

Queering Food Sovereignty: “It Feels like Building Community; to Joyfully Gather Around Food”

By

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to fill the current gap in food sovereignty literature by bringing queer farmers perspectives and voices into the academic discourse. The focus of the analysis is if queer farmers in Canada are practicing a distinct form of food sovereignty, and if so, does it vary from the current transnational movement. To accomplish this goal, a phenomenological methodology was employed, and seven participants were invited to an interview to reflect on a range of questions and highlight pertinent topics.

The interview process was supported by a literature review that captured works in food sovereignty, food justice, and the historical rise of food security. Similarly, topics such as queer farmers and queer people in rural settings were reviewed to identify themes in the literature and to be used as cross-references for a more thorough analysis.

The findings of this thesis support the well documented themes of queer farmers experiences in agriculture as it relates to education, access, and security. Based on this study's findings, the thesis concludes that currently there is not an explicitly distinct queer food sovereignty practice in Canada, but that the prospect for a queering process of the movement exists.

Keywords: Food Sovereignty; Queer Farmer; Phenomenology; Food Justice; Rural; Agriculture

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The food sovereignty movement has spent a considerable portion of its existence calling into question the current state of the food system. At its most fundamental level, food sovereignty refers to the right of communities, people, and states to determine their own agricultural policies and food systems (Beuchelt and Vichow, 2012, p. 259.). Food sovereignty perspectives began to take shape in broader political discourse during the mid-1980s. Since, it has been at the basis of policy decisions, and there has been a rise in social movements rooted in changing the food system, including heated debates on its conceptual limits and applicability in a range of contexts (Edelman et al., 2014, p. 911.). Despite food sovereignty's emergence into the political discourse, researchers, such as Li (2015) have argued the movement is plagued with problems around its applicability to specific contexts due to its broad conceptualization and generalizations, which has led to questions about its ability to draw in constituents to the cause and properly address the case specific needs of diverse populations whilst under a capitalist system (Li, 2015, p. 206.). The idea of a large, relatively generic, and optimistic food movement (Li, 2015, p. 206.) appears to draw in the idealism that is needed to fuel its survival but raises questions about how specific segments of the population, such as queer people, may identify with the movement, use it to develop their own food system models, and support the overarching goals of food sovereignty.

This thesis seeks to examine a segment of the population that is often overlooked and rarely discussed in modern food sovereignty literature: queer farmers. For this study, queer farmers are considered queer people who work in agriculture, through food production, by either working on a farm they own or as staff for one they are employed at. Queer farmers are a relatively understudied area of research that have only recently become a field of study for agricultural researchers and queer theorists, such as Leslie (2017). The duality of participating in a heteropatriarchal industry such as agriculture (Leslie, 2019, p. 929.) and a queer farmers' identity has been characterized as antagonistic due to the perceived intolerance of rural agrarian communities that reside outside the queer inclusive urban cores (Leslie, 2017, p. 30.). This study will bring attention to the experiences and perspectives of queer farmers across Canada, how they describe their agricultural practices, and how they fit into the broader discourse of the food system.

1.1 Research Question, Objectives, and Rationale

The focus of this research is the relatively untapped research area of queer farmers in the food sovereignty movement. Ultimately, this research work seeks to identify if there is a distinctly queer food sovereignty and what it looks like. The following questions will illuminate how queer farmers identify in the current conceptualization of food sovereignty, if a broader food movement aligns with their distinct needs and identities, and if queer farmers have organized themselves in a way that would facilitate the adoption of a collective movement.

This research will seek to understand:

- Is there a queer food sovereignty movement in Canada?

The above question is supported with the following research sub-questions:

1. Do queer farmers identify as practicing food sovereignty?
2. Do the principles of the food sovereignty movement align with those of queer farmers?
3. How does the food sovereignty movement facilitate the sustainability and growth of queer farmers?
4. Are queer farmers part of other food movements?

The research questions for this study are answered through a phenomenological research method using interviews with queer farmers from across Canada. The use of phenomenological research allows for queer farmers to speak directly to their lived experiences and give responses that are not limited by structured questions that push responses in a certain direction. In addition, a supplementary objective to this research is to provide another platform for queer farmers to speak to their lived experiences in agriculture and their identities within this sector, and their own overall objectives in this space.

1.2 Defining the Issue and Scope

Literature in the space of food systems and different marginalized communities has frequently focused on theoretical landscapes surrounding race, class, and gender, and this research project seeks to expand that space. Some examples of previous research are reflected in the significant body of feminist literature that has emerged to discuss multiple facets of agriculture and agri-governance as they specifically relate to gender disparity (Harcourt, 2016; Croppenstedt et al., 2013; Ponnusamy, Das, Bonny, & Mishara, 2014). These historical works that examine gender have not explicitly discussed the unique perspectives and lived experiences of queer people and where their identity and existence in the queer community intersect in agriculture. The study of race and its intersections with agriculture have become more prevalent amongst academics, with pieces such as Horst and Marion (2019) who examine farm ownership throughout the United States by race, to understand the historical disenfranchisement of other marginalized people from the food system (p. 1). Another dominant body of literature is the critical examination of food security and its ability as a concept to promote sustainability and growth in the agricultural sector (Sachs & Patel-Campillo, 2014). The intersections of race and class are important elements in food system literature and present substantive critical reflections on its inequality. This thesis will focus on self-identifying members of the queer community and will not explicitly elaborate on intersections of race and class.

This research project is not to critique the work of feminist and other scholars alike that have contributed immensely to food system literature, it is to illuminate the areas that have gone relatively untapped. Seldom does the topic of queer people and their role in the food system receive the same kind of legitimate attention. This aligns with the works of Leslie (2017) and Wypler (2019) who have researched the topic of queer farmers in agriculture. Leslie (2017) addresses the questions of how the sustainable agriculture movement has largely ignored the contributions of queer farmers and how the LGBTQ+ community have been disconnected from the queer people who occupy rural spaces (p. 30). Leslie (2017) notes that moving forward, the sustainable agricultural movement must begin to utilize the experiences of queer farmers “to further interrogate how sexuality shapes our food futures” (p. 30). Similarly, Wypler (2019) investigated agricultural focused human resources available to queer farmers, and the rampant heteropatriarchal forces that have limited access to a range of resources for queer farmers (p. 960). The contributions of Wypler’s (2019) work highlights the burgeoning need for data on queer farmers and their experiences in agriculture.

1.3 Organization of Thesis

This thesis is structured in the following way to properly address its research questions and highlight the pertinent themes that emerge. First, a background section highlights the historical significance of the rise of food sovereignty. This background will include a brief overview of food security to highlight the importance of food sovereignty’s emergence in the wake of new food secure policies. This history is followed by a literature review that will outline the contributions of other academics to the space of queer farmers and food sovereignty. Topics will range from case specific articles that highlight the evolution of the concepts to broad discourses on the theoretical implications of food sovereignty. A conceptual framework centred around food sovereignty as an organizing concept will follow the literature review. Using food sovereignty as a conceptual framework is done to analyze food sovereignty and interrogate the multiple facets of the movement as a concept. The methodology section will introduce phenomenology to readers and its importance in this study, as well as its methods and functionality in the study. The findings of the research will be presented and the relevant themes that emerged. Following the presentation of findings, a discussion chapter will analyze the themes to address the research questions. This research will conclude with a synthesize of the project and a reflection on its contributions and areas of future investigation.

1.4 Positionality Statement

The lack of research on this topic leads me to reflect deeper upon myself and my own lived experiences as a member of the queer community and a farmer. This has led me to my interest in examining the food sovereignty movement and queer people. Upon preparation of my thesis, I took time to reflect on my identity, lived experiences, and potential biases. My identity as a queer person has only recently become something that I put at the forefront of my interactions. Prior to my queer identity being embraced, people would often identify me as a farmer, based on my

family's background and business. I have woven these two identities into one that drives my research. Elements of my identity that I must continually include is my economic status, race, and gender.

Queer Identity

I have recently embraced my identity as a queer person in the past five years. I have always known that this part of my being existed, but never formally addressed it. As I have embraced and dissected my queer identity, I have applied it to my research interests. I apply queer theory into as many research projects I conduct or discussions I am in. Through this process I have come to realize that queer theory and queer identity are often overlooked in research and academic discussions. This realization has encouraged me to produce more work on queer identity and theory in underrepresented demographics and contexts. This approach has caused me to challenge my own biases rooted in systemic forces such as the heteropatriarchy, a process of unlearning and learning.

Farmer Identity

As a farmer, I have gained all my skills through knowledge sharing and hands on experiences. Being raised on a farm, I have learned all my lessons from mentors in my family. Techniques, styles, and methods to producing food are taught by those who have done it for generations and learned from mostly trial and error. This upbringing has affected how I conduct research. I see value in participant observation research methods that tap the knowledge of the participants. This is also tied to my hands-on experience. I learned through witnessing and reproducing the methods my mentors have taught me. Because of this, I see the importance of being present while conducting my research and reaching out to those in the communities I am interested in and learning/researching from them. My preferred method of conducting research is pursuing contacts with those involved in my field of interest and casting a narrow research net to capture those directly involved.

My two identities are impacted by four factors: class, race, ability, and gender. As a cisgender white male in the farming and queer community, I am very privileged. I do not experience the same oppressive forces that people of color or differently abled people do. This is important to actively monitor and unlearn, as I can approach topics in agriculture or queer theory with my own lived experiences, and assume they are universal for all in those communities. Farmers and queer people who are not cisgendered white males face significant barriers that I have not had to experience. These barriers range from a family that is accepting of their identity to financial support.

Chapter 2: Background

To better understand the evolution of the food sovereignty movement and how it is applied in case specific contexts as both an organizing principle and a policy initiative, it is important to understand what influenced its creation and political objectives. This section will provide a comprehensive overview of the history of food security and its rise in the global arena, and how food sovereignty emerged from peasant initiatives, to push against it. Similarly, the food justice movement will be presented. It is important to note that food justice as a movement has a relatively fluid history and the background section on this movement provides a high-level overview and highlight some of its guiding ideals and areas of focus. This background section will prime readers with the historical importance of each movement and the important roles food security played in the development and strategic vision of food sovereignty.

2.1 Food Security: Historical Antecedents

The call for food security emerged following WWII when the United Nations and its agriculture wing the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was first formed in 1945 (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). The mandate of the FAO was aimed at increasing agricultural productivity, raising levels of nutrition and the standard of living (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). Following WWII, geographic regions that were fraught with social, economic, and political unrest before the war were experiencing a heightened state on all fronts, and this was most prominent amongst regions whose economy was supported primarily by agrarian communities (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). Regions, such as Asia, went from net food exporter to net food importer (Sassi, n.p., 2018). During this post-war period, the dominant development discourse had largely ignored theoretical and analytical frameworks for agrarian peasant societies (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). Political figures throughout global North countries and organizations such as the FAO maintained that solutions must emphasize production and supply capabilities in the agrarian societies (Sassi, 2018, n.p.).

The 1950's were marked by mass industrialization of developing countries' agricultural sectors, and the beginning of the food aid program to dispose of food surpluses to food deficit regions (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). The 1960's remained dominated by supply driven food resolutions, with the emergence of modernization theory (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). This decade was the first to see transnational organizations and global North countries such as the United States push for mass industrialization and technological advancement in global South countries (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). Modernization theory rooted itself in the dominant discourse and framed resolutions to developing countries problems through a trickle-down process (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). In the agrarian arena, some proponents of the theory argued for its applicability to large scale farms, in which larger farm operations would adopt technological advancements and smaller ones would later accept them (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). These opinions have been deeply contested and as further sections will note, did not result in any of the purported benefits. During this decade, the World Food Programme was created in which food surplus countries, predominantly developed, would explore options to use their surplus to encourage economic and technological development in food importing countries,

and from this programme, these countries signed the Food Aid Convention in 1967, which legally bound them to provide a minimum amount of food aid (Sassi, 2018, n.p.).

The 1970's experienced significant economic downturns caused by oil price increases, a deterioration of tropical export demands, global droughts, and the breakdown of the Bretton Wood System (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). This period led to volatility in the global economy and food stockpiles; developing countries that expanded their food export market through financial and technological development programs were quickly shifting back to net importers. The 1970's led into what is characterized as the 'lost decade' (1980's), a point in time which developing countries experienced a rapid onset economic recession (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). The oil crisis of 1979 led to a drastic reduction in export markets and a steady decline in developed countries importing goods (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). Developing countries were hit the hardest, many of them were also recipients of large loans destined for low productivity projects (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). Developing countries were now experiencing worsening credit, shrinking economies, and budget deficits (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). In response to this harrowing economic state, developed countries, and organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, and World Bank pursued structural adjustment programs. These programs, in short, took the shape of loans that required partnering countries to remove tariffs on imported goods, elimination of state regulated prices, a privatization of industry, subsidy removal, and a sharp reduction in public spending (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). Structural adjustment programs did not capture and were antithetical to small holder farmers who could not compete on the world export market without the support of state subsidies and led to large agricultural companies beginning to encroach on these weak and shrinking operations (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). The experiences of small-scale farmers during these times is best characterized by three indicators that were observed in Tunisia: substantial debt amongst small-scale farmers, mass exodus of families from rural to urban regions in search of work, and liquidation of small-scale properties or subsistence farming (Jouili, 2009, p. 12). The 70s and 80s have been described by some as decades of "agricultural neglect" (Bush, 1994, p.17), due to the interventions of Western forces. This new approach to economic survival and attempted revival saw a stark shift from the original conceptualization that food security was rooted in supply, and now following the revitalization of neoliberal economic policies, food security had been reframed as a lack of capital or access to food markets (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). Production no longer signaled consumption, and it was assumed that new markets were needed for consumption.

The mid to late 1990's saw a revitalization of food security discourse with researchers and policy makers arguing for greater recognition of the need for a comprehensive approach (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). The year 1996 was earmarked by the World Food Summit (WFS), and an incremental shift from the dominant food system discourse (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). The WFS saw a reaffirmation of everyone's right to have safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and for all to be free from hunger (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). The WFS diverged from other global summits, with the acknowledgement of the importance of NGOs in the global food arena (Sassi, 2018, n.p.).

NGOs highlighted the negative impact of the IMF and World Bank, and the need to move away from food import dependency. The ‘Rome Declaration on World Food Security’ was the written culmination of NGO’s, including La Via Campesina, frustration and desire for reformation; it sent a strong political message that the current transnational approach to food security was no longer working, and national and local level action must be prioritized (Sassi, 2018, n.p.).

Despite this message being echoed throughout the global food arena, the FAO affirmed their stance on food security and defined it as “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (World Food Summit 1996, FAO 2008, p. 1.). It is important to note that while the FAO and other transnational organizations were holding these conferences, La Via Campesina was taking shape and formed in 1993, in Mons, Belgium, through the collaboration of 46 representatives from a range of peasant, Indigenous, and worker centered agricultural organizations (Desmarais and Nicholson, 2013, p. 3.). In the following years, La Via Campesina would become one of the primary vehicles pushing the food sovereignty discourse through the global arena.

The following decades are described as the ‘new food millennium’ a period plastered with economic and food crisis, exacerbated by public debt, social unrest, and financial turmoil, which led to uncontrolled fluctuations in food price indexes (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). Despite calls to alter the current approach to food security programs, the volatility of the new millennium caused a vast majority of financial capabilities to be spent on maintaining domestic markets in developed countries, as well as stem military conflicts globally (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). Following the financial crisis of 2008, governments began to question the validity of previous neoliberal approaches to food security but have refrained from fully addressing the calls made during 1996 and pursuing new methods to combat food insecurity (Sassi, 2018, n.p.). The history of food security points at a broader liberalization of state, local, and international level market focused approaches to the food system. Food crises were reframed as all stemming from similar problems, such as a lack of capital, access to export and import markets, and publicly funded or secured national food systems.

2.2 Food Sovereignty

The history of food sovereignty is one that is depicted as a movement that rose to combat and undermine the oppressive liberalized food system that was being propped up by a free market approach. Despite the relatively undisputed history of food security, food sovereignty has a less fluid and agreed upon chronological order. Food sovereignty is most reported as emerging during the late 1980’s and early 1990’s (Edelman, 2014, p. 962.). The term ‘food autonomy’ was first used in 1988 in peasant groups throughout Costa Rica, who were members of the Atlantic Region Small Agriculturalists Union, a union that some of its leaders later left and helped form La Via Campesina (Edelman, 2014, p. 962.). Other early mentions of food sovereignty were documented in Costa Rica during 1991, when rural activists were raising discontent over the dumping of food

surpluses and a demand for sovereignty for exports (Edelman, 2014, p. 962.). At a transnational level, food sovereignty was first introduced by La Via Campesina in 1996, at their second international conference (Wittman et al., 2010, p. 2.). Attendees were frustrated with the approach food security had taken in addressing food issues, emphasizing market access and maximization of production, and they presented a radical alternative in food sovereignty (Wittman et al., 2010, p. 2.).

In a speech at the World Food Summit in 1996, La Via Campesina stated that “[f]ood sovereignty is the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity. We have the right to produce our own food in our own territory. Food sovereignty is a precondition to genuine food security.” (Via Campesina 1996, in Patel 2009, p. 665.). This definition sparked further dialogue around the framing of food-based issues as a rights issue. The discourse around food based issues as rights issues was spoken to in the later definition in 2002 in which food sovereignty was defined as: “a right of people to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self-reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets; and to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources. Food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather, it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy, and ecologically sustainable production.” (Peoples Food Sovereignty Network, in Patel 2009, p. 666.). From this point on, the history of food sovereignty is one of a broad expansion of ideals and interpretations, and no clear linkages to policy changes. Food sovereignty has grown to international magnitude with several organizations adopting the concept as an organizing principle. Academics have gone on to examine the movement as an organizing concept and how it has been applied in specific cases and the relatively fluid nature in which it operates.

La Via Campesina has gone to write extensively on the importance of food sovereignty and provide critical reflections on the years since its inception. These include a revitalized definition that was referenced in their 2021 publication: *Food Sovereignty, a Manifesto for the Future of Our Planet*. The definition reads as:

“the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.” (La Via Campesina, 2021, n.p.).

A crucial contribution to the food sovereignty movement was the Declaration of Nyéléni, in 2007. This declaration, expanded off of the holistic definition of food sovereignty by providing a

thorough list of demands, including guiding principles for the world (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007, p. 1). Some of these principles include:

“...recognition and respect of women’s roles and rights in food production, and representation of women in all decision making bodies;

...all peoples in each of our countries are able to live with dignity, earn a living wage for their labour and have the opportunity to remain in their homes;

...where food sovereignty is considered a basic human right, recognised and implemented by communities, peoples, states and international bodies;” (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007, p. 2).

These principles provide a much more thorough conceptualization of food sovereignty and have been referred to and expanded upon in later iterations of the declaration, such as in 2015 when it was affirmed by delegates representing agroecology organizations and movements. The full declaration has been included as appendix item, refer to Appendix D.

2.3 Food Justice

The food justice movement can be defined as “justice for all in the food system, whether producers, farmworkers, processors, workers, eaters, or communities” (Gottlieb and Joshi, 2010, in Pugh, 2017, p. 343.). Food justice raises issues of food insecurity, public health concerns such as obesity, food deserts and food waste (Pugh, 2017, p. 343.). Food justice advocates “note that low-income and minority communities often lack economic and geographic access to healthy, desirable, and culturally appropriate foods, resulting in higher incidents of diet-related health problems” (Pugh, 2017, p. 343.). This is seen in how accessible fresh whole foods are to low-income communities of colour compared to high-income communities (Pugh, 2017, p. 344.). Similarly, food justice looks at issues focusing on the production side of the food system. This includes labour standards, access to farm programs and grants, and other industrialization and consolidation of farms pushing out small scale farmers (Pugh, 2017, p. 345.). Food justice as a movement is a culmination of production, consumption, and distribution focused issues that seeks to create a more equitable food system in low-income and marginalized communities. Both food sovereignty and food justice share similarities in their principles and values, whilst food justice has embedded itself within the Global North and urban centres.

Summary

The spark of food security initiatives following WWII saw a dramatic shift in how countries throughout the global South produced and imported food. The decades following the development of organizations such as the FAO and food aid programming were fraught with economic and food system instability as global South countries attempted to grapple with these new approaches. The problems with these new initiatives became readily apparent and through

these realizations, saw the rise of counterculture movements such as food sovereignty in the 1980's. Food sovereignty sought to undo the rise of food security and import and export heavy food programming, whilst also revitalizing states' connection to food. While food sovereignty evolved and gained global recognition, food justice homed in on issues of public health and food insecurity, predominantly amongst communities' scattered throughout the global North.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This literature review utilizes an integrative approach to support the analysis of the research questions presented earlier by examining directly or closely related areas of research. The University of Victoria library database, and Google Scholar were used as the primary search engines to identify relevant articles and analyses that could be reviewed and examined for this thesis. The following terms were used to screen in literature for a more comprehensive analysis of their content and applicability to this research: Queer, Farmer, Agriculture, LGBT, Gay, Lesbian, Rural, Farming, Food, Food Sovereignty, Food Justice, Food Security, and Food System. Secondary sources, or grey literature, were also reviewed to determine applicability to research. This included blog posts to food sovereignty organizations. Key phrases such as “queer farmers”, “food sovereignty”, and “food justice”, yielded the greatest results in finding relevant articles, but also broad enough to explore peripheral subjects to provide a thorough examination.

There is limited literature on queer food sovereignty, both in terms of queer participation in the movement and their practices. Thus, this literature review contains food sovereignty literature more broadly. To supplement this, literature on queer farmers is reviewed and presented in an effort to highlight the unique experiences and history of queer farmers, and how they may experience the farming industry differently than their hetero counterparts. As well, prominent pieces of literature on food justice are reviewed to understand if there are any intersections with queer farmers.

3.1 Food Movements: Radical and Progressive

The work of Eric Holt-Gimenez and Annie Shattuck (2011) capture the divergence between the two food movements used in this research: food justice and food sovereignty. Food movements are described by Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) as being either “progressive” or “radical” trends, with food justice aligning with the notion of progressive and food sovereignty falling into the camp of radical (p. 115). Progressive trends/food movements are described as “advance practical alternatives to industrial agri-foods, such as sustainable, agroecological and organic agriculture and farmer–consumer community food networks – largely within the economic and political frameworks of existing capitalist food systems. This is often coupled with calls for the right to food and food justice for marginalized groups self-defined by ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status, or the desire for pleasure, quality, and authenticity in the food system” (Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck, 2011, p. 115). Comparatively, “radical” is understood as “calls for food systems change on the basis of rights, but focuses much more on entitlements, structural reforms to markets and property regimes, and class-based, redistributive demands for land, water and resources, as captured in the notion of food sovereignty” (Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck, 2011, p. 115). Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) observe that the progressive food movement is more common within local/alternative food systems, whereas radical food movements excel in more militant, national and international political advocacy (p. 116).

The progressive trend is most prevalent in northern countries and amongst middle and

working classes, with a particular appeal to youth (Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck, 2011, p. 124). The key actors who comprise the progressive trend (food justice) are a blend of environmental justice and community food security organizations that work to support the needs of people of colour and underserved communities who have been neglected by racism and classism within the capitalist food system (Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck, 2011, p. 124). With a strong base of university students and youth, the progressive trend is most active in local and national arenas but are still aware of the corporate regime plaguing the food system (Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck, 2011, p. 124). Progressive food movements are most effective at building community responses to solve local problems, but this approach also hinders its ability to properly address structural forces and creates a 'patchwork' of localized policy solutions that may not coordinate effectively and address systemic issues creating the problems (Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck, 2011, p. 125).

The radical trend diverges from its progressive counterpart and seeks to overhaul the structure of the current food system, remove corporate monopolies over food, redistribute land, enhance community rights, and equity throughout the system (Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck, 2011, p. 129). The actors within the radical trend are often agrarian and labour organizations, with the most prominent one being La Via Campesina, an amalgamation of 148 organizations across 69 countries (Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck, 2011, p.129). The main vehicle for food system changes by radical trends is working at the national and international level, advocating for the food sovereignty agenda, as well as having this advocacy work through community organizations fighting for redistribution of land, market regulation, and guaranteed prices at the local level (Holt-Gimenez, 2011, p. 130).

3.2 Food Sovereignty's Ambiguity

As globalization has manifested itself within every facet of modern society, and with the encroaching impacts of climate change, concerns around the stability and sustainability of the current food system have been raised (Portman, 2018; Leslie 2019 & 2017; Epting 2018; Li, 2015). The first theme that has emerged when reviewing food sovereignty literature, is that it is arguably a fluid concept and movement that has allowed for broad interpretations and applications. Though its list of principles and demands might be well articulated in works such as the Nyéléni Declaration, tangible policy outcomes and shifts connected to these principles have been a source of criticism. This has caused it to be widely adopted as a guiding principle but also face critiques for its ambiguity and relatively lax approach to explicit actions for system change. The concept of food sovereignty has been defined as the right of people to control of their food production and distribution systems and culturally appropriate food (Wittman et al., 2010, p. 2.). Food sovereignty's initial objectives focus on returning control of the food system over to the local and national level, sustainable agricultural practices, and an emphasis on marginalized folks' contributions to agriculture (Portman, 2018; Leslie 2019 & 2017; Epting 2018; Li, 2015). It has been argued that small holder and peasant food producers are the best vehicle to achieve these goals (Beuchelt and Vichow, 2012, p. 259.). Smallholder and peasant food producers are the base of altering the food system and this can be done through regaining control over the productive

forces in the food system (Beuchelt and Vichow, 2012, p. 264.). Food sovereignty does not often deal with consumers, and its focus when addressing the role of consumers, is to argue for accessible, local, healthy, and culturally appropriate food (Beuchelt and Vichow, 2012, p. 264.). The relationship consumers have to producers under the food sovereignty movement, is the right to consumers to choose what they want to eat, and how and by whom (Beuchelt and Vichow, 2012, p. 264.). This set of consumer rights can often run antagonistically to those of the producer and food sovereignty (Beuchelt & Vichow, 2012, p. 264.). This antagonism is seen in consumers' abilities to purchase what they want and from who they want; compared to the emphasis of localized food systems run by smallholder farmers (Beuchelt and Vichow, 2012, p. 264.). This antagonism can be witnessed in the current demand from consumers for a range of available food products that might not be suitable to grow in local climates or may be out of season (Beuchelt and Vichow, 2012, p. 264). Under a food sovereignty system, consumers may become restricted in their choices and a lack of availability for certain products may evolve – frustrating consumers who are accustomed to a range of products all year round (Beuchelt and Vichow, 2012, p. 264). Despite the conflicting understandings and applications of food sovereignty, the concept has acted as the framework for new social movements to thrive and been the backbone for organizations seeking to decentralize the food systems control (Edelman, 2014; Portman, 2018).

Another area that the food sovereignty literature could benefit from further examination is its applicability to reducing poverty and hunger, and its adoption in urban settings (Beuchelt and Vichow, 2012, p. 265.). As Li (2015) articulates, “Much of the mobilization around food sovereignty is directed against the global corporate food regime, and presents a maximally inclusive, hence generic, picture of the kind of non-global, non-corporate (i.e., national, local, small farm-based) food regime that needs to be defended. It also relies on exemplary sites of locally based, sustainable farm systems to inspire activists, and to confirm that there are viable alternatives. Both these forms of argument (the generic and the exemplary) can open a gap between the movement's platform and its potential constituents. To the extent that food sovereignty aspires to be a mass-based popular movement that addresses farmer concerns, it must articulate a vision with which farmers can identify” (p. 206). The context behind this quote is from Li's article articulating a peasant community in Indonesia that shifted their production from a locally focused and cultural crop to the popularized and internationally desired cacao (2015). Li notes that food sovereignty would be aspirational, but this community was in a region that made certain crops impossible to produce, and the current economic and political state made market development without trade next to impossible (Li, 2015, p. 210.). Though Li's article does not directly connect to queer farmers and the point of examination for this research, their reflection on the broad nature of food sovereignty and its lack of universal and case specific applicability highlights areas of improvement the movement may need to undergo to be revered as impactful. The areas of improvement include its ability to address localized concerns while being able to manifest itself in the broader transnational arena to encourage its widespread adoption; without being perceived as suitable for localized issues but also effective at building broader support and adoption, the movement cannot spread or evolve. This leads to another area of reflection, how can food

sovereignty as a movement bring in multiple communities with a range of identities, such as the queer community, when it continues to orient its local actions as universal and replicable that can lead to transnational change. As Li (2015) states “even when small-scale farmers are untouched by land grabbing or corporate schemes, as in this case, expanding their capacity to exercise control over their food, their farms and their futures is still a huge challenge” (p. 210).

3.3 The Importance of Organizations

Burmeister and Choi (2012) highlight how La Via Campesina affiliate organizations in South Korea such as the Korean Peasant League (KPL) and Korean Women Peasants Association (KWPA), were able to take the larger transnational objectives of the food sovereignty movement and apply it to local and national policy change. The KPL and KWPA were two prominent organizations that assisted in labour movements and lobbied for national policy action in the wake of the 1980’s (Burmeister and Choi, 2012, p. 250.). Burmeister and Choi (2012) highlight that the KPL and KWPA were successful in promoting food sovereignty policies at the national level in lobbying state representatives and targeting officials who may hold similar values and holding mass events to draw attention to the potential fallout of certain trade pacts such as the US beef trade partnership (p. 256). They framed the potential beef trade partnership with the US as a negative that could drastically impact the safety of the public because of the mad cow disease that was spreading. The KPL and KWPA were effective in translating larger transnational objectives to state level action through building a connection to the local/state context. Burmeister and Choi (2012) note that these organizations called upon multiple other organizations to support their initiatives and try to bridge similarities to build collaboration; these collaborative actions and strategic framing of issues allowed for these organizations to gain traction and the attention of state-level officials and broader support for the food sovereignty movement in South Korea and in turn, further the causes of the transnational movement. Some food system researchers have also argued that the food sovereignty movement has had a difficult time resonating within food organizations, such as Phat Beets based in Oakland, California and Delachaise Community Garden in New Orleans, in North America (Clendenning, Dressler, Richards, 2016, p. 169-170). Researchers argue that this inability is caused by its predominantly white activist attraction in the Global North and emphasis on production – this causes outsiders of these movements to critique these organizations as not being fully in-tune with the needs of communities and potentially ignorant to the realities of people of colour (Clendenning et al., 2016, p. 170.). To properly take hold in North America, the food sovereignty movement may need to develop and support regional organizations that can speak and act in an appropriate context.

3.4 Food Sovereignty: A New Vantage

One researcher that details the limitations of the food sovereignty movement, and proposes a new approach to advance its agenda, is Figueroa (2015). Figueroa (2015) proposes a new approach to food sovereignty and other food system movements and argues that the approach must shift from a direct connection to food and its production, distribution, or consumption, and that people must be the centre of the research nexus (p. 500). Figueroa (2015) articulates that:

“underlying the many difficulties in adapting food sovereignty to a North American and urban context is the fact that this concept emerged from peasant-based struggles and rural movements in the Global South” (p. 499). Figueroa (2015) goes on to highlight that the main principles and points of contention food sovereignty uses to push their objectives and draw comparisons to the inequalities of the current food system are rooted in “traditional foodways, farming systems, access to land and means of production” (p. 499). These principles and points of contention are most easily “understood and expressed in arenas where there are clear referents for comparison: spaces of peasant production, traditional social formations, and moral economies that warrant defense against the encroachment of capitalist social relations and the industrialization of agriculture” (Figueroa, 2015, p. 499.). Figueroa (2015) goes on to question what this might mean in contexts where people are far removed from any kind of referents for what these mean in practice, and in their case, they refer to urban farmers and food organizations (p. 499). Figueroa (2015) proposes shifting “the theoretical lens from ‘food’ to the social formations and historical trajectories that produce experiences of food, a relational, historically, and culturally grounded, ‘people-centered’ approach can highlight the social elements that create and/or strengthen resonant, locally inflected political strategies for food sovereignty in urban communities” (p. 500). The line of thinking is that the food sovereignty movement, both historically and currently, focuses on those directly connected to the food system through production, distribution, and retail and has been most effective when combatting the industrialization of agriculture and the encroachment of capitalist economies. Shifting from a food centred approach to one that centres people emphasizes that the realities of the food system that must be addressed are shaped by people. This includes the histories of the region, its relationship with food and how this system has been shaped by the people and their experiences.

Figueroa (2015) continues their argument for a relational interpretation of food sovereignty by highlighting that thinking about food relationally is useful to “analyze how it was produced, but also the meaning of production through food practices, and their capacity to produce and reproduce social relations in general through the lived experiences of obtaining, preparing, and consuming food” (p. 500). Shifting how we analyze food sovereignty and shifting to a relational interpretation may lend itself to better understand queer farmers’ relationship with agriculture, as well as broader social movements.

3.5 Is it Food Sovereignty or Food Justice?

In the North American context, food justice has joined food sovereignty in attempting to build a revised food system, but compared to food sovereignty, this movement has emphasized consumers’ equitable access to healthy food (Cadieux and Slocum, 2015, p. 2.). Both food justice and food sovereignty advocate for greater control over the agri-food system by those who have been marginalized (Cadieux and Slocum, 2015, p. 2.). Cadieux and Slocum (2015) note that “the global movement for food sovereignty prioritizes the rights of small-scale and indigenous farmers to access productive resources, while food justice has been associated more with urban activists and U.S. contexts” (p. 5). Two distinguishing differences between the movements as observed by

Cadieux and Slocum (2015). The authors argue that food sovereignty continues to be cautious and antagonistic when working with states or state supported NGO's, whereas, food justice holds a more optimistic view of the state, specifically public health, agri-food, and environmental government programs as beneficial to advancing community interests in establishing food security (Cadieux and Slocum, 2015, p. 7). As outlined above, there are unique factors that play into the organizations and people that practice either food justice or food sovereignty. Cadieux and Slocum (2015) outline in their work the importance of distinguishing what it means to 'do' food justice, citing that throughout North America, more organizations are co-opting the term to advance their programs (p. 8). Examples of this are organizations encouraging people to attend farmers markets, buy local, or encouraging value-added production and stamping the term food justice onto the title of programs that promote these activities (Cadieux and Slocum, 2015, p. 8.). Cadieux and Slocum (2015) present the following areas which food justice and food sovereignty seem to organize around:

- 1) acknowledging and confronting historical, collective social trauma and persistent race, gender, and class inequalities;
- 2) designing exchange mechanisms that build communal reliance and control;
- 3) creating innovative ways to control, use, share, own, manage and conceive of land, and ecologies in general, that place them outside the speculative market and the rationale of extraction; and
- 4) pursuing labor relations that guarantee a minimum income and are neither alienating nor dependent on (unpaid) social reproduction by women. (p. 13)

Following the outline of how food justice and sovereignty seem to organize, Cadieux and Slocum (2015) outline the process of practicing food justice (p. 14):

- Understands how power is distributed in society and brings power and the following elements into conversation;
- Applies a progressive sense of place;
- Analyzes and evaluates policies and programs for their capacity to bring about systemic change;
- Identifies barriers and enabling elements for the practice of food justice;
- Considers when and how it is useful or not to engage the state, the market or other actors;
- Institutionalizes equity in democratic participatory processes at every level.

In terms of what is meant by a progressive sense of place, Cadieux and Slocum (2015) refer to Massey's (1993) argument that each "place is a process created out of changing and uneven relations of power, connecting that space with other places. Place and community are not coterminous, and all communities are marked by social hierarchies that are continually contested" (p. 14). Cadieux and Slocum's outline of what it means to 'do' food justice highlights its similarities with food sovereignty and that the two movements seem to diverge most prominently

around their focus on consumption or production and the relationship with the state and its programs.

Sbicca (2012) characterizes food justice as pursuing a “liberatory principle focusing on the right of historically disenfranchised communities to have healthy, culturally appropriate food, which is also justly and sustainably grown” (p. 456). Sbicca (2012) mirrors the claims of Figueroa (2015), that focusing on food allows for radical critiques of many inequalities in the system, but it also invites a range of influences on its meaning (p. 456). Sbicca (2012) argues that food justice incorporates concerns with inequalities and that the movement takes on ideological influences of other social movements organizing through food justice; an example of an influence on food justice is the environmental movement (p. 456). Sbicca recommends that due to the relatively loose interpretation of the food justice movement and its invitation to many influences and interpretations, that it is necessary to develop participatory communication strategies for food justice organizations (Sbicca, 2012, p. 464.). These communication strategies are intended to invite organizations members to contribute to a collective understanding of what food justice means to them and how can it be implemented. (Sbicca, 2012, p. 464). With an effective line of communication an organization can see a greater level of participation from its members. This participation allows for the organization practicing food justice to bridge any gaps that may emerge amongst their members and their own interpretation of what food justice means. Bridging this gap can support the facilitation of a dialogue that encourages marginalized communities to speak to how their interpretation of food justice could be recognized or implemented (Sbicca, 2012, p. 464.). Effective lines of communication can take the shape of targeted strategies designed to capture the attention and insight from marginalized communities in the development of the mission and vision of an organization, to building participatory round tables for groups to reflect on how an organization has evolved and where it should begin to focus its attention. Ultimately, an effective line of communication can result in an organization properly merging a diverse membership under one cohesive vision that considers the range of perspectives.

Clendenning et al. (2015) depict food justice as emphasizing the importance of race and class in the US (p. 170). This depiction is posited as a growing realization that people of colour (predominantly in urban settings) lack the necessary access to healthy foods and that this lack of access is caused by the racist history of the US (p. 170). Clendenning et al. (2015) argue that food justice functions by maneuvering around the systemic forces in place that are caused by neo-liberal policies, and seeks to establish local, community-oriented responses to lack of food (p. 170). Comparatively, food sovereignty is characterized by Clendenning et al. (2015), as challenging the systematic forces that have impacted marginalized communities, working to change the embedded power relationships, and seek structural change internationally and nationally (p. 171).

3.6 Queer Farmers

The main topic this study is focused on is queer farmers. Leslie, 2017 & 2019 and Leslie, Wypler, Bell, 2019, have produced works researching queer farmers throughout the United States

and the barriers they face. Queer farmers experience similar barriers to accessing land and entering the system that heterosexual individuals do, such as access to capital, knowledge, and land itself (Leslie, 2019, p. 929.). However, queer farmers experience these barriers differently based on their identity as a queer person. When determining where to farm and purchase land, queer people and their partners have to decide between urban or rural locations, both of which pose their own set of problems (Leslie, 2019, p. 936.). On the other hand, urban settings give a sense of security and acceptance of queer farmers' identity but are limited in available land and when land is available, it is often expensive (Leslie, 2019, p. 936.). Comparatively, rural land is more readily available and affordable than urban settings, however, the heteronormative and trans/homophobic perceptions of queer people in these regions make them cautious to purchase land and live in these communities (Leslie, 2019 & 2017). Leslie (2017) *speculates* that just the assumption of rural communities being intolerant could be enough to discourage prospective queer farmers from entering rural spaces (p. 15).

A key element to queer farmers' consideration to enter the industry and continued practice of agriculture is access to and ability to share knowledge. Queer people interested in farming can experience heterosexism from agricultural mentors, which limits their willingness to further their agricultural career or correctly self-identify (Leslie, 2019, p. 940.). Agricultural mentors are found to either make overt heterosexist remarks, or not express strong support or willingness to engage with the queer community (Leslie, 2019, p. 940.). Queer agricultural mentors seek out queer farmers to pass on their land and knowledge to, as they want the security of knowing their business and knowledge will be used by like-minded practitioners (Leslie, 2019, p. 940.). In heteronormative work settings, queer farmers are also exposed and constrained in expressing themselves while in the presence of heterosexist cisgender males (Leslie, 2017, p. 19). Leslie (2017) highlights that queer farmers who entered cooperatives or gained employment on a heterosexual owned farm, were exposed to heterosexist and normative working conditions and coworkers (p. 19). They are reliant on these work opportunities to gain knowledge of the industry and are unlikely to call out or remove themselves from these hostile work environments (Leslie, 2017, p. 19.).

Access to credit or funds to purchase land is another barrier that is amplified by queer people's identities. Heterosexual farmers often receive their land from inheritance or through marriage (Leslie, 2019, p. 938.). Inheritance for queer people can become complicated by coming out as queer, and they have often fallen out of communication or support from their family (Leslie, 2019, p. 938.). Queer farmers are also less likely to call out heterosexism in a farmer's market setting because they are reliant on these customers who might be making heterosexist microaggressions (Leslie, 2017, p. 22.).

Sbicca (2012) highlights that queer farmers may feel isolated from the predominant food movements led by cis-white straight men, but not be experiencing the same kind of injustices as people of colour who lead food justice movements in urban settings (p. 44) are. Sbicca (2012)

argues that queer farmers are “linking concerns over the degradation of the environment to industrial agriculture, bodily sovereignty in terms of gender and sexual expression, and the binary of urban/rural, gay/straight, male/female, that reproduce sexual environmental inequality” (p. 44). Sbicca (2012) notes that there are a number of forces that attempt to regulate queer identity and participation in agriculture, such as space (p. 48). This divide is characterized as ‘rural is straight’ and ‘urban is gay’, and that these spaces cannot be shifted. But even in the urban context, queer bodies are policed by heteronormative forces that seek to subvert queerness and visible queer identity, such as public displays of affection or non-conforming dress (Sbicca, 2012, p. 48.). Queer farmers who do venture into rural spaces will work to cultivate their own notion of space and identity, one that they might see as away from the influence of heteronormative forces.

3.7 Why Queer Farmers Farm

Leslie (2017) has been able to highlight a few reasons why queer farmers’ farm. One common reason for queer people to enter farming is that it facilitates the dismantling of external heteropatriarchal forces. Queer people that are in farming argue that the concept of working in an agricultural setting that does not prescribe to gendered clothing, facilitates queer people to express themselves freely without facing judgement (Leslie, 2017, p. 20.). Similarly, queer farmers enjoy the activities they must take part in to run a farm, such as operating machinery or fixing equipment (Leslie, 2017, p. 20.). These tasks are often reserved for cisgender males, so the opportunity to do these tasks allows for queer people, especially trans folk, to cross gendered barriers (Leslie, 2017, p. 21.). A common reason for queer people to farm is the ability to express and practice anti-capitalist beliefs (Leslie, 2017, p. 21.). These beliefs are expressed through things such as growing food for the community and building strong interpersonal relationships (Leslie, 2017, p. 21.).

3.8 Food Sovereignty and Queer Farmers

In relation to broader food movements such as food sovereignty, queer farmers are an elusive topic. Throughout food sovereignty’s historical evolution its researchers focussed a substantial amount of their work on issues of gender, race, and class and how they relate to the current food system and how food sovereignty can mitigate challenges associated with these variables (Epting, 2018; Portman, 2018; Patel, 2012; Figueroa, 2015, Smith II, 2019). From what is readily available online, and through the research that was conducted to prepare this thesis, no academic article has been identified that explicitly discusses the relationship between queer farmers and food sovereignty. As Smith II (2019) puts it “in many conversations on food access and food security at the local, national, and global levels, food issues among LGBTQ communities are often neglected, further exacerbating food inequalities among this population” (p. 831.). Food sovereignty organizations such as La Via Campesina have only recently addressed the emerging discourse around LGBTQ people and food sovereignty movements by creating a blog posting to discuss the topic and expressed a willingness to create more inclusive spaces and advance the needs of the queer community (La Via Campesina, 2016, n.p.). It is unclear what efforts were made to support the queer community following that article. A few years after the publication of the first queer focused article by La Via Campesina, the article ‘Coming Out! Gender Diversity in

the Food System', by Gioia (2019) was published for La Via Campesina. In the article, Gioia discussed the importance of bringing queer people into the food sovereignty conversation. This article did not present a hypothesis or provide an analysis of methodologies or approaches organizations and movements could take to incorporate queer people, but it outlined the experiences of queer people and the inequalities they face (Gioia, 2019, n.p.). Smith II (2019) outlines that many queer farmers and queer organizations are filling voids left by government policy and broader food system movements (p. 832), but none of these organizations are explicitly citing their approach as food sovereignty. It is important to note the contributions of people such as Gioia who have begun the conversation before I entered into the discourse and recognize that the research that has gone into this body of work is an extension of what was laid before. The lack of research on queer farmers and food sovereignty highlights the need to begin the process of unpacking this community's complex relationship with the current food system and how to move forward and facilitate participation in it.

3.9 What Do We Not Know?

There remain several gaps in the current landscape of queer farmers and their participation in the food sovereignty movement. It is unclear if the food sovereignty movement can lead this reform and if the movement itself will align with the needs of queer food producers. As well, if food sovereignty enters a queering process, how will this change its structure, approach, and impact on society and movements transnationally. A critique of food sovereignty is its ambiguity and wide reach as a movement. Without a defined purpose, it may not be necessary for queer people to be included in food sovereignty movements. In this scenario, queer food producers could operate within the current food system and develop their own networks and structures to meet their needs. This research will thus provide an analysis of queer farmers to further understandings of how they practice agriculture and if it aligns with food sovereignty or if they explicitly tie their approach to farming to a particular food movement. From this understanding, it will be possible to understand how queer farmers operate in the broader discourse surrounding food movements and if there is an opportunity to build new networks or connections and organizing principles for queer farmers to construct a collective. This research seeks to pioneer the academic discourse surrounding queer farmers and food sovereignty.

3.10 Conceptual Framework

This research topic combines the study of two distinct areas, food sovereignty and queer theory. For this research, food sovereignty is used as an organizing framework that determines people's interactions with each other and the material world, as well as a movement that can be practiced (Desmarais and Wittman, 2014, P. 1157.). Queer theory is used to highlight queered perspectives of the researcher and those being researched; the sexual dimensions of a subject become the central site of investigation primarily juxtaposing the queer from the norm (Dilley, 1999, p. 461). For this research, the queered perspectives and lived experiences of queer farmers will be used as the main point of reflection used against food sovereignty literature. There are not explicit themes from queer theory that will be applied to this research, other than the primary tenets

of centering queer voices and using queer observations and criticisms against the hegemonic discourse on the subject matter.

Food Sovereignty

As a movement and a concept, food sovereignty is best conceptualized as a process, a moving target that is constantly adjusting to the dynamics of the agri-food system and politics (Schiavoni, 2017, p.1.). Schiavoni (2017) contributes to the emerging field of food sovereignty literature by providing a better understanding of the concept of food sovereignty and the key actors, for this reason, they will be relied on heavily for this section. Schiavoni (2017) depicts three distinct trends in food sovereignty:

1. The construction of food sovereignty as continuous through time – food sovereignty efforts are not static, but as shaped by the history from which they arose and as continuing to make history as they unfold over time (p. 4).
2. Food sovereignty is relational that reflects the open-ended and iterative nature of food sovereignty efforts; that is, that the very meanings of food sovereignty and pursuits toward it are dynamically shaped by competing paradigms and approaches (p. 4).
3. Food sovereignty construction as neither state-driven nor society-driven alone, but rather as a product of the interaction between and among diverse state and societal actors (p. 4).

Schiavoni characterizes these trends and points of analysis in food sovereignty as a historical-relational-interactive framework. This contribution to understanding how food sovereignty is created, operates, and who it is created by is important when engaging in the question of how do queer farmers practice food sovereignty.

Desmarais and Wittman (2014) provide a critical analysis of food sovereignty in Canada and present a range of interpretations of the movement and how distinct actors interact with the concept (p. 1155). Desmarais and Wittman (2014) echo the relational aspects to food sovereignty that Schiavoni detailed and draw comparisons to how food sovereignty will look different in parts of Canada compared to regions in the Global South, and that race, class, gender history, culture, and politics can shape the form food sovereignty takes (p. 1157). This conceptualization is expanded by the argument that the Canadian agricultural sector varies across each respective province – the prairies produce large yields of specific commodities such as grains and beef, while British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec contain on average smaller farms that produce a range of commodities that vary from their prairie counterparts, and the Atlantic provinces prioritize specialized industries such as fishing (Desmarais and Wittman, 2014, p. 1158.).

Desmarais and Wittman (2014) also describe Canada's agrarian society and rural communities as ideologically diverse containing a range of perspectives that can support neoliberal interpretations of agriculture to a more social and economic justice perspective (p. 1158). This range of perspectives is reflected in the diverse organizations involved in Canada's agriculture industry, such as the National Farmers Union, a founding member of La Via Campesina, to supply managed industries that have worked in antagonism to neoliberal policies (p. 1158). Desmarais and Wittman (2014) argue that the Canadian context is varied and unique based on a range of factors,

such as actors supporting the concept of food sovereignty to those promoting neoliberal policies, Indigenous communities seeking to regain sovereignty through food discourse, and urban ‘foodies’ who have worked to build local food systems through guerilla gardening, and urban community gardens (p. 1168). Desmarais and Wittman (2014) depict Canada and its food sovereignty discourse in the initial stages and since food sovereignty is a process rooted in structural change, it is the beginning of a long process (p. 1169). Desmarais and Wittman’s interpretation and review of the Canadian context highlights the relational and case specific nature of defining food sovereignty movements. Recognizing the varied farming practices across the provinces and the range of beliefs towards food and agriculture policy, one can expect that when attempting to understand what queer food sovereignty looks like in Canada, a clear universal definition may be more difficult to provide.

Contextually, how food sovereignty has been defined historically will play a role in how actors interpret the movement and their actions in relation to it. As outlined earlier, in 1996, food sovereignty received one of its first formal and publicized definitions by the peasant organization Via Campesina (Jarosz, 2014, p. 173). La Via Campesina defined food sovereignty as:

“The right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity. We have the right to produce our own food in our own territory. Food sovereignty is a precondition to genuine food security.” (Via Campesina, 1996, in Jarosz 2014, p. 173.)

The 1996 definition of food sovereignty posits that national sovereignty over agriculture and policy decisions must be upheld and maintained. In this definition, the state is the primary actor. This definition was later expanded in 2001 when Via Campesina formed a new definition of food sovereignty:

“The right of peoples to define their own agriculture and food policies, to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives, to determine the extent to which they want to be self-reliant, and to restrict the dumping of products in their markets. Food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy, and ecologically sustainable production.” (Via Campesina, 2001 in Jarosz 2014, p. 173.)

The expanded definition aligns with a more relational interpretation, one that allows the individual or case specific actor, to interpret their own food sovereignty. As detailed earlier, food sovereignty’s emergence was founded in direct opposition to neoliberal policies (Edelman, 2014). This opposition was played out in the theatre of transnational conferences with representation from organizations such as the WTO and FAO. The historical significance of how food sovereignty emerged aligns with its original definition, where the state appeared to be the primary actor and vehicle for food sovereignty to take hold. This history is important, as stated earlier, food sovereignty has often been interpreted by others as loosely defined and relatively unattainable for

local urban movements, as it is portrayed as a transnational state level movement (Li, 2015). The development of a significant set of principles that the food sovereignty movement has aspired to achieve, as detailed in the Declaration of Nyéléni expand on the original definitions and provide a key space for interrogation. These principles are aspirational and provide a framework and set of goals for states and organizations to work towards. This interpretation could have manifested itself in discourse amongst queer farmers and is important to recognize. The conceptual understandings of food sovereignty that have been detailed above will be considered for this research.

Queer Theory

As noted above, for this research, queer theory will focus on the lived experiences and perspectives of queer farmers. Dilley (1999) reviewed published qualitative studies and observed that the three major tenants employed by researchers were:

- examination of lives and experiences of those considered non-heterosexual;
 - juxtaposition of those lives/experiences with lives/experiences considered "normal";
 - examination of how/why those lives and experiences are considered outside of the norm.
- (p. 462)

Queer theory “questions socially established norms and dualistic categories” (Thiel, 2018, p.1). What this means, is that queer theory looks beyond the binaries that have been developed throughout a range of studies and raises ideas around what might exist between or outside of those binaries (Thiel, 2018, p.1). In terms of the frame of analysis, queer theory focuses on the individual and their lived experience as a member of the queer community (Drabinski, 2013, p. 96). Despite the primary focus of analysis being the queer individual, queer theory does not concern itself with what it means to be queer, but what being queer does (Drabinski, 2013, p. 96). It reframes the understanding that being queer has a broader impact on the individual and how they conduct themselves and how they navigate space, systems, and interactions. For this research, it will be important to understand how being queer impacts the individual (queer farmer), in how they navigate space, orient themselves in the broader food system, and how they reflect on their role.

Due to the nature of this research and the fact that there currently is no published literature on what queer food sovereignty is and if it exists, queer theory will be utilized broadly and focus on centering the experiences and perspectives of the queer participants. For this research a queer farmer will be considered a self-identifying member of the LGBTQ+ community, who is employed as a food producer at their own farming operation or working as a laborer. Despite being the primary variable that is being interpreted and researched, other factors that impact the actor, such as location, gender, race, and class will also be considered. This consideration is done to recognize the historical and context specific implications all these factors can have on the queer farmer. To support the analysis of the findings, the works of Oswin (2008) and Butler (2020) will be used. These pieces will support the examination of power and identity and how queer farmers may align with food sovereignty and how their identity impacts their ability to navigate the agriculture industry.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology employed for this research, the reasoning behind its selection, methods and tasks, data analysis, trustworthiness and reliability, and strengths and limitations. This study had queer farmers from across Canada participate in virtual interviews to speak about their lived experiences in agriculture and their connection to food sovereignty. The research obtained approval from the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board (University of Victoria, 2020) on March 16th, 2021. The ethics protocol number is: 20-0611.

4.2 Methodology

To answer the questions posited by this project, a phenomenological study was employed. A phenomenological study, as Creswell (2007) states, “describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p. 57). Creswell (2007) argues that the fundamental goal of a phenomenological approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of a phenomenon (p. 58).

The phenomenon that is being studied by the inquirer is experienced by each individual in the study and can range from broad conceptualizations such as experiencing grief, or more specific circumstances such as undergoing the same surgery (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). The inquirer then collects data from each individual to develop a composite description of the essence of the experience – consisting of what they experienced and how (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). A key component of any phenomenological study is that “all research participant[s] [have] experienced the phenomenon, [are] intensely interested in understanding its nature and meanings, [and] is willing to participate in a lengthy interview” (Moutsakas, 1994, p. 108). Ahmed (2006) argues that it is still possible to have queer people experience the same phenomenon, but their experiences may diverge slightly from the main phenomenon but reproduce the same or similar outcome (n.p.).

For this study, the only criterion to participate is to be employed in agriculture or own a farm in Canada, and to identify as a member of the queer community. The nature of this study requires few criteria to properly experience the phenomenon.

4.3 Methods and Tasks

Key informant interviews were used to gather primary data for this thesis.

Key Informant Interviews

The initial aim of this study was to have 15 queer farmers participate. Invitations were sent out the week after receiving ethical approval on March 16th, 2021. This early invitation was done deliberately, recognizing that farmers’ schedules begin to fill up quickly in peak growing seasons. Invitations were sent out early to establish a line of communication with participants early on, so that when interviews were scheduled, participants were already fielded and selected for the study. A call for participants was sent out through Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WOOF),

Young Agrarians, Fierce Agricole, Farmers for Climate Solutions, and the Rainbow Chard Collective. Only WOOF, Young Agrarians, and Farmers for Climate Solutions responded and sent out a call for participants. These organizations were selected based on their direct relationship with farmers as well as individuals looking to enter agriculture. These organizations position in the agriculture lent themselves to having access to a wide array of potential participants. In total, their combined mailing lists reached over 2,000 farmers. The response rate was lower than anticipated, and after screening out non-queer farmers, only 10 participants were identified as being suitable for this study. After reaching out to eligible participants, 7 confirmed their interest and availability and participated in the interview process. The interviews were conducted over a two-week period, with each interview taking between 45 mins to 1.5 hours.

The data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews held over Microsoft Teams. The interviews opened with structured questions to assist in understanding the participant's position and history in the agriculture industry. Following these initial questions, broad, more conversational questions were used to encourage a free-flowing discussion that was guided by the participant. Follow-up questions, not captured in Appendix A, were only used to pull more information from respondents on a case-by-case basis. Refer to Appendix A for a full list of interview questions. To transcribe the responses, Microsoft Teams has a built-in transcription tool and was used for these interviews. Following the completion of all the interviews, each recording was reviewed with its transcription to guarantee textual accuracy. To produce the themes and commonalities, applications such as Excel and Microsoft Word were used. As Creswell (2007) argues semi-structured interviews are considered the most effective approach to data collection when using a phenomenological methodology, as it facilitates an easy flowing conversation that encourages authenticity in answers (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). The purpose of the interviews is to identify the themes within the phenomenon of queer farmers practicing food sovereignty (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). To achieve the goals of identifying the main themes within the phenomenon, questions scoped towards lived experiences in agriculture, what principles do they employ, and do they seek to collectivize with other queer farmers. These thematic questions aimed to elicit more fulsome information about the landscape of queer people and farmer's relationship with the food system. They further probed if food sovereignty is a concept in practice and if so, how can it bring more queer farmers into the industry.

4.4 Data Analysis

To analyze the data collected during the semi-structured interviews, Microsoft Excel was used to group key phrases in themes. Interview recordings were reviewed and transcribed. Each transcribed interview was reviewed to determine themes that emerged in that specific interview. This process was replicated across each participant interview. Individual participant interview themes were then reviewed against each other to determine overlap and universal themes for the group. Once broader group themes were identified, each individual interview segment related to the broader theme was reviewed to determine if universal phrases or statements were used across the group for each theme. This process was used to determine if the common themes were

emerging based on colloquial use of phrases or if participants had a distinct experience that aligned with the broader theme. This process assisted in determining the quality of the data collected and if the broader theme could be used to represent the entire group or should be identified as a theme for a portion of participants.

4.5 Strengths and Limitations of the thesis

Limitations

This study has a few limitations and weaknesses. The main weakness is access to and ability to find a large number of respondents for the interviews. This was greatly impacted because of the pandemic, which limited the options for how this study could be conducted as well as time availability. Had this study been conducted face to face, it may have allowed a free-flowing dynamic to emerge with the participants, impacting their responses. As well, the agricultural industry was impacted because of the pandemic and caused the sector to become burdened with supply chain challenges and demands on producers. This would have limited potential participants' willingness to take part in an interview whilst addressing these challenges. This study requires respondents who work in an industry that is bound to seasonal demand. The nature of the farming industry makes scheduling interviews at certain points in the year more difficult, such as prime growing seasons Spring and Summer. Second, it was challenging to find these respondents through organizations and networks that operate across Canada. Third, the scarcity of specialized literature. This study is a part of a relatively new body of research, which means that there is not a substantial amount of current literature to build off. This scarcity of literature may limit the depth that this study's literature review can go into. Similarly, phenomenology requires at least some understanding of the broader philosophical assumptions, and these should be identified by the researcher (Creswell, 2007, p. 62). Due to limited literature on queer food sovereignty, this study will rest on the work of related fields, as well as pave a new road. Similar fields of study include research on queer farmers and broader food sovereignty literature.

Strengths

Despite the limitations and weaknesses, this study has one major strength. As noted above, this study contributes to a growing body of literature which lends itself to start other conversations around the topic of queer farmers and food sovereignty.

Chapter 5: Results or Findings

The findings from the virtual interviews with the seven participants are outlined below in the corresponding themes that emerged. The main themes that were discovered were:

- Education and how the Farmers started
- Reasons for farming
- The role of mentors
- The importance of a Farms Business Approach
- Views on the current food system and how the system should change
- A Queer Farmers Role in Change
- The Uniqueness of Queer farmers
- Community as a founding principle
- What is Food Sovereignty

5.1 Education and How The Farmers Started

The first theme to emerge from the interviews was the universality of participants' beginnings in agriculture. The three interview questions that resulted in these themes were: "How long have you been working in agriculture?", "Did you receive any formal education in agriculture?" and "How did you first get into agriculture?". Out of the seven participants, none had any previous formal education in agriculture. It was only after they had their first exposure to working in agriculture or as one participant described, their "aha moment" (Participant three), did three of them decide to obtain formal training in agriculture. It should be noted that each participant commented that their exposure to agriculture was minimal and, in many cases, "didn't think that this was even a suitable career path for someone like me" (Participant two) refereeing to their queer identity and growing up in the suburbs. The four participants that did not complete formal education did receive post-secondary education, but when entering agriculture, they argued that hands-on experience and knowledge would be more valuable than pursuing a certificate or degree.

Every participant related their first exposure and subsequent entering agriculture was connected to their interest in environmental sustainability and stewardship. As participant five stated "I had a strong interest in environmental issues and worked in environmental fields before agriculture but as time went on and I began to dig deeper into sustainability I realized that agriculture was one of those areas at the corner of it all". Agriculture was seen by all interviewees as an extension of their passion for environmental sustainability. They pursued formal careers in that space. Only four participants immediately entered agriculture through formal jobs and received employment on farms in Canada or abroad. The remaining three participants volunteered on local farms in their communities to receive an initial exposure. Each participant identified as living in a rural or peri-urban setting and operating a farm at a small to medium scale. Small to medium scale was characterized by participants as 3-10 acres. This is a significant range and will be referred to in my areas of further research section.

5.2 Reasons for Farming

The next theme to emerge from interviews was the passion driving their time in agriculture. The interview question that produced this theme was “How did you first get into agriculture?”. Five participants had distinct and varied reasons for farming but shared a common thread of agency and autonomy. The remaining two emphasized their reasons were rooted in their passion for environmental sustainability (Participant one and Participant five). The main driving force behind farming was a universal desire to have agency or autonomy. Whether the agency or autonomy was over space, their impact, what they produce, their body, the five participants expressed a desire to understand and be sovereign and own their actions and outputs and saw agriculture as the vehicle to do so. The desire for agency and autonomy is reflected in participants insights using the term ‘control’ and ‘ownership’. As Participant three described: “agriculture is a really intimate way to develop a long term deep meaningful relationship with a specific place”. Participant three also argued the importance agriculture has on their individual being: “agriculture also allows for me to be totally by myself and working, being present in my body and being in my head. Having space to think with my thoughts, or listen to the birds, a certain kind of mindfulness you don't get with other jobs.” Participants also had broader social understandings of why they should be in agriculture or how their involvement in the industry will be positive. This included participant six who wanted to have control over their impact on the environment and their role in sustainability:

“We wanted to do something that would not only allow us to do some really good work around not only like environmental justice, but also like health justice and social justice and all sorts of stuff in our world”.

Participant seven saw agriculture as a way to own their product, share it with people, and be the narrator for the story of their work:

“Farming and more specifically, being able to go to the farmers markets and have a connection with people that way is so important to me. So, you get the connection with the earth, but then you get a genuine authentic connection with people through food and through agriculture and a connection that allows me to share my product and its story.”

Agency and autonomy came in distinct forms for the five participants, but it became apparent both were important factors in agriculture that they valued.

5.3 The Role of Mentors

Participants shared that who, where, and how they received support or shared knowledge was important. The interview questions that resulted in these responses were “Did you receive any formal education in agriculture?” and “Do you think queer farmers are innately different than heterosexual farmers?”. Participants related this to the value mentors have in the queer community and saw an innate connection to agriculture and the important role mentors play. Being queer and

in agriculture raised important questions for Participant one, “I realized that when I entered agriculture, I was going to need support and like someone who could guide me, but being queer, I needed someone who understood me. I needed to be seen by that support and guide. It’s hard to find a queer mentor but that’s one thing I wish was more accessible. But then it’s a question of where you find them?”.

Participant two expands on this with, “I’ve been on farms where I thought since they were all women, that I’d be in a safer space. Yes, they weren’t queer, but hey they’re at least women. But I was sorely mistaken – they gendered the work the most and often othered me and made me feel like they didn’t know what tasks to give me. It became hard for me to feel confident in the space but also didn’t give me the space to learn.”

Participant four applied tactics learned in post-secondary education to navigate non-queer mentors:

“Since being out for so long I was very used to taking information from sources that didn’t really look like me or make me feel seen or represented and taking that info and turning it into a way that applies to me. So, when I was in school, I didn’t have many profs that looked like or were like me at all, so I spent a lot of time taking their lessons and soaking it up and then applying it or turning it into something that aligned more with how I saw the world or my being. Though I didn’t have queer mentors, I am glad I am now in a position of educating youth and being that queer mentor for people.”

The remaining 3 participants did not have detailed contributions relating to mentors but stated that they didn’t have any in agriculture and that they had to turn to conventional avenues for mentorship.

5.4 The Importance of a Farm’s Business Approach

An important theme that emerged from these interviews was how the farmers sold their product, how it was marketed and who bought it. The two-interview question that sparked this discussion was “How would you define your method of agriculture?” and “What are the main principles you employ on your operation?”. Every participant used a community-supported agriculture box program. These programs are designed by having consumers sign up ahead of a harvest season for a dedicated box that could be delivered daily, weekly, and so on, with fresh produce from the farm. These particular programs require a dedicated consumer base that has an established relationship with the farm, but as Participant one stated, “The Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) allows me to plan and understand what I need to plant but also consider what is manageable.”

Only two participants offered their products in farmers markets as their main point of sales.

Participant three shared:

“We do farmers markets. I love farmers markets days. They are super social and so busy. Lots of sights and smells and sounds. You see familiar faces and start building long term

relationships week to week with customers. But also, you get that excitement of a first-time interaction with someone new. Getting to share your mutual love and interest in food and pass on what you produced.”

As it came to marketing, to build up their consumer base and awareness in the community, every participant stated that they were deliberate with their marketing. Every participant made their marketing at their property, flyers, or market stands overtly queer, such as Participant three:

“I make my marketing overtly queer. Big words stating we're queer. I want our customers to know and be exposed, but also for other queer or questioning people to see us and know they're safe. Now through word of mouth, all the queers in our community search for us at the markets and connect with us”.

These marketing tactics and sales mechanisms have attracted a distinct clientele to each participants establishment. For example, participant two shared: “I'm not trying to grow food for rich white people. I really try to apply food equity principles in my farming practices. I am trying to grow food for my community, and I make that clear with how I run and market my business.”

Despite the positive experiences for every participant, Participant 5 did experience transphobia and a change in their customer base as they transitioned:

“What’s interesting is that like at farmers markets, after I had transitioned, we would have regular customers of years no longer buy from us. Before, you'd see them at the market for years and they'd come and buy from you, and you had this super close relationship but that all changed. Now, after I came out and presented in an authentic way, they wouldn't even look at me and just walk away. But at the same time, we now have so many visibly queer people. They would look for us and find us. I think that’s a huge part about being visibly queer in these spaces, it brings other queer people out.”

5.5 Views on the Current Food System and How it Should Change

Each participant was asked “Can you tell me about your views on our world’s current food system? Does your queer identity impact how you perceive our food system and your experiences as a food producer?”. A follow-up to that question was “How do you think you can get the food system to change?”. Participants had strong opinions on our current food system and how it functions and universally argued that it is fundamentally broken, while others found it difficult to elaborate on how it should change.

Participant one:

“I think our current food system is very broken. Two main things come to mind: environmentally destructive and poor labor practices. My queer identity has helped me to better understand and relate to like other groups of people who are experiencing marginalization in our food system.”

Participants argued that being queer allowed them to reflect on the impacts of the food system not

just on themselves, but other marginalized communities.

Participant four:

“I see our food system as being shaped by power. I feel like it has been weaponized in many ways through like colonialism. I don't see it as one centering community or sufficiency, it centers profit and the status quo.”

Outside of impacting marginalized people, participants found that the current system is not stable and does not adequately support those who work in agriculture. This included participant seven: “Well, I believe that it's an incredibly fragile system. The climate crisis keeps worsening and worsening, and we get less, you know, hotter days and less rain.”

While each participant was confident in identifying what was wrong with the current food system, not all were able to identify what they wanted to change or how it could change. Respondents argued that thinking about how the food system should change was an overwhelming task that felt all encompassing.

Two participants did provide near identical areas of opportunity for improvements to the food system: Participant one:

“Access. Access is at it all. Everyone doesn't have access and I don't mean that in a food security sense – we don't need to ship in more food. What I mean is the marginalized people in our communities are unable to, under this current system, access the food I am able to produce and that's because of funds, job security, health services, things like that.”

Participant two:

“Well like obviously how people access it. That needs to improve so everyone can. But also, like access food that aligns with their cultural values, so not just specific cultural needs, but maybe aligns with your values on rental affordability. Universal basic income. Also, more money needs to be given to smaller farmers who are looking to grow in a climate conscious way. Even Europe and America are beating us in that.”

5.6 Queer Farmers Role in Change

The second portion of the previous question did not invoke a response for what role they could play in changing the food system, but when asked “As a queer farmer, how do you want the current food system to change?”, participants had a range of opinions. Five participants saw a role for themselves as food producers to make a change in the space of replicating desired business practices into the system and creating equitable spaces for community.

The following are comments from the participants:

Participant two:

“I see I play a role in the education side of things. Providing info to my community on food

practices. But also, when I build a business, I need to build a business that aligns with my values - equity, labour practices, sustainability. I don't want to have a business if I can't feed all sorts of people.”

Participant four:

“I see my job as an educator, providing insight and support. Food can be a wonderful place for communication and understanding and solidarity building, so you may not understand me, but we all need to eat and have our own culture around food.”

Participant five specifically saw their role in building community:

“Bringing in the community to see the farm, feel the soil, get their hands dirty. Couple times a week the people to come out and help on the farm and I think that feeds into people feeling connected. They get to meet other people.”

Participants saw their role in change as one rooted in education and awareness, with some referring to how they can employ certain business practices on their farm that align with their values and in turn make a marginal shift in the system around them.

5.7 The Uniqueness of Queer Farmers

Unsurprisingly, the participants raised topics related to queer farmers, queers in agriculture, how to get more in agriculture, and some of their own biases upon entering agriculture being queer. This topic was raised throughout the interview and cannot be directly connected to any specific interview question. This subject was one that was raised casually.

Participant one:

“We could get more queer people in agriculture if little queer folk could see we are here and exist. Younger me would've liked to know someone like me could be in that space - would have made that journey into ag[riculture] more comfortable. "Where are the people?"

Participant four:

“I came out very young, and never thought agriculture was something I could do. Growing up I saw shows with queer people living in urban centers like downtown LA, and like my family is working class and a little redneck so when I'd see these queer people in media, I didn't really connect with them.”

Participants did not know agriculture was a space for them to exist or even a potential career path.

5.8 Community as a Founding Principle

The most prominent theme to emerged from these interviews was participant’s references to community. This response was not sparked by any specific interview question and was raised throughout the interview, underpinning the integral component community plays for these

participants. It became clear that farming and community, and its connections to queerness were seen as intrinsically connected to all of the participants. Community within the context of what queer farmers have expressed during their interviews is the queer community. specifically Participant one:

“I want community in farming, I want my queer community with me in this space. I formed community in different mixers but didn’t often find too many queer people. So, I loved the mixers, but I still didn't find my people there.”

Similarly, participant three argued that:

“As a queer person there is something so important and transformative in finding my community. Coming out in the city, and working on an urban farm, queerness and food work didn't intersect but I wasn't far from my people. I see farming and queerness interconnected with community.

Participant four drew a direct connection between the idea of a farming community and the queer community:

“There are many similarities to farming and queerness. There's a real focus on community, and community sufficiency, because like rural communities and the history of them has been less services and requiring each other and your neighbor to survive.”

The same participant shared that fostering connections/ networks was a tradition and another similarity between farming and queerness:

“Another similarity between farming and queerness is there is this wonderful, I think tradition of like passing on and getting people connected with one another, so I may not be able to help you with your tractor, but I know somebody who does.”

Participant six raised an interesting forum to build community in response to living in more remote regions, or in spaces that aren’t openly queer accepting: “How do you meet other queer farmers? It's Instagram.”

Participants saw community as a key part of their being, their involvement in the industry, their businesses, but also presented modalities to access and build community when it might not be as accessible in remote places. Community will be examined later in the discussion and its importance in food sovereignty.

5.9 What is Food Sovereignty

At the end of each interview, I asked each participant to define food sovereignty to me, or to describe what it means to them. Participants tended to define food sovereignty as placing control of the food system into the hands of a localized community and aligning values with food production. Some participants also argued that it was a broad term that captured a wide range of

ideas. For example:

Participant one:

“It came from La Via Campesina. To me it means that people have control over their food system, and access to it. It goes beyond food security in just calories and demands things like culturally appropriate food.”

Participant two:

“Yeah, I'm familiar with it. It goes beyond food security in that it wants people to have food that aligns with their needs other than nutritionally but also culturally and align with their values. It also looks at the control of the system being in the community.”

Participant five:

“I find it's a bit of a catch all term, generally meaning anything from the ability to produce and supply food into the local economy into the local area and be able to be self-sufficient in food, but also particularly in the context where we live. Food sovereignty also has a very important meaning in people being able to afford and access that food that is produced locally.”

Participant seven: “Oh to me it's a bit broad, but if I remember correctly, it really emphasizes like community and community autonomy of the food system and who controls it.”

After being asked what food sovereignty is, I asked queer participants to explain what queer food sovereignty means to them, or what it elicits in them when they hear it. They were reminded that there is no wrong or right answer. Participants referenced the importance of community and how a queer food sovereignty would underpin the importance of that facet of their identity and being:

Participant four:

“Queer folks as a community. Kind of taking more responsibility for maybe our ways of food production. Kind of in the way that over the last few years, we've really taken the hold of our cultural productions, so you're seeing, hopefully a lot more like media by queer people for queer people featuring queer people. Grown by queer people accessible to other queer people and just really feel more involved in our food production because I think it's very mysterious right now too”.

As well, participants argued that a queer food sovereignty would create space for queer people and provide that sanctuary for their collective existence.

Participant six: “The ability to take queer space in the space of agriculture that is very like affirming and safe.”

Participant seven:

“I think with queer food sovereignty, it's a greater focus on community. That's just everything with farming. For me personally, everything goes back to community. And cultivating that community and the power of that through the conduit of food and agriculture.”

The remaining participant responses will be provided in the discussion portion to highlight other points in these two main themes.

Summary

The interviews presented interesting findings to reflect on in the following discussion. Queerness has provided opportunities for participants to reflect on both their role in agriculture, how the food system impacts them, but also what kind of impact they would like to have when they make decisions in the system. Similarly, participants highlighted that they did not have a previous relationship to agriculture through generational inheritance or teachings, which presented its own unique set of problems in the form of education, finding mentors, but also provided opportunities for them to develop their own relationship with the industry. Agriculture also acted as a conduit for participants to gain control over their actions, impact on society, and their individual body. Most importantly, outside of systemic reflection and individual opportunities, participants centered community as being interconnected to every facet of their interviews. The following discussion chapter will expand on the previous themes in the findings section and draw connections between the literature on food sovereignty and answer the research questions.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Analysis

This chapter of the thesis unpacks the findings from the participant interviews and answers the primary research question: Is there a queer food sovereignty and does it differ from the broader movement? To answer the main research question, the sub-research questions will first be reviewed against the findings:

1. Do queer farmers identify as practicing food sovereignty?
2. Do the principles of the food sovereignty movement align with those of queer farmers?
3. How does the food sovereignty movement facilitate the sustainability and growth of queer farmers?
4. Are queer farmers part of other food movements?

The answering of the main and sub research questions will culminate in the final argument that: based on this study, currently there is no distinct queer food sovereignty explicitly practiced by queer farmers or supported by an organization in Canada. However, queer farmers do engage in practices congruent with food sovereignty and present unique points of reference into how a queering of the movement would change it. To answer the main and research sub-questions, the themes presented in the findings will be used to guide the discussion. The literature review will be used to situate the findings from the participant interviews and to create a fulsome argument. The chapter will conclude with presenting further areas of examination.

6.1 Answering the Research Questions: Do Queer Farmers Identify as Practicing Food Sovereignty?

If there is a queer food sovereignty, it needs to be understood if participants identify with that movement. Research participants were asked if they had any guiding principles or reasons why they entered agriculture and how they conduct themselves in the industry. These particular research prompts were used as an opportunity to see if participants explicitly stated food sovereignty, or anything connected to the movement was something they employ. None of the participants cited food sovereignty as something they identify with or use in their practice. However, their responses do provide insight into how their practices and perceptions of the food system align with the principles of food sovereignty. The discussion demonstrates that the historical context and relationship participants have with agriculture, how they entered the industry, their search for mentors, and queer people's relationship to culture and place have influenced why they do not identify as aspiring to food sovereignty. The following sub-headings will support the claim that queer farmers do not currently identify with aspiring to food sovereignty, and that is based on its historical development, the use of organizations, and the main arena food sovereignty operates within.

6.2 The Importance of Food Sovereignty's History and Development

The historical evolution and current organization of the food sovereignty movement can help provide insight into why queer farmers may or may not identify with practicing food sovereignty. As outlined earlier by Edelman (2014), the historical evolution of food sovereignty

emerged amongst a class of society in the Global South experiencing significant agricultural problems caused by the expansion of Western countries' desire for cheap agricultural products (p. 962). The overall objectives of the food sovereignty movement are to return control of the food system over to local communities or nations, with an emphasis on sustainable agricultural practices (Portman, 2018; Leslie 2019 & 2017; Epting 2018; Li, 2015). The definition reflects the objectives of those impacted, in which food sovereignty is defined broadly as “the right of nations and peoples to control their own food systems, including their own markets, production modes, food cultures and environments” (Wittman et al., p. 2, 2010). This broad-based definition aligns with the historical upbringing of the food sovereignty movement and its objectives in which states and peoples became concerned with the expansion of Western economic institutions and developed a movement that could facilitate their reclamation of their agricultural systems.

Reflecting on the historical rise of food sovereignty, the main actors who developed the movement and its principles were peasant farmers in the Global South who were experiencing severe exploitation and an encroaching Western force. The antagonists in this context are Western nations and their institutions, whilst the protagonists are Global South nations and localized peasant communities. As food sovereignty has evolved into a broad-based food movement, its origins and orientation provide insight into how others might consider its adoption or if other communities may observe it. In the context of queer farmers within Canada or other Western countries, it could be difficult for queer farmers to consider the movement as one that is suitable for them to adopt or organize around, as it was adopted by communities and states in the Global South to counter Western expansion. This is not to say that food sovereignty isn't suitable for states outside of the Global South. Rather, queer actors in the Global North may not immediately identify with the movement but aim to practice many of its principles. This argument is supported by Figueroa (2015) and will be examined further in a following section. In the queer farmer context in Western countries, queer farmers are operating within the boundaries of the capitalist states who have historically been the antagonist that resulted in these counter movements developing. This can be seen in how La Via Campesina, the main transnational body representing the food sovereignty movement has echoed the purpose of food sovereignty: “sovereignty is the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity. We have the right to produce our own food in our own territory” (Via Campesina 1996, in Patel 2009, p. 665.). Food sovereignty organizations and the movement more broadly have emphasized states and peasantry communities as the main actors fighting for their rights within the current food system.

Communities such as the queer community may not recognize how a movement that orients itself in this way could be used to organize themselves, when they do not occupy a singular geographic region, embodied by a state actor, or have peasantry roots in agriculture. This critique is in alignment with Figueroa (2015) who argues that “underlying the many difficulties in adapting food sovereignty to a North American and urban context is the fact that this concept emerged from peasant-based struggles and rural movements in the Global South” (p. 499). Reflecting on the

historical development and structure of the food sovereignty movement, and the interview participants placement in North America provides a critical look into how food sovereignty's inability to expand its definition or reorient its lens to include marginalized communities outside of the Global South may make it less applicable or attractive to adopt by other communities. It is possible that this may explain why queer farmers in North America may not identify with practicing food sovereignty. Historically, the movement has not encapsulated them and was not founded with direct connections to their experiences. Understandably though, the food sovereignty movement emerged out of peasant farmers in the Global South so its objectives and structure are based on supporting their needs. To expand food sovereignty into the space of queer farmers outside of the Global South may require larger organizations such as La Via Campesina developing strategies aimed at targeting far removed communities not traditionally captured by the current food sovereignty movement. This highlights the important role an organization can play when advocating for people as well as building a collective of voices and vision.

Organizations play an important role in advocating for members but also establishing a collective vision and value, Burmeister and Choi (2012) echo this importance in the food sovereignty context. The Korean Women Peasants Association (KWPA) and the Korean Peasant League (KPL) were formed to advocate for peasant farmers and food sovereignty at the local and state level (Burmeister and Choi, 2012, p. 250). As outlined earlier, the KWPA and KPL were successful in having food sovereignty policies adopted at the state level through lobbying initiatives and building a collective voice through holding mass events (Burmeister and Choi, 2012, p. 256). Burmeister and Choi (2012) argued that the KWPA and KPL were also successful because of their ability to collaborate with other regional organizations with shared values to build bridges on indicatives to create a larger impact (p. 256).

In the Canadian context, to conduct this research a number of farmer organizations were contacted to solicit the access to their membership in an effort to invite queer farmers for the research. Only two explicitly queer farmers' organizations were identified. Both will remain unidentified for confidentiality purposes. Neither organization responded to an initial email seeking a contact person to discuss the project and did not return a follow-up email that was sent three weeks later. During the participant interviews it was discovered that participant three was a founding member of the Rainbow Chard Collective. The collective was established back "in the early 2000s to build a network. It has died off, but it was so helpful in the early years to help other queer farmers find each other" (Participant three). The organization was initially formed to act as a network to connect other queer farmers but did not have any broader vision or goals. Similarly, participant two developed a platform to create community: "I started the queer farmer Instagram to build community. I think technology has been really good in helping build community for queer people" (Participant two). Both examples are indicative of queer farmers' interest at the local and potentially national level to establish collectives to operate on larger stages and engage in broader discussion amongst their community. However, neither has been designed with the intent of creating a cohesive vision or values or advocating on the behalf of their membership. With the

current structure focused on forming a network and community, conversations around policy and government advocacy could not exist. It appears that because Canada has relatively few active queer farmer organizations, a policy black hole has formed which underpins that this community could benefit from an organization to assist in developing a more cohesive voice and vision for queer farmers. The references to using these platforms to build community will also be examined later in the discussion.

6.3 The First Generation to Farm

Along the vein of a scarcity of collective organizations or historical relationship with the movement, one interesting finding that emerged throughout the interview process was that every single participant was the first in their immediate family's known history to have entered agriculture. At first this finding was not an immediate consideration for further examination, but when queer farmers enter agriculture might provide a vantage into why food sovereignty isn't explicitly used to define their practices. Participant seven furthered the analysis and investigation when stating that "I find that queer farmers tend to be first generation farmers". No research participant had a historical relationship with agriculture, nor any generational knowledge to share or institutions such as family-owned land to utilize. Along with being a first-generation farmer, queer farmers longed for queer mentors, such as participant one: "I needed to be seen by that support and guide. It's hard to find a queer mentor but that's one thing I wish was more accessible. But then it's a question of where you find them?". As well, no farmer interviewed had beyond seven years of experience in agriculture and each one still referred to themselves as "learning" and "new to the industry". Without this engrained connection to agriculture or the food system as a producer, queer farmers do not have access to the traditional mentors or forms of knowledge sharing heterosexual food producers have (Leslie, 2019, p. 940).

Similarly, participant four discussed how they had grown accustomed to heterosexual forms of information sharing but would then apply what they learned in a way that better aligned with their needs and values: "Since being out for so long I was very used to taking information from sources that didn't really look like me or make me feel seen or represented and taking that info and turning it into a way that applies to me". The need for mentorship that is similar to one's identity aligns with the work of Leslie (2019), but this need goes beyond finding similarities, it also makes participants feel more accepted and safer being in the industry. As participant two notes through their experience on women owned farms: "I've come across women owned farms that are very sexist and gendered and not accepting to me". Participant two was not in a position in which they wanted to go into detail about their experience on this farm but noted that the misuse of pronouns and overly gendered work made them feel unwelcome but also unwilling to participate in the farm chores and in the end, not learn anything from the experience. The participant responses build off Leslie (2019) in which they argue, agricultural mentors are found to either make overt heterosexist remarks, or not express strong support or willingness to engage with the queer community (Leslie, 2019, p. 940.). Each of the participants are first generation queer farmers, they are in a position of requiring significant mentorship and support that is often provided to heterosexual partners.

As more queer farmers enter agriculture and the interview participants remain in the industry, there is an opportunity for the participants to turn into potential mentors for future queer farmers and provide that generational knowledge and experience. As Leslie (2019) notes, queer agricultural mentors seek out queer farmers to pass on their land and knowledge to, as they want the security of knowing their business and knowledge will be used by like-minded practitioners (Leslie, 2019, p. 940.). Based on their early entry into agriculture and representing the first generation of their people in agriculture, their relationship to broader food movements that call upon historical relationships to the industry, land and community might not be in alignment with their current needs to survive in the industry but also develop their own networks. As generations of queer farmers begin to proliferate and these research participants move into the position of mentors to new queer farmers, the next generation may become more in tune with broader food movements and in turn, identify with ones like food sovereignty.

6.4 Outside of the Concrete Jungle

The physical space queer farmers occupied became another sub theme that emerged throughout the interviews that hinted at why the participants might not identify with practicing food sovereignty at this current juncture. Urban settings provide a space for queer farmers to feel safe and seen in their identity but present barriers to accessing land and when land is accessible, it is often quite expensive (Leslie, 2019, p. 936.). Similarly, rural settings have more available land for farming, but queer farmers perceive these settings as unaccepting of their identity and disconnected from their community (Leslie, 2019, p. 936.). As participant three stated: “I moved from the urban space surrounded by more queer farmers and ended up in a more rural region with already very few farmers. Now I don't know of any other queer farmers in my community, which is hard”. Each respondent cited rural spaces as appearing unwelcoming to queer farmers, but some presented opportunities to circumvent this barrier and reasons for occupying the space. Participant two argued that “there are queer people near cities and queer farmers there too, but we need to show our community that you can exist in rural spaces”. Participant two entered agriculture and the more rural community they now reside in with the realization that their immediate community might not be accessible to them. This reflection can lead to isolation and a general lack of sense of community. Participant three used tools such as Instagram to navigate this sensation: “with the advent of social media, I've been able to maintain in touch with other queer farmers and my community”. Entering these spaces and using technology to connect with your community and show them that queer farmers and queer people in general can exist in rural contexts supports the claim made by Leslie (2017) that the general assumption that rural spaces are intolerant could be enough to discourage prospective queer farmers (p. 15), however the research participants have created mechanisms to disrupt this assumption. The broader impact of these participants' actions in rural spaces is unknown but presents an interesting frame of reference – they are self-aware that these spaces are perceived as unwelcoming to their community but trying to change this norm. Participant four expanded on this by reflecting on their childhood and representation: “growing up, I saw shows with queer people living in urban centres like downtown LA, and like my family is working class and a little redneck so when I'd see these queer people in media, I didn't really

connect with them”. Representation in rural spaces will become an important factor in assisting queer participation in agriculture but also highlights some of the shortcomings of food sovereignty.

As noted earlier by Figueroa (2015), food sovereignty has operated within a rural context and its translation to urban settings may be one of its more difficult barriers to broader adoption (p. 499). The research participants seem to echo this by highlighting their recognition of the barriers rural spaces might present to their identity and connection to community. To incorporate queer farmers under the umbrella of food sovereignty, the movement may need to reorient its principles and values to encompass other less rural communities. However, some of this study’s participants spoke to how they, as queer farmers, are creating pathways for change within these spaces and making them more accessible.

6.5 Answering the Research Questions: Do the principles of the food sovereignty movement align with those of queer farmers?

Despite the fact that no research participant explicitly stated they practice food sovereignty, their responses provide an opportunity to understand if the principles one employs when in agriculture can indicate alignment with the movement. This portion of the discussion will examine research participant’s responses to highlight that queer farmers are aligned with the broader movement and their businesses and presence in the industry is inadvertently guided by the principles of the food sovereignty movement. To support this claim, queer farmers’ reasons for entering agriculture, how they structure their business, their perception of the current food system and how would they change it will be used to highlight the connections between queer farmers values and the principles of food sovereignty. The principles of food sovereignty that will be referred to are destabilizing the current industrialized food system, ecological sustainability, control over the food system, and growing culturally appropriate food. These principles are considered paramount to the formation of the food sovereignty movement and seen amongst its many definitions. Such principles found in definitions can be seen in the works of Wittman et al. (2010), Patel (2009), Holt-Giménez & Shattuck (2011). These authors definitions of food sovereignty emphasize the importance of the movements overall goals of disrupting the current food system, prioritizing community-based food systems that are culturally appropriate and centering environmental sustainability. The sub-headings will support the argument that queer farmers are currently practicing food sovereignty principles and hold similar values, but do not see them as connected to a broader movement.

6.6 What Influenced Queer People to Farm

Every participant referenced their concerns for environmental sustainability as a key consideration and contributing factor to their involvement in agriculture as a food producer. As noted earlier, only two did not have other reasons outside of environmental sustainability for being involved in agriculture. Participant four reflected on the current state of the food system and its impact to the environment and saw agriculture as the vessel to make that change: “I got out of high

school and felt very restless and kind of frustrated with our food system and seeing so many things that really upset me socially and ecologically and I was looking at ways that I can make a change in our broader system”. Participant six saw that agriculture would support them in doing something around environmental stewardship: “we were struggling with our role in any kind of environmental stewardship in general, and particularly in, decarbonizing the economy and making a real significant change in that world”. The reasons for farming presented by queer farmers are supported by Sbicca (2012) who notes that queer farmers are “linking concerns over the degradation of the environment to industrial agriculture, bodily sovereignty in terms of gender and sexual expression (p. 44).” Queer farmers’ driving force was to have agency over their impact to the environment and their general concerns over its current state. This agency was also visible throughout their statements relating to why they farmed and agriculture’s opportunity for them to be in control of their identity and body, something that will be explored in a later section. Environmental sustainability and food sovereignty have been intimately connected as noted by Patel (2009): Food sovereignty does not “negate trade, but rather, it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy, and ecologically sustainable production.” (Peoples Food Sovereignty Network, in Patel 2009, p. 666.). At a high values-based level, the inclusion of environmental sustainability in food sovereignty principles is in alignment with the driving force for the research participants and the reasons they farm. Despite this connection to environmental sustainability, participants didn’t see organizations as the vessel to push an environmental sustainability agenda but that their individual decisions to enter an industry that allotted a certain degree of control and tangible outcomes was the desired avenue. Control for queer farmers was expressed as their ability to have autonomy over themselves and their decisions. This individual interpretation of how to exert control within the broader system speaks to the work of Butler (2020) who argues that “‘agency’ or ‘freedom’ or ‘possibility’ is always a specific political prerogative that is produced by the gaps opened up in regulatory norms, in the interpolating work of such norms, in the process of their self-repetition. Freedom, possibility, agency do not have an abstract or pre-social status but are always negotiated within a matrix of power” (p. 22). Queer farmers are attempting to form some kind of agency within the broader food system and are using agriculture as a means to do so. This attempt at utilizing their agency to a certain degree will be discussed further when examining other concepts such as food justice and the current food system.

6.7 Using Business as the Base for Change

In the same vein to why queer farmers entered agriculture, how they structured their businesses, and their practices provides a vantage point in how their values and principles align with food sovereignty. As participant two stated: “I’m not trying to grow food for rich white people. I really try to apply food equity principles in my farming practices. I am trying to grow food for my community, and I make that clear with how I run and market my business”. This statement by the participant aligns with the comments provided by Leslie (2017) in which they note that queer farmers tend to have anti-capitalist tendencies as food producers and seek to grow food for their community (p. 21.). Outside of directly trying to grow food for their community, the

businesses marketing was focused on building a community and making it clear that this business was queer: “I make my marketing overtly queer. Big words stating we're queer. I want our customers to know and be exposed, but also for other queer or questioning people to see us and know they're safe” (Participant three). The intent to grow food for your community but also to identify your business as employing equity-based practices and targeting the community you are part of presents an interesting opportunity to draw a connection to food sovereignty. Food sovereignty’s many definitions and principles include a focus on prioritizing food producers to allow them to grow culturally appropriate foods (Wittman et al., 2010, p. 2; Beuchelt and Vichow, 2012, p. 264.). Culturally appropriate foods are represented in a community and their needs. Understanding that queer farmers are deliberate in trying to grow food for their community and feed this community aligns with the idea of culturally appropriate food grown by local food producers within the food sovereignty movement. Similarly, marketing your business as explicitly queer and safe for queer people to access helps facilitate the development of networks and deeper community-based connections. This may not be an explicit attempt to grow for queer people, but it is deliberate in trying to create that access for queer people and indicate to heterosexual consumers that this business operates under a certain set of principles and expectations. This approach to building a business that is explicitly and front facing in a queer way is in alignment with Butler’s (2020) conceptualization of performative acts, in which the performance or action is an attempt to exercise power (p. 17). The use of a performative act to exercise a certain degree of power is operating within the degree to which queer farmers have found space in agriculture to use “agency” or “freedom” as describe by Butler (2020) earlier. The queer farmer in this instance is using the limited amount of space they have acquired within the broader system to assert power within the confines of the existing system and institution. This will be expanded upon in a later section.

6.8 The Current System Doesn’t Work

Every participant had something to discuss as it related to their understanding and interpretation of the current food system. The theme that emerged was “that it's an incredibly fragile system” (Participant seven). Interview participants saw that the current system was plagued with inequalities and that within the current “food and land is the site of so much oppression and historical oppression” (Participant three). Along with the inequalities within the current system, participant four argued that the current food system is “shaped by power” and that it has been “weaponized in many ways through things like colonialism”. The consensus was that the food system as it currently exists is not functioning to serve communities and is designed for maximum profit and the status quo (Participant four). One visual example that was provided by participant 5 was the imagery of “farmers who are barely surviving selling organic blueberries to some woman driving a big white BMW SUV”. Participant five used this example to underline how they saw the system failing producers and maintaining the status quo. The perspective provided by the participants is aligned with how food sovereignty came to be. As Portman, 2018; Epting 2018; and Li 2015, note, food sovereignty emerged out of the peasantry in the Global South out of frustration with the corporatization of the food system and dominance of capitalist objectives around

maximum profit and extraction. Queer farmers are aware of the inequalities within the current food system and how it is negatively impacting their lives, but also other marginalized communities. When asked how they would want the food system to change, queer farmers were unable to articulate a broad vision for its change. As participant six noted, “I am a food producer within this big machine, I don’t know exactly how I can see the system to change but I focus on my local impact and what I can control on my own farm”. Similarly, participant one lamented that: “I don’t know if I can play a big role in the systemic change we need as a food producer in this oppressive system”. Queer farmers are aware of the inequalities and problems plaguing the current food system and are implementing localized strategies to offset those systemic impacts on their communities. Participant two developed their business with these inequalities in mind: “I need to build a business that aligns with my values - equity, labour practices, sustainability. I don’t want to have a business if I can’t feed all sorts of people”. The most common role participants saw for themselves in creating any change in the system is as an educator. Participant four argued that “food can be a wonderful place for communication and understanding and solidarity building, you may not understand me, but we all need to eat and have our own cultures around food”. Queer farmers are clearly aware of the problems that plague the current food system and have expressed a desire for it to change, however, their understanding of how that change could happen is indicative of their disconnect from broader organizations. As noted earlier, organizations that collectivize people over shared values, vision, and goals can advocate for their members and lobby levels of government or other organizations for system change. Without these organizations present, it is fair that queer farmers are focusing on the closest space they can create change – their local communities and their consumers. The lack of organizational support or vision for queer farmers is underpinned by arguably the largest and most well-known food sovereignty organization, La Via Campesina, only have made blog posts as recent as 2019 stating their support for initiatives focused on the LGBTQ community (Gioia, 2019, n.p.). There have been no reported actions since the blog post was first published and no follow-up article written on the topic but also recognizing that these organizations may operate outside of the online realm and not provide a readily available update. Queer farmers align with the values of food sovereignty in the space of changing how the current food system supports food producers, however, without the necessary supports in place, their impact may be concentrated to local communities and not systemically.

6.10 Answering the Research Questions: How does the food sovereignty movement facilitate the sustainability and growth of queer farmers?

This research sub-question was developed while hypothesizing that queer farmers were going to have a more universal alignment with food sovereignty and explicitly identify with it. As noted in the first portion of the discussion, no queer farmer identified with practicing food sovereignty. Without identifying with food sovereignty, it became difficult to assess how queer farmers saw the food movement connected to their growth and how it could be used to facilitate the emergence of more queer farmers. Similarly, while attempting to find queer farmers and contacting queer farmer organizations in Canada, it became apparent that due to the lack of response from these organizations and the scarcity of them in the first place, that organizational

support and representation would make answering certain research questions difficult. There remain certain elements that the broader movement and its organizations can look to adopt to better reflect queer farmers. This includes remarks made by a few participants, such as participant two, who argued that “we need more visibility and representation” in relation to queer farmers and developing communication tools. Food sovereignty organizations can develop policies and initiatives to address this representation and visibility that queer farmers are requesting. Beyond representation and visibility, it is difficult to assess how the broader food sovereignty movement can facilitate the sustainability and growth of queer farmers, until the community is represented in these organizations and the movement more broadly. This thesis is not able to properly address this sub research question but will refer to it in “What Remains to be Answered”.

6.11 Answering the Research Questions: Are Queer Farmers Part of Other Food Movements?

Interview participants and the literature review on food justice provide insight into how queer farmers current actions within the food system might be in line with food justice but their observations of systemic inequality are indicative of a desire to shift into more radical forms of action such as food sovereignty. Cadieux and Slocum (2015) provided a high-level definition of food justice, as a movement that is more associated with urban activists and operates in the United States (p. 5). Reflecting on the participants’ identification with queer people existing in more urban areas and less willing to enter rural regions supports a rudimentary connection to food justice at first look. Expanding on this, Cadieux and Slocum (2015) note that food justice also utilizes a unique sense of place that takes into consideration communities and the social hierarchies that exist within each one (p. 14). This reflection on space and the different hierarchies within a community is congruent with assertions made by the participants that within their community, queer people experience different barriers and also must navigate spaces with certain levels of caution. This was true for participant four who had experienced a few unsafe and volatile encounters with members of their community, strictly on the basis of their queer identity. Participant four did not detail the particularities of these events but shared that these experiences occurred while they lived in a remote community working as a farmhand.

Comparatively, food sovereignty’s lens of examination in relation to space has been the nation state and the communities tied to geographic locations (Cadieux and Slocum, 2015, p. 14). Sbicca (2012) also notes that food justice has incorporated the concerns of a range of marginalized communities in its discourse at local levels, whilst also drawing from other comparative social movements such as environmental sustainability campaigns (p. 456.). This incorporation is reflected in every participant citing their concerns for environmental sustainability as an influencing factor in practicing agriculture. Their connection to food justice may be more realistic based on its active use of the movement. Both examples provide a high-level connection between queer farmers and the concept of food justice. As Clendenning et al. (2015) argue, food justice functions by maneuvering around the systemic forces in place that are caused by neo-liberal policies, and seeks to establish local, community-oriented responses to a lack of access to

nutritious, appropriate food (p. 170). Despite the focus on community responses to a lack of food, the explicit willingness to navigate the current system to produce the response does not align with participants' clear frustration with the current system and their deliberate efforts to subvert certain capitalist elements by targeting their community, creating equity opportunities, and using the physical space of a farm to escape the surrounding forces. Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) provide a unique conceptualization of food sovereignty as a radical food movement, which can be defined as: "calls for food systems change on the basis of rights, but focuses much more on entitlements, structural reforms to markets and property regimes, and class-based, redistributive demands for land, water and resources, as captured in the notion of food sovereignty" (p. 115).

Though interview participants did not make any explicit demands around redistribution, there was a strong emphasis on how the current food system is fragile, exploits actors, and is not functioning. These two food movements and the connection participants have to both provide an area of examination that could indicate their desire to radically change the current food system but, in alignment with their responses on how to change it, feel as though they are not in the position to do so. Throughout this research, queer farmers did not state that they identify with being a part of either movement. However, participants' responses and reflections can provide insight into how their principles and values may be more aligned with food sovereignty. This isn't to say one movement can be considered better than another, but participants' responses can assist future studies in understanding how these movements may evolve and their respective organizations may develop programming and policies to target specific communities.

6.12 Answering the Research Question: Is there a Queer Food Sovereignty?

The basis for this thesis was to understand if a queer food sovereignty exists. This portion of the discussion will draw on the previous section's arguments and other authors in the literature review to argue that there currently is no explicitly queer food sovereignty. However, this section of the discussion will provide a counter argument that despite the lack of an organizationally supported and transnationally understood queer food sovereignty, queer food sovereignty exists, and it is a process that will require supports. This argument will be supported by queer farmers' definitions of food sovereignty and what queer food sovereignty means to them. In addition, the discussion will reflect on how queer farmers have navigated the current food system and its connection to other food movements such as food justice.

6.13 What Do the Farmers Think?

Every participant was able to articulate a definition of food sovereignty and surprisingly, each one was very closely related both to each other but also the formal definitions used throughout this essay. As participant one articulated: "it came from La Via Campesina. To me it means that people have control over their food system, and access to it. It goes beyond food security in just calories and demands things like culturally appropriate food". Participants emphasized localized control of the food system, culturally appropriate food, but also described it as "a bit of a catch all term" (Participant 5). This is in line with Li's (2015) critique of food

sovereignty and its applicability to broader discourse in which they argue that it is a relatively ambiguous concept with broad strokes of intent that must build a vision that farmers identify with (p. 206.). Now, when asked to define a queer food sovereignty, participants often referred to their food sovereignty definition but added in a queer lens of examination. This included participant one who stated that “a queer food sovereignty would take what I said earlier and emphasize the different intersections in the queer culture”. Other participants related it back to community and emphasized that the current focus of food production in food sovereignty would be reoriented to queer people producing for other queer people, or as participant four stated: “queer folks as a community. Kind of taking more responsibility for maybe our ways of food production. Kind of in the way that over the last few years, we've really taken the hold of our cultural productions, so you're seeing, hopefully a lot more like media by queer people for queer people featuring queer people. Grown by queer people accessible to other queer people”. This statement is similar to participant one who defined queer food sovereignty as an: “emphasis on community. Queer control, queer participation, to feed queer people”. The focus of the food sovereignty movement on the control of the food system being within the hands of the localized community is thus translated into a queer context when attempting to define a queer food sovereignty.

The definitions presented throughout the thesis provide insight into how queer farmers define the movement and these definitions present an opportunity for reflection on what they see as the priority. Initially there were hypothesizing that queer farmers may not present definition that differ from food sovereignty when defining queer food sovereignty. These responses indicate that the current definition and approach of the movement does not fully capture this marginalized community. Though the queer food sovereignty definitions relied on food sovereignty as the basis for them, the distinct shifts in actors and areas of focus highlight that there is room for a queer food sovereignty.

6.14 What Will it Take?

There have been three main things impacting queer farmers ability to identify with the food sovereignty movement: their time spent in agriculture, a scarcity of organizations, and how food sovereignty has been practiced and is framed.

As noted throughout this thesis, queer farmers can be characterized as new to the agriculture industry, or at least in the space of food system research as producers. Being new to agriculture and their lack of generational knowledge or support, has resulted in relatively new generations of queer farmers entering into the food system as a producer and developing an understanding of what it means to be queer in agriculture and subsequently what their needs might be. As time progresses and queer farmers turn into mentors and more queer people enter the industry, a stronger understanding of experiences will emerge. With the understanding of experiences, there is greater opportunity for future research to take place to understand their needs and the broader system impact on the community. All of these areas of expanded research can lead to the development of a shared system of values, vision, and goals for queer farmers in Canada.

Within the same vein, due to the relative newness of queer people in farming, there is a black hole of organizational support. Until an organization enters into the space to fill this role and build a stronger collective understanding of queer farmers and their needs and advocate for them, queer farmers will continue to organize around their farms and develop localized supports in their communities but remain discontent with the systemic problems they experience and bear witness to. To develop an organization to provide a collective vision and voice and to garner support for a queer food sovereignty could be done through two methods. First, larger transnational organizations that have pioneered the space of food sovereignty discourse, such as La Via Campesina can begin to create a more relational visions of food sovereignty and to provide supports to localized efforts within other states for food sovereignty. Second, state governments can begin to form broad food system focused forums with select memberships to support the future development of organizations. An example of this is food policy councils, which bring together a distinct collective of food system voices to discuss emerging issues – in the queer food sovereignty context, this can be prominent queer voices in agriculture. Since queer farmers are not consolidated to one geographical space, such as the communities often referred to in food sovereignty, a reorientation of the movement and its area of examination needs to occur. This is supported by Figueroa (2015) who argues that shifting “the theoretical lens from ‘food’ to the social formations and historical trajectories that produce particular experiences of food, a relational, historically, and culturally grounded, ‘people-centered’ approach can highlight the social elements that create and/or strengthen resonant, locally inflected political strategies for food sovereignty in urban communities” (p. 500). This shift in how food sovereignty is oriented would support queer farmers’ broader desire to develop community around their shared identity and experiences and cultivate spaces that reflect their innate needs as queer people.

6.15 What’s Next: Building a Queer Food Sovereignty

Throughout the interview process respondents provided insight into how they navigated obstacles that they were presented with or how their own identity influenced key decisions relating to their business. These points of reflection and introspection highlight how a queer food sovereignty could be developed but also the key pillars that would be involved. This portion of the discussion will examine the major themes that emerged from interview participants that might not have been directly connected to a pre-existing sub research question. This will include how queer farmers identity has impacted their perspective on the food system as well as how community is the center pillar to their identity and intrinsic to their actions in the food system. These points will be used to highlight two distinct areas raised by queer farmers that have not been explicitly discussed in other literature but provide a unique vantage for examination and future hypothesizing.

6.16 A Queer Perspective

Each participant argued that their queer identity impacted their experiences and perspectives on and in agriculture in different ways. These impacts ranged from interpreting how

the food system affects others to how they experienced business. It became clear through the interview process that queerness was a factor in how the farmers experienced agriculture but also how they would reflect on the questions and what might be of the most interest for them to discuss. It also provides insight into how a queer food sovereignty might evolve and take shape based on these varied interpretations and perspectives. As participant one stated, “queerness is quite political”. Participant four shared a similar sentiment arguing that their politics and identity “as a farmer [is] inextricable and also my political identity is inherently queer”. Participant one continued by hypothesizing how queerness impacts other queer farmers:

“[Q]ueerness helps them see other communities or understand how their actions can impact others in the system. So, the decisions made around how to do farming are within the idea of queerness. Prioritizing hiring marginalized people, especially queer people. Or subsidizing food boxes for other groups to access”.

These statements highlight how queer farmers will approach activities within the food system and more importantly how they will operate as a queer farmer. Queerness therefore cannot be removed from how queer farmers conduct themselves as food producers and their actions within the food system are going to reflect their values and politics.

This cemented identity is also reflected in how queer farmers will enter and cultivate spaces. Referring to being in a predominantly heterosexual and very rural region, participant three found that their queer identity in farming “gives me this constant reminder that it is not always a safe space”. Interestingly participant six had found that queer volunteers and employees would use their time on the farm to discuss topics that might have been plaguing them for some time and argued that the farm and the act of farm labour created a safe space for other queer people to express themselves. Expanding on queer farmers’ reflection on the issues with the current food system and the belief that it currently replicates inequalities and the status quo, queer farmers politicized identity is a key contributor to this particular perception. As noted earlier, their identity allows them to observe and examine in greater detail the impacts on other marginalized people. The belief that the current system supports the status quo and perpetuates inequality might also hint to why queer farmers might be inadvertently practicing food sovereignty. As Cadieux and Slocum (2015) note: “food sovereignty continues to be cautious and antagonistic when working with states or state supported NGO’s” (p. 7.).

Similarly, as Smith (2019) states: “[i]n many conversations on food access and food security at the local, national, and global levels, food issues among LGBTQ+ communities are often neglected, further exacerbating food inequalities among this population” (p. 831). Without any organization talking about queer needs within the food system, expressions of discontent with the current system by the queer farmers’ should be expected.

Queer farmers’ recognition of the current injustices and the food system’s replication of them,

highlights how they observe the structural problems and general lack of action against them. A queer food sovereignty would have to replicate this politicized identity. Expanding on the idea of creating a queer space for queer people to feel safe, an organization would have to enter the large arena of food system discourse and occupy space to create that avenue for queer farmers to express and share their experiences and needs. Without this organizational structure, queer farmers will replicate this process locally within the fields but not necessarily see systemic change.

6.17 Queer Community as the Key Pillar

Throughout this thesis the topic of community has been ever present in discussions. This is seen in queer farmers developing mediums such as Instagram to connect with each other in rural spaces, to how they develop their business and marketing, or how they share knowledge and desire more queer mentors. Participant one clearly stated: “I want community in farming, I want my queer community with me in this space. I formed community in different mixers but didn’t often find too many queer people”. The desire for community is seen as deeply rooted in the farming community in general, as participant four put it: “There are many similarities to farming and queerness. There's a real focus on community, and community sufficiency, because like rural communities and the history of them has been less services and requiring each other and your neighbor to survive”. This longing for community and its deeply connected nature to agriculture could be reflected in other areas the participants touched on. As noted earlier, queer farmers found they were the first of their family to enter agriculture. There is no generational connection or knowledge to the practice so it is expected that one would seek out familiar faces and sources for support. Queer farmers have been developing community and seeking each other out to develop community but have not worked to subvert the current system. Queer farmers have opted to navigate it as it currently is and create change within their business and physical space; this willingness to act within the current system will be referred to in a later section. Reflecting on the authors throughout the literature review, the concept of community within food sovereignty refers to localized people under a collectivized umbrella acting against encroaching forces (Clendenning et al., 2015, p. 929).. This community is being connected through media platforms or has been considered not present within agriculture. Within the food sovereignty lens, this kind of community is not the protagonist acting against systemic forces as they are not all universally bound by a shared geographical space.

6.18 Reflecting on the Theoretical Lens and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical lens and conceptual framework that supported the development of this thesis provides insight into the complexities when attempting to determine if there is a queer food sovereignty. As Schiavoni (2017) articulated earlier, there are several ways food sovereignty takes shape and how it evolves (p. 1.). Food sovereignty is a dynamic practice that evolves over time and is neither solely state-driven nor society-driven but a product of interaction amongst diverse state and local actors over time (Schiavoni, 2017, p. 4.). As noted earlier, each participant was a first-generation farmer. This early entry into the industry is reflective of why none may identify with practicing food sovereignty but also aligns with the argument of Schiavoni (2017) that food

sovereignty is a process and requires time to adapt and evolve. Queer farmers could very well be at the beginning stages of entering into the discourse around food sovereignty, based on relatively new entry into the industry. Similarly, as noted throughout this thesis, without any active organization advocating for queer farmers in Canada, engaging with the state and other actors on food sovereignty issues for queer farmers is not plausible under its current conceptual framework. This provides a general understanding that food sovereignty is a process and its adoption amongst diverse communities will require time and potentially organizations to support queer farmers through these dialogues. This argument is supported by Desmarais and Wittman (2014) who depicted Canada more broadly at the time of their publication as just entering the food sovereignty discourse and embarking on a long path (p. 1169). The theoretical components to this thesis are in line with the works of Leslie (2017 & 2019) and Leslie, Wypler, and Bell (2019) who have argued for the relatively new and untapped area of research that is queer farmers.

As it relates to the theoretical framework, the contributions of Butler (2020) highlight how queer farmers, under the lens of queer theory, are working to establish their own points of control in self-made spaces. These examples of exerting control over one's body and their impact on the broader system highlights queer farmers' recognition of a broader problem with the current system and their desire to mitigate their impacts. However, queer farmers are aware of the systemic forces and problems and see that agriculture and being a food producer allots them a certain degree of agency in this space and the ability to create change. This space they are able to create and develop agency in, has been reinforced through their business practices. Queer farmers are using this agency in this self-made space, to assert a certain degree of power through performative acts by describing their business practices and employing certain principles. This replication of power within a space of greater autonomy draws parallels to Oswin (2008) who posits that "queer theory challenges the idea of the pre-constituted sexual subject and understands power as productive rather than simply oppressive". Oswin (2008) is raising the idea that the concept of exerting power is not implicitly wrong, it is the bearer and context in which that power is used that underpins its morality. Reflecting on queer farmers' critiques of the current food system and its replication of colonial power, countered by queer farmers' interest in controlling their own space to exert their own kind of power highlights how queer farmers are looking to subvert norms within the current food system but conscious of how they must function in this space.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This thesis aimed to address a gap in food sovereignty literature by engaging the experiences and reflections of queer farmers in Canada. Through the interviews conducted for this thesis, participants provided insights into how they observe themselves in agriculture, how broader food movements might interact with them, the distinct lived experiences of queer people, and ultimately, identifying how the food sovereignty movement might be able to enter a process of ‘queering’ to draw in new proponents of the cause.

The literature review contributed to further understanding interview participant’s reflections by drawing from peripheral studies in food sovereignty, queer farmers, and other food movements such as food justice. Findings throughout the interview process aligned with previous academic works and underpinned well documented realities for queer people entering agriculture. Despite the supporting themes that emerged throughout the interview process compared to the literature review, when cross-referenced with studies in food sovereignty, some distinct new themes emerged. The need of an organizational champion, or association to advocate on behalf of queer farmers in Canada, has resulted in queer farmers turning to web-based means to build connections amongst each other in the industry. The utilization of tools such as Instagram and participant’s reflections on wanting to build connections with other queer farmers highlights the benefit this segment of the population could have if an organization was able to facilitate this network building. Deeply connected to the work of building informal networks of queer farmers in Canada was the overarching theme of community that was laced throughout participants’ responses. It became apparent that community was an integral part of queer farmers’ existence in agriculture. Community can be seen in how queer farmers conduct their business and utilize different practices to support their community but also align their values with their practices and attempt to cultivate a space for other queer people. Similarly, when reflecting on how the current food system could change and how it currently harms segments of the population, queer farmers posited the importance of community in combating these systemic forces but also community as a lens through which they can understand the intersections of the current system. When presented with answering the overarching research question for this thesis, the reflections and literature review support the idea that there currently is not a distinctly queer food sovereignty, but that the movement itself can and appears to be on the precipice of going through a process of ‘queering’.

7.2 Limitations of Analysis

The purpose of this thesis was to fill a gap in food sovereignty literature and build off other queer farmer articles. Despite this overarching goal being achieved, there are a number of limitations that became apparent throughout the research that may have hindered its

comprehensiveness.

The first limitation was finding participants for this thesis. Having a wider range of research participants and more in general could support the development of a more in-depth analysis that could uncover other themes not yet identified. Due to the lower than desired number of participants, it was more difficult to analyze findings and present the arguments as being generalizable in the broader discourse.

Second, the content of questions asked of participants could have been shifted. Throughout the interview process, the responses were fulsome and detailed and following the final interview, the process of identifying themes was manageable, with themes being uncovered relatively easily. However, there could have been a benefit to asking more probing questions about participant's thoughts on associations or organizations representing them, to structural supports they might benefit from. There were many instances where participants did not have something they felt they could contribute to a question and would look to move onto another one or take the discussion in a different direction. To address this, a more structured interview process could have been employed.

In addition, the pandemic impacted this thesis in a number of ways. First, the agricultural industry broadly was experiencing massive fluctuations in supply chains and demand that resulted in many individuals becoming overworked. This may have had a lingering impact on the ability to secure participants. Despite these limitations in this thesis, it was possible to address its primary goal and highlight areas of further examination.

7.3 Further Research

Throughout this research process further areas of examination were uncovered. One broad area that requires further research is the queer community within the space of agriculture. The interview process highlighted areas of research such as queer mentors, knowledge sharing, business models and approaches by queer farmers, and queer supply chains. Participants alluded to these topics in their responses, but they were not discussed further as that would risk detracting from the purpose of this thesis. Another topic of further research is the concept of urban queer farmers and food systems. Every participant outlined that their approach to agriculture was on a relatively larger acreage not directly within an urban center. The importance of location, scale, and approach to farming could greatly impact queer farmers' responses to these questions but also more generally, presents an area for further examination. A number of participants connected the importance of community to the proximity of urban centers. Reflecting on the importance of community for queer farmers, their placement in urban centers may drastically change how they approach farming, whether it be through how they conduct their business to how they orient themselves within the broader system.

7.4 Final Thoughts

When embarking on this process of researching queer farmers, it was not anticipated that community nor one's queer identity would have played such a pivotal role in how queer farmers shape their business, and how they interact with and perceive the food system. It has become clear that queer farmers in Canada are actively cultivating spaces for themselves to express their identity and build a community centered around shared values and principles, and the farm is a space in which this journey is happening. When connecting queer farmers to the food sovereignty movement, it is clear that this often-overlooked community in agriculture has yet to be engaged with by the cause. This relative absence of queer farmers in the food sovereignty movement can be associated to a range of factors, such as a lack of generational connections to agriculture, a scarcity of organizations to represent and collectivize the community, and the fact that queer farmers do not occupy a singular geographical location.

Moving forward it is possible that the food sovereignty movement and its organizations such as La Via Campesina, can enter a queering phase and actively work to better engage with queer farmers – there are clear connections in values and principles between food sovereignty and queer farmers. Despite the fact that this thesis uncovered that there currently is no distinctly queer food sovereignty, it did highlight that there can be a process of queering the food sovereignty movement. This queering process can be best described by the reflections of one of the interview participants: “It feels like building community; to joyfully gather around food”.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

To start I have a few short questions to build an understanding of you and your operation and then we will move into some more questions that you can expand upon as freely as you like.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. How long have you been working in agriculture?
2. What sector of agriculture are you in?
3. Did you receive any formal education in agriculture? Such as diplomas, certificates, bachelor's degrees, or any professionally trained programs?
4. How would you define your method of agriculture? Such as small or large-scale? Conventional or organic?
5. How did you first get into agriculture?
 - i. Probe: What led you to agriculture?
 - ii. Probe: Was there a single moment that made you consider agriculture? How would you describe this moment?
 - iii. Probe: Did you think you would go into agriculture? (This probe can be used to determine the reasoning behind their choices)
6. Can you tell me about your views on our worlds current food system? Does your queer identity impact how you perceive our food system and your experiences as a food producer?
 - i. Probe: If so, how would you want it to change?
7. Do you think queer farmers are innately different than heterosexual farmers? Such as do you think there is a different approach to how they operate in agriculture? This could be who they employ, methods of farming, business models, etc.
 - i. Probe: If so, what are the biggest differences? If no, why?
 - ii. Probe: Are there any similarities?
 - iii. Probe: Are these differences expressed in how you practice agriculture?
 - iv. Probe: Do you think these differences impact how you conduct yourself? Such as your approach to business, building relationships?
8. What are the main principles you employ on your operation? Such as do you prioritize organic farming over conventional, or look for certain communities to employ on your operation?
9. As a queer farmer, how do you want the current food system to change?
10. How do you think you can get the food system to change?

Appendix B: Consent Form



**University
of Victoria**

Participant Consent Form

Queering Food Sovereignty: A Phenomenological Study of Queer Farmers in Canada

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Queering Food Sovereignty: A Phenomenological Study of Queer Farmers in Canada that is being conducted by Connor Williamson and Dr. Astrid V. Pérez Piñán.

Connor Williamson is a Graduate Student in the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by [REDACTED] or phone: [REDACTED].

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Master's in Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Astrid V. Pérez Piñán. You may contact my supervisor at [REDACTED].

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to understand how queer farmers in Canada practice food sovereignty and if it diverges from other approaches.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because the topic of food sovereignty is a budding area of research and queer farmers have not been examined in conjunction with the concept. Food sovereignty works towards a more equitable, just, and producer lead food system. To progress towards this vision of a more equitable food system, it is important to understand if this movement can meet the needs of queer farmers and adequately represents the needs of them.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are employed as an agricultural producer in Canada and identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include one interview that is expected to take 1 hour to complete. This interview is designed to be delivered remotely through the phone or video conferencing software such as Zoom. The audio of the interview will be recorded and transcribed for later analysis. No video will be recorded or stored for analysis.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including time during your

workday. Recognizing that agriculture is a busy and time sensitive industry, the interviews have been structured to best accommodate your schedule and can be delivered to meet your needs.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include the addition of new research to an emerging field of study, the inclusion of queer voices in the conversation of agriculture and broader food movements, and the recognition of the diversity of contributors to the food system.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be deleted, including any notes, videos, transcriptions, and correspondence.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity each participant will be given a pseudonym. The pseudonym will include the persons agricultural sector, provincial location, gender and sexual identity and age. The pseudonym will only be used when direct quotes are being used in the writing of the thesis. During the interview, participants are welcome to create a nickname before joining, as well as have their camera turned off.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by ensuring all research related materials including writing documents and audio files will be stored in a password secured file. This file will only be accessible by Connor Williamson and will not be shared with anyone. Connor Williamson will only share any research related materials with Dr. Astrid V. Pérez Piñán as needed.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared directly with participants and through thesis dissertation and publication. This will include publication on the internet that will be accessible through UvicSpaces.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of at the completion of the thesis and all research material will be deleted from Connor Williamson's computer and storage devices.

Contacts

You may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca). Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.



Appendix C: Ethics Approval

Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	Astrid Perez Pinan (Supervisor)	ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER	20-0611
PRINCIPAL APPLICANT	Connor Williamson Master's student	Expedited review - delegated	
UVIC DEPARTMENT	Public Administration PADM	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE	16-Mar-2021
		APPROVED ON	16-Mar-2021
		APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE	15-Mar-2022

PROJECT TITLE Queering Food Sovereignty: A Phenomenological Study of Queer Farmers in Canada

RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS
Connor Williamson - ,

DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING None

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL
Appendix 1 - Certification.pdf - 06-Jan-2021
Appendix 2 - Organization Recruitment Email.pdf - 15-Mar-2021
Appendix 3 - Queer Farmer Direct Contact Email.pdf - 15-Mar-2021
Appendix 5 - Consent Foorm.pdf - 15-Mar-2021
Appendix 4 - Interview Questions.pdf - 15-Mar-2021

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.


Modifications
To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol.

Renewals
Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.

Project Closures
When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.

Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlines by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.



Dr. Rachael Scarth
Associate VP Research Operations

Appendix D DECLARATION OF NYÉLÉNI



DECLARATION OF NYÉLÉNI

27 February 2007

Nyéleni Village, Sélingué, Mali

We, more than 500 representatives from more than 80 countries, of organizations of peasants/family farmers, artisanal fisher-folk, indigenous peoples, landless peoples, rural workers, migrants, pastoralists, forest communities, women, youth, consumers, environmental and urban movements have gathered together in the village of Nyéléni in Sélingué, Mali to strengthen a global movement for food sovereignty. We are doing this, brick by brick, have been living in huts constructed by hand in the local tradition, and eating food that is being produced and prepared by the Sélingué community. We give our collective endeavour the name "Nyéléni" as a tribute to and inspiration from a legendary Malian peasant woman who farmed and fed her peoples well.

Most of us are food producers and are ready, able and willing to feed all the world's peoples. Our heritage as food producers is critical to the future of humanity. This is specially so in the case of women and indigenous peoples who are historical creators of knowledge about food and agriculture and are devalued. But this heritage and our capacities to produce healthy, good and abundant food are being threatened and undermined by neo-liberalism and global capitalism. Food sovereignty gives us the hope and power to preserve, recover and build on our food producing knowledge and capacity.

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers. Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal - fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just income to all peoples and the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage our lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations.

In Nyéléni, through numerous debates and interactions, we are deepening our collective understanding of food sovereignty and learned about the reality of the struggles of our respective movements to retain autonomy and regain our powers. We now understand better the tools we need to build our movement and advance our collective vision.

What are we fighting for?

A world where...

...all peoples, nations and states are able to determine their own food producing systems and policies that provide every one of us with good quality, adequate, affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food;

...recognition and respect of women's roles and rights in food production, and representation of women in all decision making bodies;

...all peoples in each of our countries are able to live with dignity, earn a living wage for their labour and have the opportunity to remain in their homes;

...where food sovereignty is considered a basic human right, recognised and implemented by communities, peoples, states and international bodies;

...we are able to conserve and rehabilitate rural environments, fish stocks, landscapes and food traditions based on ecologically sustainable management of land, soils, water, seas, seeds, livestock and other biodiversity;

...we value, recognize and respect our diversity of traditional knowledge, food, language and culture, and the way we organise and express ourselves;

.... there is genuine and integral agrarian reform that guarantees peasants full rights to land, defends and recovers the territories of indigenous peoples, ensures fishing communities' access and control over their fishing areas and eco-systems, honours access and control over pastoral lands and migratory routes, assures decent jobs with fair remuneration and labour rights for all, and a future for young people in the countryside;...where agrarian reform revitalises inter-dependence between producers and consumers, ensures community survival, social and economic justice and ecological sustainability, and respect for local autonomy and governance with equal rights for women and men...where it guarantees the right to territory and self-determination for our peoples;

...where we share our lands and territories peacefully and fairly among our peoples, be we peasants, indigenous peoples, artisanal fishers, pastoralists, or others;

...in the case of natural and human-created disasters and conflict-recovery situations, food sovereignty acts as a kind of "insurance" that strengthens local recovery efforts and mitigates negative impacts... where we remember that affected communities are not helpless, and where strong local organization for self-help is the key to recovery;

...where peoples' power to make decisions about their material, natural and spiritual heritage are defended;

... where all peoples have the right to defend their territories from the actions of transnational corporations;

What are we fighting against?

Imperialism, neo-liberalism, neo-colonialism and patriarchy, and all systems that impoverish life, resources and eco-systems, and the agents that promote the above such as international financial

institutions, the World Trade Organisation, free trade agreements, transnational corporations, and governments that are antagonistic to their peoples;

The dumping of food at prices below the cost of production in the global economy;

The domination of our food and food producing systems by corporations that place profits before people, health and the environment;

Technologies and practices that undercut our future food producing capacities, damage the environment and put our health at risk. Those include transgenic crops and animals, terminator technology, industrial aquaculture and destructive fishing practices, the so-called white revolution of industrial dairy practices, the so-called 'old' and 'new' Green Revolutions, and the "Green Deserts" of industrial bio-fuel monocultures and other plantations;

The privatisation and commodification of food, basic and public services, knowledge, land, water, seeds, livestock and our natural heritage;

Development projects/models and extractive industry that displace people and destroy our environments and natural heritage;

Wars, conflicts, occupations, economic blockades, famines, forced displacement of people and confiscation of their land, and all forces and governments that cause and support them; post disaster and conflict reconstruction programmes that destroy our environments and capacities;

The criminalization of all those who struggle to protect and defend our rights;

Food aid that disguises dumping, introduces GMOs into local environments and food systems and creates new colonialism patterns;

The internationalisation and globalisation of paternalistic and patriarchal values that marginalise women, diverse agricultural, indigenous, pastoral and fisher communities around the world;

What can and will we do about it?

Just as we are working with the local community in Sélingué to create a meeting space at Nyéléni, we are committed to building our collective movement for food sovereignty by forging alliances, supporting each others' struggles and extending our solidarity, strengths, and creativity to peoples all over the world who are committed to food sovereignty. Every struggle, in any part of the world for food sovereignty, is our struggle.

We have arrived at a number of collective actions to share our vision of food sovereignty with all peoples of this world, which are elaborated in our synthesis document. We will implement these actions in our respective local areas and regions, in our own movements and jointly in solidarity with other movements. We will share our vision and action agenda for food sovereignty with others who are not able to be with us here in Nyéléni so that the spirit of Nyéléni permeates across the world and becomes a powerful force to make food sovereignty a reality for peoples all over the world.

Finally, we give our unconditional and unwavering support to the peasant movements of Mali and ROPPA in their demands that food sovereignty become a reality in Mali and by extension in all of Africa.

Now is the time for food sovereignty!