston 2008) argue that as an action alone, the purchasing of certified food products, or any food product for that matter, does not result in transformational change- and transformational change is what is needed. Knezevic (2012: 254-255) explains how organic food in North America once represented a “full-fledged alternative, a product of chemical-free, small-scale, diverse farming, which relied on social relationships for marketing and manifested the ‘back-to-the-land’ resistance to the dominant ideologies and economic system.” Now, with increasing popularity, it has in part been co-opted by the industrial food system. The idea of organic, represented by the Canada Organic logo has been reduced to “chemical-free food within the industrial food system” (Knezevic 2012: 255), and some health and ecological benefits do accrue from that – but political transformation does not.

The issue of certification remains a contested one in the politics of food. The initial intention behind organic production was to provide sustainable alternatives to the industrial food system and this intention has not disappeared. It has however, been reworked into the dominant industrial food model with the use of standardizing certified labelling. Food labels create standards and regulations that the industrial food system use to commercialize alternative food models to make profitable niche markets (Knezevic 2012: 248). This is where food labels pose a problem for expanding alternative food models; when they get reworked and incorporated into the dominant industrial food model that they initially opposed. Therefore, while purchasing products that bear the Canada Organic logo does express public concern for chemical-free products, the standardization of the label reduces this concern to chemical-free, instead of concern for creating socially and environmentally sustainable food models which it once represented (Knezevic 2012).

IDENTITY POLITICS

I knew from the outset that if I had been successful at confidently determining how to consume food in an ethical way that supported the ideas of food sovereignty, this would not result in a revolutionary change. Why then did I focus my attention on something that I knew would not produce the ultimate outcome I hoped for? Bauman (2001) and Lasch (1979) have argued that people living in modernity experience a feeling of hopelessness that any real change can be made and this feeling leads people to focus on their own individual actions in the hope that these actions will bring some form of satisfaction to their lives. This is where I see my intentions lying; in my desire to grasp

onto *something* and feel confident in my actions toward it. My reasoning for responding as a consumer to the injustices in the food system expresses what Zukin (2004: 34) claims, which is that “we persist in believing that shopping is a realm of freedom from work and politics, a form of democracy open to all, and an exercise of skill...” I feel like my consumption choices are a part of my day-to-day life that I have total control over, something lacking in almost all other aspects of my life. Studying Sociology can be disheartening and has left me with more questions than answers. Feeling confident that the food I consumed daily wasn’t contributing to the horribleness in the world that I had spent eight years learning about seemed to be something I could tangibly accomplish. Unlike the idea of ending poverty or solving world hunger, being an ethical consumer was something that seemed possible. Nearing the end of my research I know that even this desire is not achievable by my own definition of what it means to eat ethically. This individualistic consumer focused response to problems in the food system is a far cry from Iris Marion Young’s notion of political responsibility. We need to challenge ourselves to see ourselves as more than neoliberal consumers and as political subjects with a responsibility to be active in changing the structural inequalities that we benefit from. This is further explored in Chapter 6.

While I did not intentionally set out to do this research to gain this knowledge and keep it to myself, in critically reflecting on my personal narratives I can see the selfishness behind my research. The questions I had around third party certifications and needing to distinguish which ones were or were not credible reflect a concern for myself and not for the producers of such products and the potential such initiatives have for social justice. This self-motivation is also visible in my fear of being considered a

hypocrite by others and falling into the stereotype of being a foodie who jumps on bandwagons. If there was the smallest potential that buying a certified product of some kind meant a fairer wage for those who produced it or less damage to the environment, why wouldn't I choose that option? Perhaps because wanting clarity on credible and not credible certifications has more to do with constructing my own authentic identity than wanting social justice and environmental sustainability. While that is not the intention, by critically reflecting on how I approached my research it seems that the desire to construct an authentic identity is a major driver of my research. Johnston and Baumann (2010: 94) claim "foodscape[s] remain a terrain for status-seeking where cultural artifacts are used to achieve distinction, and reinforce class boundaries." My experience illustrates how even with a perceived intention of engaging in a foodscape that is more socially just and environmentally sustainable, we may still be motivated by a need to construct authentic identities.

CHAPTER 6: RE-CONSIDERING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Drawing on institutional ethnography and autoethnography, I have explored the tensions and confusions of attempting to live out food sovereignty on a day-to-day basis. The questions that have been explored include: (1) how do the ruling relations shape our responses to injustice in the food system such that consumer action is most appealing? (2) What prevents people who engage in new food movements via ethical eating, from seeing the political potential of food sovereignty or new food movements in general? (3) How can we bridge the gap between those who see the political potential of food sovereignty, and those who (mis)understand it? (4) How can we more effectively engage with food sovereignty on a day-to-day basis? My lived experience of attempting to act out food sovereignty has offered many analytical insights. Firstly, the importance of questioning one's intentions and recognizing the ruling relations that coordinate our experiences. For while our desires to enact change may come from the best intentions, without critically questioning our understanding of the problem and potential solutions, we may reproduce the very thing we wish to change. Secondly, the importance of prioritizing the discourse around the political potential of new food movements. Mainstream media prioritizes consumer action, whereas those deeply engaged with food studies argue for the importance of political action to create transformational change. Thirdly, the need for ethical eaters to develop their political selves to reach beyond consumer action. In this concluding chapter I am thus left to ask, if not solely through consumption choices, how can those who desire a more socially just and environmentally sustainable food system act towards this goal?

LOCATING RULING RELATIONS

In reflecting on and acknowledging my intentions for wanting to be an ethical eater, I am able to show a potential space for strengthening support for new food movements. The proverb “the road to hell is paved by good intention” could in fact be true in the case of ethical eaters. Instead of criticizing ethical eaters for reproducing class boundaries and accusing them of attending to their identity politics, perhaps we should encourage such people to critically reflect on the ways they act towards injustices and how these actions have been influenced by ruling relations. For, perhaps just like myself, they have failed to see themselves as political subjects and were unsure of how else to respond to such issues. If one of the main motivators of purchasing intention is the moral and/or ethical belief in making the right decision (Guido et al. 2010; Shaw and Shiu 2002), is this not hope for the future? This displays a large group of people who are aware and acknowledge unethicalness in the current industrial food system, whether it be social injustice, inhuman treatment of animals or something else. When we become aware of the ruling relations that coordinate our experiences (in this case of being an ethical eater) we are able to question how these ruling relations direct us towards certain actions over others.

Present day reflection: Guthman’s (2008) “If Only They Knew” article is flashing in my head as I write the above sentence. Guthman (2008) critiques a common saying in new food movements: that if people only knew how bad the industrial food system was, they would not consume from it. She argues how this idea shows colorblindness and

universalism¹³ within the new food movement (Guthman 2008). My recommendation for questioning our intentions and recognizing the ruling relations that coordinate our experiences, as it may lead to a more political understanding of new food movements, is a suggestion for those who already express an interest in creating a more socially just and environmentally sustainable food system. It is not my belief that if everyone knew of the severe injustices in the current food system and how various neoliberal components organize our understanding of these injustices and how to respond, our food system would magically be transformed. The recommendations I make are for those who are new to the study of food and/or who intentionally attempt to consume ethically (however they define what is ethical or not or whether that means purchasing certain products and not others, or attempts to reduce their environmental impact), in the hopes of creating more socially just and environmentally sustainable food systems. I acknowledge the concern posed by Guthman (2008) of the colorblind mentality in alternative food discourse, however, my aim in this thesis is to bridge the gap between those who, like Guthman, are deeply engaged with food and agriculture scholarship and those who are new to this field and these ideas. Fostering political engagement from those who already show support for new food movements and who do “wish to know” how to support these movements is what I am recommending.

Equally as important to locating the ruling relations that lead us towards consumer action and away from political action, is locating others who are differently situated vis a

¹³ Guthman (2008: 391) refers to universalism as “the assumption that values held primarily by whites are normal and widely shared.” New food movement discourse is heavily influenced by whites. Therefore, by assuming that if people only knew where their food came from they would conform to white ideals around food consumption, further excludes people of color from such movements.

vis these relations. We need to be able to find the commonalities that connect those of us who desire change instead of focusing on what separates us. Too often throughout this journey I came across boundaries that had been drawn. For example, in the documentary *Cowspiracy*, Howard Lyman states “you can’t be an environmentalist and eat animal products, period. Kid yourself if you want...but don’t call yourself an environmentalist.”¹⁴ Furthermore, various vegan accounts on Instagram state “you cannot love animals and eat them too.” Statements like these call on identity politics and create in-groups and out-groups. When we recognize our political connections and shared interest we create the possibility of political alliances.

PRIORITIZING THE POLITICAL

A deep analytical reading of the food sovereignty literature coupled with the experience of attempting to live out food sovereignty, allows one to view it as primarily a political project rather than a consumption one. For myself, this reoriented my attention to political action and to exploring ways, other than through consumption choices, I could contribute to the establishment of food sovereignty as the dominant food model. The motive behind this desire positioned me quite differently in respect to how I would act on this desire. In re-reading the food sovereignty literature I can see the political focus the authors provide. In a physical sense, the political focus was of course, always in those pieces of literature. However, it took this entire journey for me to see them. It should not take an MA in Sociology and two years immersed in food studies to see the importance of political action responses to injustice in the industrial food system. Why are political

¹⁴ Can be seen in *Cowspiracy* at time: 1:16:05.

responses not more successfully promoted? This research, along with others (Hollanders 2003; DuPuis 2000) suggests a potential reason: the subjectivities we as individuals develop from being immersed in a neoliberal capitalist society. Being able to make sense of the complexities of the injustices in the current food system and see the political action that its transformation requires is difficult to do when we see ourselves as individuals responsible for acquiring the knowledge necessary to guide our actions; as if anyone who truly wanted to do the right thing would know how to do so and those of us who are unsure of how to respond just don't care enough.

Guthman (2007b) criticizes authors such as Michael Pollan for ignoring work done by social scientists on the social study of food. She argues, “[w]hat is so painfully evident here [in Michael Pollan’s book *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*] and in many other of the new food books, is how food politics has become a progenitor of a neoliberal anti-politics that devolves regulatory responsibility to consumers’ via their dietary choices” (Guthman 2007b: 264). Now, with what I have learned throughout this journey, I share Guthman’s frustration with the authors of such books and their promotion of consumer based actions. Guthman acknowledges the issue of “dense scholarly writing in reaching a popular audience” and that the reason there is an absence of ideas from those deeply engaged in scholarship of food and agriculture, could be “our own inability to get our voices out there” (Guthman 2007b: 263-264). Regardless of who is to blame for apolitical, consumer choice based solutions becoming so dominant, we must work towards promoting and prioritizing political responses. My aim in sharing this journey, is thus to bridge the gap between those who see the political potential of food movements, such as food sovereignty, and those who (mis)understand its political potential. I am able to offer

a unique perspective as I come from being someone of the latter to someone of the former.

REACHING A WIDER AUDIENCE

Guthman's (2007b) critique of food writers who resort to Manichaeism ethics is legitimate in that they fail to capture the complexity of issues within the industrial food system and promote a simplistic form of action based on consumer choice. This was after all, what happened to me. I was sucked in to consumer action as a result of watching *Food Inc.*, where food authors such as Michael Pollen, farmers, and journalists promote the idea of "voting with your dollar." What we need from food scholars is easy access to their ideas in a language that is understandable to the general public. I suggest a documentary where academic food scholars such as Guthman, are featured with suggestions for how to politically respond to injustices in the food system. This film could be shown in high schools, post-secondary institutions, and at community events. Farmers markets would be an excellent way to promote the film as many who attend such markets express interest in alternative food systems already (Dodds et.al. 2014). Social media platforms such as blogs, have the ability to reach a wide audience as well. If there were easily accessible, clearly stated ways for people to politically respond to injustices in the food system, I see the potential for an alternative food system in Canada's future. The knowledge and recommendations of academics deeply engaged with food studies however, must be made accessible for the dominant discourse around action to be made politically based.

LOCAL ORGANIZING: EXPERIENCING SELF AS A POLITICAL SUBJECT

In an attempt not to do what Guthman (2008) criticizes other food writers for doing, I conclude this thesis by exploring potential political responses to issues of the industrial food system. Smith (2008: 24) promotes the idea of making change from below “as an ongoing work of organization with multiple foci which expands people’s experience of taking action.” Although the idea of consumption choices has proven to be less important than I had initially thought, engaging in consumer action does offer a physical space for local organizing and can be political. Interest in eating locally brings people to farmers’ markets, and while they can be places of privilege, frequented most often by white (Payne 2002), middle to upper class people (Guthman 2008), they do provide physical access to farmers and a potential for everyday people to come together and develop and/or strengthen their individual and/or collective political consciousness. They are also great sites for alternative economies to grow and they allow small scale farmers to gain access to markets that are partially outside the corporate market place. Furthermore, farmer’s markets are spaces to give and collect information about food initiatives within the community. For example, I and 120 other people currently living in Oakland were able to participate in the Oakland Community Garden Initiative survey. Twelve of us are ready to “bring our shovels” as Ron Finley recommends in his Ted Talk (2013) and have organized a working group to begin the process of creating a community garden. We envision a garden that welcomes all and brings people together; a place for parents to teach their children about gardening and respect for nature; a place where we can nurture great food through collective efforts. While not discounting the potential benefit a community garden in Oakland can have, the coalition building that has the

potential to grow in this space could project well beyond a single community garden. With the development of a community garden we can engage the everyday person with city counselors, BC Parks and Recreation, local businesses, schools and various other education programs, senior's groups etc. Smith (2008: 23) suggests that "the building of connections, activists' experience and political consciousness among supporters is a vital development in the process of making change from below." It is through such things as community gardens that we can bring people together and allow us to further develop our political consciousness, connect with other people, and ultimately make change from below.

ONTOLOGICAL SHIFT

An underlying idea has been persistent throughout this inquiry, it has taken many forms and has presented itself through different concepts, but the core idea has remained intact. I have come to see it as a need for an ontological shift. Wiebe and Wipf (2011: 7-8) refer to this when they argue that "achieving food sovereignty in Canada requires fundamental changes in our...view of our place in the wider world, and many of our relationships to each other and our environments." Ron Finley (2013) suggests it in his Ted Talk when he states "to change the community, you have to change the composition of the soil. We are the soil." Roberts (2013: 17) creatively displays it when he explains how the word "waste" is a verb not a noun. Even utilizing the methodology of Institutional Ethnography reinforces the need for developing an ontological shift. These analytical findings have led me to think that developing capacity for an ontological shift in oneself and others can be seen as a political act taken on a daily basis, and a way of moving food sovereignty forward.

Gibson-Graham (2006: xxvii-xxviii) argue for the “cultivat[ion of] ourselves as activists and subjects of noncapitalist economies” and “theorists of possibility.” We need to be able to imagine a new economic politics beyond capitalism. Using Althusser’s (1972) concept of overdertermination, Gibson-Graham argue that capitalism cannot be seen as having a simple causality, therefore, “[w]e may no more assume that a capitalist firm is interested in maximizing profits or exploitation than we may assume that an individual woman wants to bear and raise children, or that an American is interested in making money” (Gibson-Graham 1996: 16). Imagining a politics of possibility however, requires shifting stances and working against the habitual practices and feelings we so easily resort to (Gibson-Graham 2006). Seeing the politics of possibility in certification labels for example, would require seeing the benefits and potential of such things, for while they may reproduce new forms of neoliberal governance, they also display sites of public support for socially just, human, environmentally sustainable etc. food systems. For some people, buying fair trade products may be solely a search for authenticity, but for others, such was the case for myself, it was an attempt at making change and refusing to support an unjust food system. If our definition of consumer was understood as unfixed and not necessarily a characteristic of neoliberalism, could we imagine the political potential of consumer action? I acknowledge the shortcomings of this action for making transformational change, but if we view “the consumer” in the context of anti-essentialist presumption of overdetermination, could this act support the creation of other economies, or at least foster theorists of possibility? If we were able to deconstruct our current understanding of the neoliberal consumer, could purchasing something like fair trade coffee be seen as a political act? It could be argued that since fair trade offers an

alternative model of the market, one that is regulated by notions of justice, as well as being organized around cooperatives in the Global South where the extra money earned from fair trade coffee makes a difference in the community, purchasing such products could be viewed as a political action in creating a new food economy.

Connolly's (2002) description of the layered corporeality of cultural beings and Alaimo's (2008) description of transcorporeality propose ways of inducing our ability to see the politics of possibility. Trans-corporeality is defined as "the recognition of the substantial interconnections between human corporeality and the more-than-human world" (Alaimo 2008). If we view the human body as inseparable from the environment (trans-corporeality), we can no longer view food as an isolated product but as a product of various interactions and networks and the very fabric of our bodies and minds (Bryant 2012). With this ontological view, the boundaries that have been constructed around eating healthy diminish. It is no longer individual health or a mother's concern for the wellbeing of their children that orients the way we consume food but the health of all children, of all humans, of the environment etc. If we can view ourselves and the relations we have to others, and to the more than human world, as interdependently connected, then the health and wellbeing of all becomes necessary for the health and wellbeing of ourselves as individuals. Alaimo's (2013) call for a posthumanist resilience gives us an inspirational push to continue engaging with the daily tasks that foster change. Alaimo (2013: 1) calls for:

a posthumanist resilience, enacted through our immersion in networks that are ecological, material, technological, multispecies, and subcultural. Why not undertake mundane revolutionary practices that foster intersubjective well-being through a million minute attempts to foster the resilience of ecosystems, the survival of species, the just distribution of health, wealth and opportunity, and the desire to more generally "unfuck the world."

DECOLONIZATION

Gazing beyond the idea of taking action through consumption choices, the process of decolonization comes to the forefront. I can see now that Indigenous Food Sovereignty is part of a much larger effort towards decolonization. Further reflection on Dawn's explanation of Indigenous food sovereignty has given me a new way of understanding the goal of food sovereignty in general. She said how the English word sovereignty is a colonial term that does not fully reflect the goal of Indigenous food sovereignty because Indigenous cultures do not desire control over their food. According to the working group on Indigenous food sovereignty, Indigenous food sovereignty is achieved by "upholding our sacred responsibility to nurture healthy, interdependent relationships with the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food" (WGIFS). What a beautiful way of viewing food sovereignty, as an incitement to decolonization rather than a claim to ownership and authority, or a fetishization of location. Instead of attempting to operationalize food sovereignty as an ethical consumer purchasing guide, those like me, who desire social justice and environmental sustainability, can engage with food sovereignty in efforts of decolonization. Grey and Patel's (2015) vision of food sovereignty as decolonization for example, offers a new way for understanding white settlers place within Indigenous food sovereignty. Grey and Patel (2015: 441) argue that "understanding food sovereignty as an anti-colonial struggle... for the space to imagine social relations differently – is in keeping with the deepest spirit of food sovereignty." Focusing our efforts on our consumption choices undermines the potential that food sovereignty has for decolonization by reasserting neoliberal ideology through consumer choice. Including the ideas offered by Indigenous food sovereignty within our

understanding of the meaning of food sovereignty, moves us towards the possibility of re-imagining our connection to one another, to nature, and to food (Grey and Patel 2015).

Ally-ship was a common topic for discussion during the BC Meal Exchange retreat that I attended during the summer of 2016. As Dawn Morrison explained, the difficulty I and other white settlers feel in discussing topics in relation to Indigenous peoples is a result of our colonial past. It is in accepting this discomfort and engaging in work of decolonization that we can begin to be allies. I see that it is my responsibility as a white settler to be an ally in the fight for Indigenous Food Sovereignty. This responsibility cannot come from guilt but as a response to the acknowledgement that decolonization is my and other white settlers work to do. Dawn Morrison and Abra Brynne introduced me to the decolonizing pledge that had been developed during the B.C. Food Systems Network annual gathering. The pledge consists of a checklist of various things settlers can do to advance the decolonization process. This pledge provides tangible actions that we as white settlers in Canada must participate in as it is our responsibility, as those who have relatively benefited from colonization, to do so.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Issues of rigour in the research process are important to autoethnographers and institutional ethnographers, but these measures are defined somewhat differently than they are in traditional ethnographies (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011; Townsend 1996). Autoethnographies and institutional ethnographies have an inherent truth to them because they express actual lived experiences (Townsend 1996). Questions of validity refer to the usefulness of the story told throughout the autoethnography and to the uses the story can

put to (Bochner 2002). Furthermore, in order to evaluate the generalizability of an autoethnography, one might ask if the story speaks to the readers and if unfamiliar cultural processes are illuminated from the autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner 2000; Ellis & Ellingson 2000).

The analytical findings from this thesis will be useful for various people differently situated in food studies. This research shows the desperate need for those deeply immersed in academic scholarship on food and agricultural to make attempts to reach a wider audience. The increasing sales of fair trade and organic products, the popularity of food documentaries and increased market sales at farmer's markets are just a few examples that suggest people are increasingly interested in food and the way food is produced. Making the knowledge food scholars have attained, in particular the importance of political action and possible political acts, accessible to the general population is crucial for moving new food movements forward. Neoliberalism's tendency to mark us as individuals and to encourage us to manage our identity politics through consumer action, coupled with popular food documentaries encouraging viewers to make change by changing what they eat and creative corporate marketing strategies, has prioritized voting with one's dollar over responding politically. Political responses to injustice in the food system need to become a more prevalent discourse in new food movements and those deeply immersed in food and agriculture academically, are ideal for providing such information.

The analytical findings from this thesis will also be used for creating a blog where I will be committed to a style of writing and language that is understood by the general public. This will allow those who are interested in new food movements, for whatever

reason (be it animal rights, environmental sustainability, unjust working conditions for migrant workers, the use of genetically modified organisms, etc.) to engage in scholarly literature that does not require a post-secondary degree to understand. It is my hope that by sharing my story on this blog, the limitations of consumer action will be visible and others will be encouraged to experience themselves as political subjects. Furthermore, this thesis contributes to the literature on autoethnography and institutional ethnography, which may be of use to others within academia. I hope to encourage other academics to consider such approaches to research and be willing to admit their ignorance of the topic of study.

Finally, in regard to the validity and generalizability of this research I will quote Ellis (2004: 254): “Increased self-understanding sometimes can provide a quicker and more successful route to social change than changing laws or other macropolitical structures, or espousing general cultural-political theories.” It was only through the process of writing this thesis; of (mis)understanding the literature, of privileging the privileged, of failing to see myself as a political subject and then recognizing that failure, that I was able to understand the political potential of new food movements and how to meaningfully participate within such movements. It is my hope that by sharing this experience, others will be able to recognize in their own experiences similarities with and differences from mine, and why this may be the case.

I began my research by asking (how) we as individuals who must consume food daily can consume in a way that aligns with our desire for social justice and environmental sustainability. Drawing on institutional ethnography and autoethnography I have critically and reflexively analyzed my personal experience in attempting to answer

this persisting question. What I came to see was how, if we only attend to consumer action, in the fight for a socially just, environmentally sustainable food system, we reassert ourselves as neoliberal subjects, who feel as though we are purchasing ethically and in that sense, doing the “right” thing. By only attending to consumer action as our method of participating in change, we focus our efforts on consumer choice and making ethical purchases, expecting the label to do the rest of the work. This prohibits us from developing ourselves as political subjects and seeing the importance of engaging in other, more politically based, forms of action. By sharing this journey, I hope to show how the political potential of new food movements are (mis)understood and are instead acted out by attempts at eating ethically. It is through my lived experience that I see the potential for ethical eaters to become politically engaged in new food movements, by focusing their efforts on recognizing the ruling relations that coordinate their understanding and actions and by seeing themselves as political subjects. Furthermore, in creating more accessible and easily understood forms of communication I hope to show those committed to eating ethically (in whatever form this takes for each individual) how their desire connects them, locally and globally, to those fighting for a more socially just and environmentally sustainable food system.

REFERENCES

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. 2010. "The Canadian Consumer Behaviour, Attitudes and Perceptions Toward Food Products." International Markets Bureau, Market Analysis Report, May 2010.
- Akram-Lodhi, A. Haroon. 2015 "Accelerating Towards Food Sovereignty." *Third World Quarterly* 36(3): 563-583.
- Alaimo, Stacy. 2008. Trans-Corporeal Feminisms and the Ethical Space of Nature. *Material feminisms*: 237-264.
- Alaimo, Stacy. 2013. Bring Your Shovel! *A Journal of the Environmental Humanities* 1(1).
- Albritton, Robert. 2012. "Looking through the Political Ecological Lens: Food and the Environmental Crisis." Pp.89-103 in *Critical Perspectives in Food Studies* edited by M. Koc, J. Sumner, and T. Winson Oxford University Press: Ontario.
- Alkon, Alison Hope, and Christie Grace McCullen. 2010. "Whiteness and Farmers Markets: Performances, Perpetuations... Contestations?" *Antipode* 43(4): 937-959.
- Allen, Patricia. 1999. "Reweaving the Food Security Safety Net: Mediating Entitlement and Entrepreneurship." *Agriculture and Human Values* 16: 117-129.
- Anderson, Kip and Keegan Kuhn. 2014. *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret*. A.U.M. Films NS First Spark Media.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. 2001. "Consuming Life." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 1(1): 9-29.
- Beagan, Brenda and Gwen E. Chapman. 2012. "Constructing 'Healthy Eating'/"

- Constructing Self.” Pp. 136-154 in *Critical Perspectives in Food Studies* edited by M. Koc, J. Sumner, and T. Winson Oxford University Press: Ontario.
- Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York: A Division of Random House.
- Blumer, Herbert. 1969. *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspectives and Method*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Bochner, Arthur P. 2002. “Perspectives on inquiry III: The moral of stories.” Pp. 73-101 In *Handbook of interpersonal communication* (3rd ed) edited by Mark L. Knapp and John A. Daly. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Boyatzis, Richard E. 1998. *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Cairns, Kate, Josee Johnston and Norah MacKendrick. 2013. “Feeding the ‘Organic Child’: Mothering Through Ethical Consumption.” *Journal of Consumer Culture* 13(2): 97-118.
- Campbell, Benjamin L., Saneliso Mhlanga and Isabelle Lesschaeve. 2013. “Perception Versus Reality: Canadian Consumer Views of Local and Organic.” *Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics* 61(4): 531-558.
- Campbell, Marie. and Frances Gregor. 2002. *Mapping Social Relations: A Primer in Doing Institutional Ethnography*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Canadian Organic Growers. 2011. “What is Organic?” Retrieved July 11, 2016 (http://www.cog.ca/about_organics/what_is_organics/).
- Canada Organic Trade Association. 2013. “The National Organic Market. Growth, Trends and Opportunities.” (https://ota.com/sites/default/files/indexed_files/COTA_NationalOrganicMarket

- ummay.pdf). Retrieved Feb. 20, 2017.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 1996. "The Search for Meanings- Grounded Theory." Pp. 27-49 in *Rethinking Methods in Psychology* edited by J. A. Smith, R. Harre, and L. Van Langenhove, London: Sage Publications.
- Connolly, William. 2002. *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cook, Daniel T. 2009. "Semantic Provisioning of Children's Food Commerce, Care and Maternal Practice." *Childhood* 16(3): 317-334.
- Denzin, Norman K. 1997. *Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century*. London: Sage Publications.
- Desmarais, Annette. 2002. "Peasants Speak - The Vía Campesina: Consolidating an International Peasant and Farm Movement." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 29 (2):91-124.
- Desmarais, Annette A. 2012. "Building Food Sovereignty: A Radical Framework for Alternative Food Systems." Pp. 359-379 in *Critical Perspectives in Food Studies*, edited by M. Koc, J. Sumner and A. Winson. Mills: Oxford University Press.
- Desmarais, Annette. 2015. "The Gift of Food Sovereignty." *Canadian Food Studies* 2(2): 154-163.
- DeVault, Marjorie L. and Liza McCoy. 2006. "Institutional Ethnography: Using Interviews to Investigate Ruling Relations" Pp. 15-44 in *Institutional Ethnography as Practice* edited by D. Smith. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Dietz, Mary Lorenz, Robert C. Prus, and William Shaffir. 1994. *Doing Everyday Life: Ethnography as Human Lived Experience*. Mississauga, Ontario: Copp Clark

- Longman.
- Dodds, Rachel, Mark Holmes, Vichukan Arunsopha, Nicole Chin, Trang Le, Samantha Maung, and Mimi Shum. 2014. "Consumer Choice and Farmers' Markets." *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 27(3): 397-416.
- DuPuis, E. Melanie. 2000. "Not in My Body: BGH and the Rise of Organic Milk." *Agriculture and Human Values* 17(3): 285-295.
- DuPuis, E. Melanie, and David Goodman. 2005. "Should We Go "Home" to Eat?: Toward a Reflexive Politics of Localism." *Journal of Rural Studies* 21(3): 359-371.
- Eagleton-Pierce, Matthew. 2016. "Historicizing the neoliberal spirit of capitalism." Pp.17-26 in *The Handbook of Neoliberalism* edited by S. Springer, K. Birch and J. MacLeavy. New York: Routledge.
- Edelman, Marc. 2014. "Food Sovereignty: Forgotten Genealogies and Future Regulatory Challenges." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 41(6): 959-978.
- Ellis, Carolyn. 1999. "Heartful Autoethnography." *Qualitative Health Research* 9(5): 669-683.
- Ellis, Carolyn. 2004. *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Ellis, Carolyn and Arthur P. Bochner. 2000. "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity." Pp.733-768 In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ellis, Carolyn and Laura Ellingson. 2000. "Qualitative Methods." Pp. 2287-2296 In *Encyclopedia of Sociology* edited by E. Borgatta and R. Montgomery. New York:

- Macmillan.
- Ellis, Carolyn, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner. 2011. "Autoethnography: An Overview." *Historical Social Research* 36(4): 273-290.
- Finley, Ron. 2013. "Ron Finley: A Guerrilla Gardener in South Central LA." TED website, retrieved Feb. 25, 2017.
(http://www.ted.com/talks/ron_finley_a_guerilla_gardener_in_south_central_la.html).
- Food and Agriculture Organization. 2001. *The State of Food Insecurity*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- Foucault, M. 1982. "The Subject and Power." *Critical Inquiry* 8: 777-795.
- Foucault, Michel. 1995. *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Vintage Books: A Division of Random House, Inc.
- Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder & Herder.
- Gibson-Graham J K. 1996. *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*. Blackwell: Oxford.
- Gibson-Graham J K. 2006. *A Postcapitalist Politics*. London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gimenez, Eric Holt and Annie Shattuck. 2011. Food Crisis, Food Regimes and Food Movements: Rumbblings of Reform or Tides of Transformation? *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 38(1): 109-144.
- Glaser, Barney and Strauss, Anselm. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. New York: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Gray, John. 1996. *After Social Democracy*. London: Demos.

- Greco, Monica. 1993. "Psychosomatic Subjects and the 'Duty to be Well'. Personal Agency Within." *Economy and Society* 22(3): 357-372.
- Grey, Sam and Raj Patel. 2015. "Food Sovereignty as Decolonization: Some Contributions from Indigenous Movements to Food System and Development Politics." *Agriculture and Human Values* 32:431-444.
- Guido, Gianluigi, M. Irene Prete, Alessandro M. Peluso, R. Christian Maloumy-Baka, and Carolina Buffa. 2010. "The Role of Ethics and Product Personality in the Intention to Purchase Organic Food Products: a Structural Equation Modeling Approach." *International Review of Economics* 57(1): 79-102.
- Guthman, Julie. 2007a. The Polanyian Way? Voluntary Food Labels as Neoliberal Governance. *Antipode* 39(3): 456-478.
- Guthman, Julie. 2007b. "Commentary on Teaching Food: Why I am Fed Up with Michael Pollan et al." *Agriculture and Human Values* 24(2): 261-264.
- Health Canada. 2016. "About Health Canada" Retrieved Feb. 20, 2017. (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/index-eng.php>).
- Hollander, Gail M. 2003. "Re-naturalizing Sugar: Narratives of Place, Production and Consumption." *Social & Cultural Geography* 4(1): 59- 74.
- Holt, Nicholas L. 2003. "Representation, Legitimation, and Autoethnography: An Autoethnographic Writing Story." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 2(1): 18-28.
- Holt, Georgina and Matthew Reed. 2006. *Sociological Perspectives of Organic Agriculture: From Pioneer to Policy*. Gateshead: Athenaeum Press.
- Hughner, Renee S., Pierre McDonagh, Andrea Prothero, Clifford Shultz J. and Julie

- Stanton. 2007. "Who are Organic Food Consumers? A Compilation and Review of Why People Purchase Organic Food." *Journal of Consumer Behavior* 6(2-3):94-110.
- Hyde, Kenneth F. 2000. "Recognizing Deductive Processes in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 3(2): 82-90.
- Jarosz, Lucy. 2014. "Comparing Food Security and Food Sovereignty Discourses." *Dialogues in Human Geography* 4(2): 168-181.
- Johnston, Josee. 2008. "The Citizen-Consumer Hybrid: Ideological Tensions and the Case of Whole Foods Market." *Theory and Society* 37(3): 229–270.
- Johnston, Josee and Shyon Baumann. 2010. *Foodies: Democracy and distinction in the gourmet foodscape*. New York: Routledge.
- Johnston, Josee, Michelle Szabo, and Alexandra Rodney. 2011. "Good Food Good People: Understanding the Cultural Repertoire of Ethical Eating." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 11(3): 293-318.
- Kemmis, Stephen, and Robin McTaggart. 2000. "Participatory Action Research." Pp. 559-603 in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kenneth F. Hyde. 2000. "Recognizing Deductive Processes in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 3(2): 82 – 90.
- Kerkvliet, Benedict J. 2009. Everyday Politics in Peasant Societies (and ours). *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 36(1): 227-243.
- Knezevic, Irena. 2012. "Labels and Governance: Promises, Failures and Deceptions of Food Labelling." Pp. 247-259 In *Critical Perspectives in Food Studies* edited by

- M. Koc, J. Sumner, and T. Winson Oxford University Press: Ontario.
- Lappé, Frances Moore, Joseph Collins, and Peter Rosset. 1998. *World hunger: 12 myths*. New York: Grove Press.
- Lasch, Christopher. 1979. *Culture of Narcissism*. New York: Warner.
- Lavin, Chad. 2009. "The Year of Eating Politically." *Theory & Event* 12(2).
- Lavin, Chad. 2013. *Eating Anxiety: The Perils of Food Politics*. University of Minnesota.
- Levy, Paul and Ann Bar. 1984. *The Official Foodie Handbook (Be Modern-Worship Food)*. New York: Timbre Books.
- Lewin, Kurt. 1947. "Feedback problems of social diagnosis in action." *Human Relations* 1(2): 147-153.
- May, Tim. 1993. *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- McMahon, Martha. 2013. "What Food is to be Kept Safe and for Whom? Food-Safety Governance in an Unsafe Food System." *Laws* 2(4): 401-427.
- McMichael, Philip. 2013. "Historicizing Food Sovereignty: A Food Regime Perspective." Paper presented at the Conference on Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue, Yale University, September 14–15, 2013.
- Mead, George. 1934. *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Meadows, Donella H., Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers and William W. Behrens III. 1972. *The Limits to Growth*. New York: The New American Library, Inc.
- Neem, Johann N. 2016. "Coming Down from the Clouds: On Academic Writing." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- O'Malley, Pat. 1996. "Risk and Responsibility." Pp. 189-207 in *Foucault and Political*

- Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Government* edited by A. Barry, T. Osborne, N. S. Rose. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Patel, Raj. 2009. "Food sovereignty." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 36(3): 663-706.
- Payne, Tim. 2002. "US Farmers Markets, 2000: A Study of Emerging Trends." *Journal of Food Distribution Research* 33(1):173-175.
- Pillow, Wanda. 2003. "Confession, Catharsis, or Cure? Rethinking the Uses of Reflexivity as Methodological Power in Qualitative Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 16(2): 175-196.
- Pinker, Steven. 2014. "Why Academics Stink at Writing." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*:1-14.
- Pollan, Michael. 2006. *The Omnivore's Dilemma A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: The Penguin Press.
- Princen, Thomas, Michael F. Maniates and Ken Conca. 2002. *Confronting Consumption*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Prus, Robert.1994. "Approaching the Study of Human Group Life: Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Inquiry." Pp.10-29 in *Doing Everyday Life: Ethnography as Human Lived Experience*, edited by M. L. Dietz, R. Prus and W. Shaffir. Mississauga, Ontario: Copp Clark Longman.
- Robert, Kenner. 2008. *Food Inc.* Magnolia Pictures.
- Roberts, Wayne. 2013. *The No-Nonsense Guide to World Food: New Edition*. Ontario: New Internationalist.
- Taber, Nancy. 2012. *Beginning with the Self to Critique the Social: Critical Researchers as Whole Beings*. INTECH Open Access Publisher.

- Tomich, Dale. 2004. *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and the World Economy*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Townsend, Elizabeth. 1996. "Institutional Ethnography: A Method for Showing how the Context Shapes Practice." *The Occupational Therapy Journal of Research* 16(3): 179-199.
- Schlosser, Eric. 2001. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Shattuck, Annie and Eric Holt-Gimenez. 2010. "Moving from Food Crisis to Food Sovereignty." *Yale Human Rights and Development Journal* 13(2): 421-434.
- Shaw, Deirdre, and Edward Shiu. 2002. "The Role of Ethical Obligation and Self-Identity in Ethical Consumer Choice." *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 26(2): 109-116.
- Shiva, Vandana. 2016. *The violence of the green revolution: Third world agriculture, ecology, and politics*. Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky.
- Shugart, Helene A. 2014. "Food Fixations: Reconfiguring Class in Contemporary US Food Discourse." *Food, Culture & Society* 17(2): 261-281.
- Smith, Dorothy E. 1987. *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Smith Dorothy E. 1990. *Texts, Facts, and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, Dorothy E. 1999. *Writing the Social: Critique, Theory, and Investigations*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Smith, Dorothy E. 2005. *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People*. Lanham:

- Altamira Press.
- Smith, Dorothy. 2008. "Making change from below." *Socialist Studies* 3(2): 7-30.
- Spurlock, Morgan. 2004. *Supersize Me. The Con.*
- Strauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin. 1994. "Grounded Theory Methodology." Pp.217-285
in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln.
Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Vía Campesina. 1996a. "Tlaxcala Declaration of the Vía Campesina." Reprinted in
Proceedings of the II International Conference of the Vía Campesina [1996].
- Vía Campesina. 1996b. "The Right to Produce and Access to Land." Presented at the
World Food Summit, November 11-17,1996. Rome, Italy.
- Wiebe, Nettie and Kevin Wipf. 2011. "Nurturing Food Sovereignty in Canada" Pp. 1-19
in *Food Sovereignty in Canada* edited by H. Wittman, A. A. Desmarais, and N.
Wiebe. Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- Wittman, Hannah, Annette Desmarais, and Nettie Wiebe. 2010. "The Origins and
Potential of Food Sovereignty." *Food sovereignty: Reconnecting Food, Nature
and Community* 1-14.
- Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (WGIFS). "Indigenous Food Systems
Network: Indigenous Food Sovereignty." Retrieved Feb. 25, 2017.
(<http://www.indigenousfoodsystems.org/food-sovereignty>).
- World Bank. 1986. *Poverty and Hunger: Issues and Options for Food Security in
Developing Countries. Washington: The International Bank for Reconstruction
and Development/The World Bank.*
- Yiridoe, Emmanuel K., Samuel Bonti-Ankomah and Ralph C. Martin. 2005.

“Comparison of Consumer Perceptions and Preference Toward Organic Versus Conventionally Produced Foods: A Review and Update of the Literature.”

Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems 20(04): 193-205.

Young, Iris Marion. 2003. *Political responsibility and structural injustice*. University of Kansas, Department of Philosophy.

Zukin, Sharon. 2004. *Point of Purchase: How Shopping Changed American Culture*.

New York: Routledge.

APPENDIX A

Summary of research questions that emerged from phase one of analysis:

1. Does the organic label just tell consumers that this product was produced from a company that can afford to label their product as organic?
2. What would be the lesser risk, purchasing honey with the certified organic label and potentially supporting a large corporation who pay their workers a low wage, or purchasing honey without the certified organic label to avoid supporting large corporations and risking the product containing harmful chemicals from inorganic pesticides?
3. If a product is organically produced, does it matter what retail outlet it is purchased at?
4. Which organic certification parties are credible? What are each of their standards? How strict are they with ensuring that producers are meeting these standards?
5. What is the “true” goal of food sovereignty?
6. How can the general public decipher between these “true” meanings of food sovereignty and those put forth by “powerful interests”? How can we make sure we don’t fall into a reworked version of food sovereignty when we attempt to practice it in our day-to-day lives?
7. Whose needs should we be including in our decisions around food consumption and how can we know what their needs are?
8. Does it matter if food has been grown locally and or organically if it has been grown

on indigenous land?

9. Whose responsibility is it to provide the means to fulfill the basic human right to food?

Does the nutritional content of this food matter? Does the treatment of the producers of this food matter?

10. Food sovereignty is presented in the literature as a global collective movement but can an individual act out food sovereignty on a day to day basis?