Youth, Food Justice and the Practice of Everyday Politics: A Case Study of Agricultural Resistance in the Spring Ridge Commons

by

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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This study uses the concepts of everyday politics and cultural resistance to explore how young people are experimenting with ‘free spaces’ in which to develop alternative ideas and practices within the food justice movement. Through a case study of the Spring Ridge Commons – a youth-generated free space – this research describes how youth are redefining relationships to place and to people by practicing alternative foodways like urban foraging; creating decommodified food sources; sharing skills and knowledge through peer-to-peer networks; building community through relationships of mutual support; and experimenting with non-hierarchical governance. Such practices have potential implications for child and youth care such as: reconnecting youth and adults through shared practice and meaningful work in “real life” politics and community building, reconceptualizing 'youth' and 'adult' such that both have greater access to acts of cultural production, and creating experiences of democracy in everyday life.

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

This research seeks to explore ways in which young people are politically engaged, outside of traditional forms of politics. Using a case study approach, this research explores young people's participation in the agri/cultural resistance of the Spring Ridge Commons, a publicly accessible urban food forest in Victoria, BC. This chapter begins with an overview of the context that frames the study, followed by statements of the research focus, research goal, and guiding research questions. I also present my rationale for conducting the study including my personal and professional experiences and perspectives on the potential significance of the research.

Context

The context for this study is the political nature of food, particularly as it is expressed through the food justice movement within North America and young people's (political) participation in creating alternative relationships to food. The many and varied projects and lifestyles represented within the food justice movement share a common focus, a move toward greater environmental and social justice through active participation in alternative food systems. Such food systems -- encompassing food production, distribution, and consumption -- act as alternatives to the globalized and corporatized agri-food system that currently dominates our relationships with food. The essential component of a corporate-controlled food system is that it treats food as a commodity rather than as a basic human need and right (Cone, Abbott, and Myhre, 2000), yet it does so within a rhetoric of providing food for the world's hungry (McMahon, 2002). This system produces more food available for *purchase*, which assumes an ability of those facing poverty and hunger to be able to buy food, while at the same time creating barriers to people's ability to produce food for themselves. While the corporate food system aims to provide cheap food, it does so at the expense of high nutritional values, good human and environmental health, fair pay for farm workers, and local autonomy of food production.

Food justice, in contrast, aims to build opportunities for alternative food production and operates within an ethos of democracy (Levkoe, 2006; Wekerle, 2004). Wekerle (2004) defines food justice as an "explicit critique of the global food system and a theoretical framing of local initiatives as both the practice of democracy and as means of de-linking from the corporate global food system" (p. 379). Food justice reclaims food production from corporate control and in so doing creates new physical and social spaces for creating systemic change and engaging in political processes that are rooted in place, culture, and everyday activities (Wekerle, 2002).

The food justice movement can be seen as a "new social movement" that focuses on both institutional and non-institutional contexts and the tactics and strategies of both formal organizations and culture as enacted in everyday life. While there are many formal organizations and institutional contexts related to food systems, food is highly cultural, as are the activities associated with its production and consumption. And these cultural elements and everyday practices of food justice are important in terms of theorizing young people's involvement in the movement as political. Furthermore, public and adult perceptions of young people's political capacities are low, showing little faith in young people's ability to represent community interests or to act as voting members of a community organization (O'Donoghue & Stobel, 2007; Camino & Zeldin, 2002). Youth are segregated from adults on the basis of age and are limited to the roles of student, athlete, and consumer (Camino & Zeldin). As a result, youth and adults have little contact with one another in the world of politics. Whereas youth experience restricted access to traditional political participation -- for example through age restrictions on voting and serving on the boards of community organizations -- and appear to be disengaged from politics, they are generating new forms of politics through acts of cultural resistance and production.

Outside of traditional political activity another form of youth citizenship and activism is emerging that is based in (sub-)cultural practice and production. Juris and Pleyers (2009) frame these activities as 'alter-activism,' whereas Riley, Griffin, & Morey (2010) describe them as 'everyday

politics.' Alter-activism is defined by “a commitment to horizontal, networked organisation; creative direct action; ... and the organization of physical spaces ... as laboratories for developing alternative values and practices” (Juris & Pleyers, p. 57). In the case of everyday politics, Riley, Griffin and Morey suggest that one solution to the hierarchy of adults over youth in traditional politics is “not to engage with institutions associated with governance and power, but to create one's own spaces in which to live out alternative values, shifting political participation to the 'everyday' individual or informal group level” (p. 347). In this study I use the term everyday politics to refer to cultural forms of political participation in addition to the concept of cultural resistance which encapsulates both alter-activism and everyday politics as it is defined by Riley, Griffin and Morey. Everyday politics is a useful term for quickly capturing the idea of political participation through culture and everyday activities, while cultural resistance provides a useful framework for investigating youth participation in the food justice movement.

Cultural resistance is “[c]ulture that is used, consciously or unconsciously, effectively or not, to resist and/or change the dominant political, economic and /or social structure” (Duncombe, 2002, p. 5). It functions by providing “free space” that exists outside of dominant culture and wherein alternative ideas and practices can be developed, by building community, and by acting as a 'stepping stone' into other forms of political activity (Duncombe). Essential to cultural resistance is Duncombe's concept of 'participatory culture,' wherein people are the producers rather than consumers of culture, including social and physical spaces, and modes of governance. In short, participatory culture takes a Do It Yourself (DIY) approach to politics through cultural production.

Research Focus

Young people's participation in traditional politics appears to be declining (O’Donoghue & Strobel,, 2007; Riley, Griffin & Morey, 2010). In part this may be due to negative beliefs about the abilities of youth to effectively engage in political processes and to represent community interests (Camino & Zeldin, 2002; O’Donoghue & Stroble, 2007). Alongside this apparent decline in youth civic

engagement, young people are creating new forms of politics and experimenting with the creation of physical and social spaces in which to develop alternative ideas and practices. This research explores young people's engagement in everyday politics through agri/cultural production and resistance in the food justice movement.

Research Goal and Guiding Questions

The goal of this study is to understand and describe how young people are participating in the agri/cultural resistance of the Spring Ridge Commons, a site of alternative food production and social practice. Duncombe's (2002) proposed mechanisms of cultural resistance are the basis for my guiding research questions. These mechanisms are a) creating a free space for testing alternatives and developing ideas and practices, b) building community, and c) acting as a stepping stone into political activity. The research questions are: 1) How does the Spring Ridge Commons allow for ideas and alternatives to be tested? 2) How does the Spring Ridge Commons foster community? 3) How are people organizing themselves and interacting with each other in relation to the Spring Ridge Commons? and 4) How has experience in the Spring Ridge Commons influenced people's understanding of their activities as political? Overlaying these was a final research question, "How are young people engaging with the Spring Ridge Commons as a site of cultural resistance?" Therefore, for every question that I explored, I looked specifically at young people's participation.

Research Design Overview

In order to explore young people's participation in everyday politics I have conducted a case study of agri/cultural production and resistance in the Spring Ridge Commons, a public food forest in Victoria, BC. I recruited participants for this study based on age and their relationship to Spring Ridge. I wanted to learn about youth participation in Spring Ridge from young people and so I recruited participants between 17 and 30 years of age. I made exceptions in age if a participant had been involved as a steward of the garden or had been between 17 and 30 at the time of their participation in the site. I also recruited participants based on their level of interaction with Spring Ridge, focusing on

site stewards and regular users, in order to gain insight into its organizational structure and most prominent functions for users.

Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, document review, observations, and participant observations, resulting in the following data sources: interview transcripts, websites and board meeting minutes of community organizations involved with Spring Ridge, and fieldnotes. I transcribed all interviews, summarized relevant information from documents using a document summary form suggested by Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), took notes with some quotes during observations, and wrote detailed fieldnotes immediately following observations. After data collection I conducted a thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), using coding procedures outlined by Strauss (1987). The basic approach consisted of the following steps: familiarizing myself with the data (e.g. through transforming raw data into textual documents); generating initial codes through open coding; searching for themes; reviewing themes through assessing their representation across interview participants, additional coding, mapping their relationships to one another, and mapping their relationships to the study's research questions and findings; defining and naming themes; and producing the report.

Rationale and Significance

My desire to study the food justice movement in the context of child and youth care comes from my own experience in the movement and my work with young people. I had an idea that something important was happening in the world of alternative food systems and that this something was related to the idea of DIY (do-it-yourself) ways of living, which I noticed mostly in the lives of some young people. Also, from my work in alternative agri-food contexts I have felt (and still feel) that food is highly political, a perspective that popular media attention has caught up to in recent years. Newspaper and magazine articles are questioning global food security, documentaries are making public the practices and impacts of agribusiness (e.g. the academy award nominated Food Inc. [Kenner, 2008]), and best-selling books on our relationship to food have made it into Oprah's book club (e.g. In Defense

of Food [Pollan, 2008] and Animal, Vegetable, Miracle [Kingsolver, 2007]. Likewise, the amount of grassroots initiatives is inspiring. At the same time that food is largely taken for granted in North America, our many connections to food coupled with rising media attention could make it a powerful catalyst in promoting greater political awareness and engagement.

This study explores the perspective that young people are creating new forms of politics through agricultural resistance and an ethos of DIY. These processes are occurring outside of our dominant ways of interacting with youth through facilitated programs in mental health, youth development, education, and so on. The significance of this study lies in the questions it opens up: What does young people's participation in agri/cultural resistance and everyday politics tell us about the field of child and youth care and the ways that we conceptualize youth?

I began growing food, learning alternative production systems, and bringing agriculture into my work and studies in youth care four years ago and in that short time I have consistently been introduced to a wide array of regional agri-food initiatives in Victoria; from consumption (e.g. The Island Chef's Collaborative), to production (e.g. City Harvest Coop, Haliburton Community Organic Farm, Saanich Organics, Spring Ridge Commons, Haultain Commons), and distribution (e.g. Food Roots Distributors Coop, Share Organics, local markets). All of this, as well as the personal connections that I have made along the way have contributed to my feeling that a global movement is occurring and that I am taking part in its local manifestations here in Victoria. It is my personal and professional experiences in food justice and child and youth care that brought me to the ideas to be explored here.

Definitions of Key Terminology

Agri/cultural production: The act of producing food and/or culture. This is a combination of concepts meant to highlight agriculture as an act of cultural production.

Agri/cultural resistance. Cultural resistance is “[c]ulture that is used, consciously or unconsciously, effectively or not, to resist and/or change the dominant political, economic and /or

social structure" (Duncombe, 2002, p. 5). I have extended the term to include agricultural resistance to represent alternative food practices within food justice.

Do It Yourself (DIY): A critique of "passive consumer culture" and the "active creation of an alternative culture" (Duncombe, 1997, p. 124). It also commonly refers to doing or making something without professional training or assistance.

Culture: I use a broad definition of culture in this study, specifically: "the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a … social group; *also***:** the characteristic features of everyday existence … or a way[s] of life shared by people in a place or time (www.merriam-webster.com). Specific to this study, cultural products include gardens, ways of acquiring food, forms of governance, and ways of relating within community. Such a broad definition means that cultural production can range from the simplest of everyday activities to the creation of cultural forms such as art and gardens, and that anyone could be considered to be engaged in cultural production, on some level. That said, there are processes of cultural *re*production, which I define as a reification process of existing cultural beliefs, practices and forms, and cultural production where new forms or ways of life are generated.

Cultural Production: In relationship to the idea of 'participatory culture' (below) this study will focus on acts of cultural production that reengage us with cultural forms that have been commodified and presented back to us as consumers. For example, within a corporate agri-food system, our primary access to food is through purchase. I will also focus on acts of cultural production that align with the idea of cultural resistance, or that create alternatives to dominant cultural forms. For example, our dominant forms of social organization are hierarchical, thus the creation of non-hierarchical relationships represent an alternative form of cultural production.

Everyday politics. Cultural forms of political participation (e.g. the cultural production of alternative practices, relationships, and spaces).

Participatory agri/culture. Seminal to the idea of cultural resistance as dissent is the concept of 'participatory culture,' wherein people are the producers rather than consumers of culture. As

Duncombe (2002) states, “the very *activity* of producing culture has political meaning” in “a society built around the principle that we should consume what others have produced for us” (p. 7). I have extended the term to include participatory agriculture, wherein people are the producers rather than consumers of food.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

I begin this review with an exploration of the food justice movement, which is the context of my study. I outline its defining features including what it stands in opposition to, what discourses it is embedded in and engaged with, and what it envisions for a better food system. I then focus on ways of studying the cultural elements of the food justice movement. I draw mainly on Stephen Duncombe's (2002) concept of cultural resistance to frame the ways in which culture and agriculture come together as a means of political dissent, in particular through the ethos of DIY and participatory agri/culture. I have not included youth involvement in the food justice movement as a distinct section; this is because very little has been written on the subject. Literature relating to youth and food-system and/or gardening projects focus on those that are run as programs facilitated for youth, often with educational or therapeutic goals. Instead, I have included relevant research and theories of youth political engagement within the broader areas of inquiry framed by cultural resistance: culture as political dissent, the creation of 'free space' for testing alternatives, building community, and processes of politicization. I conducted a review of the literature from a variety of disciplines, including agriculture, cultural studies, anthropology, psychology, sociology, community development, education, and child and youth care.

The Politics of Food

Our relationship to food is biological, cultural, environmental, economic, emotional, and political and this variety is reflected in the multiple interconnected initiatives that are shifting how we produce and consume food. Researchers, activists, and farmers are differentially concerned with local and/or organic food, food security, food sovereignty, public health, and environmental sustainability, to name a few of the many entry points for analysis of food movements. In this review I focus on food as

political: As Levkoe (2006) states, “we … use food as a way to … examine political and social relations within society” (p. 89). Specifically, I utilize the concept of food justice to define the boundaries of food as a social movement. I begin by describing the primary conditions for the emergence of food justice, namely the corporatization of our agri-food system and the two main guiding forces in food movements to date, food security and food sovereignty. I outline their usage within food movements and propose that 'food justice' holds better explanatory power while maintaining focus on the common element among responses to corporate agriculture: A movement toward greater environmental and social justice through active participation in alternative food systems.

Corporate agriculture. The corporatized agri-food system treats food as a commodity rather than a basic human need and right (Cone, Abbott, and Myhre, 2000). Ironically, it does so through a discourse of human rights that focuses on food shortages and developing solutions to feeding the world's population. As McMahon (2002) states: “A globalized agri-food system is thus constructed as a market imperative that becomes a moral imperative in a world of hungry people” (p. 204). Solutions favoured by a corporate agri-food system privilege science over local knowledge and economy over people. Such solutions produce more food available for *purchase*, which assumes an ability of those facing poverty and hunger to be able to buy food, while at the same time creating barriers to people's ability to produce food for themselves. Agri-business, chemical fertilizers, genetically modified organisms, corporate control over seeds (life) and vast distribution systems are touted as the only means possible for meeting the needs of the global population, while small-scale farming is presented as inefficient and incapable of producing the amount of food required to sustain us. Hidden behind these imperatives are the social and environmental injustices that the corporate agri-food system is built on. Thus 'cheap' food is produced to ensure that all can eat, but this food lacks nutritional quality and has the hidden costs of prevalent hunger and obesity, exploited migrant and third world agricultural workers, disenfranchised farmers, and environmental degradation (Cone, Abbot, & Myhre, 2000; Allen, 2008).

Food security versus food sovereignty. One of the propelling forces in food movements is the discourse of food security. The basic idea of food security is that everyone has enough food to survive, and it has been a powerful idea for both agri-business and alternative agri-food systems. That is, just as the fear of food shortage has been a successful rhetoric to support corporate control of the agri-food system, it has been a motivating idea for grassroots initiatives. For example, on Vancouver Island where the Salish Sea presents a tangible barrier to fast and easy food distribution, our existing capacity for local food production (i.e. our ability to produce the food we consume) is particularly troubling. Many individuals and groups have been motivated by the knowledge that we produce only 5% of the food we consume, and that without ferry access (or for that matter, any break in the global food distribution system), the food supply on Vancouver Island would be consumed within three days (Island on the Edge, Versteeg, 2007). In my experience, the term food security holds motivational power in that it tends to be very quickly understood. Quick comprehension of the term makes sense given our political climate of security, and given the fact that we understand very intimately what it would mean to be food *in*secure; moreover, it is very closely related to popular discourses of food shortages and rising food prices. But while food security may be a useful starting point for raising awareness about the environmental and social injustices of the dominant agri-food system, the term is also problematic, particularly because it is easily confounded with the dominant discourse described above, which masks the commodification of food behind the moral imperative of addressing world hunger.

As Patel (2009) states, food security has become "[increasingly irrelevant] as a guiding concept in the shaping of international food production and consumption priorities" (Patel, 2009, p. 664). Patel continues: "The terms on which food is, or is not, made available by the international community has been taken away from institutions that might be oriented by concerns of 'food security', and given to the market, which is guided by an altogether different calculus" (p. 664). The privileging of economy can be read in the first official definition of food security given by the Food and Agriculture Organization

of the United Nations (FAO), in 1974. Here, the explicit focus is on people's access to food through *consumption.* Food production appears only in reference to the abstracted control of production by the market economy:

> the availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production prices. (United Nations 1974, cites in FAO, 2003)

Later definitions from 1996 and 2001 (still used now, in 2011 publications) speak to "physical, social, and economic" access to food, but it is not clear what is meant by physical and social access[1]. In practice, food security is used primarily in economic terms (Levesque-Walker, 2011). For example, government funded community health research and community garden development define people as food insecure when they cannot afford to purchase enough food to live (Levesque-Walker). Such use of the term neglects physical and social access to food and also the quality of the food accessed, although these are outlined in the official definitions:

> Food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels [is achieved] when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. (FAO 1996 cited in FAO 2003)

> Food security [is] a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. (FAO2001 cited in FAO 2003)

Through its emphasis on economic access to food, the FAO definition of food security plays into the corporate rhetoric of increasing food production for sale on the global market and is de-politicized. As Appadurai (2002) states: "There is some reason to worry about whether the current framework of human rights is serving mainly as the legal and normative conscience – or the legal-bureaucratic lubricant – of a neoliberal, marketized political order" (p. 25).

Food security as it is currently defined, understood, and employed, is incapable of adequately

[1]Patel (2009) traces the evolution of food security definitions, outlining how they have shifted according to political and economic trends. He argues that the additional wording of "social and physical access" represented a small victory of non-governmental organizations within a political atmosphere of 'neo-liberal triumphalism.'

addressing the social and environmental oppression that is necessitated by a corporate-controlled food system. A critical shortcoming in the FAO's definition of food security is the relative focus on *consumption* by people rather than *production* by people, both in terms of directly producing food, and in terms of producing policies that govern food system practices. As Patel (2009) states: "[c]ritically, the definition of food security avoided discussing the social control of the food system. As far as the terms of food security go, it is entirely possible for people to be food secure in prison or under a dictatorship" (p. 665). Thus, food security as defined by FAO, limits citizens to consumer choice in relationship to how they access food. As such, within a globalized corporate-controlled agri-food system people are distanced from the sources of the food they eat, both geographically and in terms of personal experience.

Food sovereignty, in contrast to food security, is about reclaiming food *production* from corporate control. Leading the way in food sovereignty is La Via Campesina (viacampesina.org)[2], which defines food sovereignty as a necessary precursor to food security:

> Long-term food security depends on those who produce food and care for the natural environment. As the stewards of food producing resources we hold the following principles as the necessary foundation for achieving food security.... Food is a basic human right. This right can only be realized in a system where food sovereignty is guaranteed. Food 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 its focus on production by people rather than by the abstracted market, the definition of food sovereignty "pose[s] questions about the relations of power that characterise decisions about how food security should be attained" (Patel, 2009, p. 665). Through a rights-based and feminist analysis, Patel (2009) argues that the core of food sovereignty lies in "challenging deep inequalities of power" (p. 670). Food sovereignty is radical and politicized in that it makes visible the power inequalities in the

[2] Via Campesina is an international movement of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless, rural women, indigenous people, rural youth and agricultural workers. We are an autonomous, pluralist and multicultural movement, independent of any political, economic, or other type of affiliation. Born in 1993, La Via Campesina now gathers about 150 organisations in 70 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas (www.viacampesina.org)

food system and its detrimental effects. It also takes into account environmental and social justice alongside each other: "those who produce food and care for the natural environment." That said, in my experience, food sovereignty is less well known and less readily understood than is food security: For most of the general public, the political aspects of food are much less visible in their everyday lives and less individually tangible than is the idea of having enough to eat.

Food justice. Food security is a well known idea used as a guiding principle for both grassroots, small-scale food production and globalized, corporate food production. While it is useful in raising awareness and government funding, it is also problematic in that it is depoliticized. Food sovereignty, in contrast, is radical and built from the actions of small scale farmers around the world who are working to reclaim our rights to food, especially through access to land and modes of production. Unfortunately it is less well-known in Canada and lacks immediate recognition – out of 148 member organizations in 69 countries, only 2 are Canadian (Via Campesina, 2008). A third concept, which has emerged more recently, is food justice. Food justice holds in common with food sovereignty the task of reclaiming food production as well as an ethos of democracy (Levkoe, 2006; Wekerle, 2004). Food justice, by virtue simply of its name, also represents more clearly the movement toward social and environmental justice common to the variety of agri-food initiatives that exist in Canada. Wekerle (2004) defines food justice as an "explicit critique of the global food system and a theoretical framing of local initiatives as both the practice of democracy and as means of de-linking from the corporate global food system" (p. 379). Food justice responds to the corporatization of the agri-food system through local grassroots initiatives networked with policy-level changes and transnational resistances (Hassanein, 2003; Levkoe, 2005; Wekerle, 2004). Through food justice people are re-skilling to effect change, both in terms of material skills needed to produce food and the social-political skills needed to engage in the creation of alternative food systems. As Hassanein (2003) notes, food justice movements both confront and offer alternatives to "powerful and highly concentrated economic interests" that are the hallmark of agri-business (p. 79). I use food justice as a primary

framework for understanding food movements because of its ability to encompass the efforts of food sovereignty and its relevance to the Canadian context.

Democracy. Democracy appears as a key element of both food sovereignty and food justice, although it is more often used in the food justice literature. In Levkoe's (2006) words, "relegating food solely to the whim of market forces directly threatens democracy, putting profits ahead of the people who are involved in its production, distribution, and consumption" (p. 90). Food justice is "a struggle to build a viable alternative system outside the neo-liberal, capitalist marketplace and to reclaim the ethos of democracy" (Levkoe, p. 89). Similarly, Wekerle (2004) notes that food justice focuses on the "right to food as a component of a more democratic and just society" (p. 378). In general, there is a call for restructuring our entire agri-food system, with broader implications to society as a whole. Yet, what democracy means is not clearly articulated in the literature.

When authors turn to the idea of democracy the discussion tends to focus on more traditionally political and institutional forums for democracy. For example, Patel (2009) and Hassanein (2003) both highlight active engagement in decision-making and policy-building as a core element of change in the food system. According to Hassanein (2003),

> The best hope for finding workable solutions to conflicts about the character and direction of the agro-food system is through active participation of the citizenry (in the broad, denizen sense of the word) and political engagement to work out our differences. … participation is a key feature of democracy (p. 79).

Food justice also calls for a reclamation of people's access to and stewardship of the means of food production, such as land and seed, from corporate interest. The ability to mobilize resources and effect change at the level of regional, national, and international policy is without doubt an important aspect of the food justice movement, yet does not shed much light on the cultural aspects of the movement on the ground nor the relationship between non-institutional and institutional initiatives. Food justice authors contend that democracy through active participation requires engagement in decision- and policy-making in the agri-food system, connections between grassroots and bureaucratic initiatives, and

social transformation through everyday activities that create alternative agri-food systems (Hassanein, 2003; Patel, 2009; Wekerle, 2002). That said, I was unable to find concrete examples of transformation through everyday activities in the food justice literature.

According to Wekerle (2002), using the frame of food justice opens up possibilities for focusing on systemic change, engaging in political and policy processes, movement mobilization and strategies, and how these are rooted in place, culture, and everyday activities. Following Wekerle's idea that food justice initiatives are "rooted in place, culture, and everyday activities," I will be focusing on the cultural elements of the food justice movement as a place of social change, and to explore democracy as a core value and/or structure of the food justice movement. I will frame my inquiry into food justice as a contemporary social movement primarily through the lens of cultural resistance.

Cultural Resistance

Cultural resistance is "[c]ulture that is used, consciously or unconsciously, effectively or not, to resist and/or change the dominant political, economic and /or social structure" (Duncombe, 2002, p. 5). Duncombe is careful to note that cultural resistance is "no firmer" in explanation than its root concept. As he states, "culture is pliable; it's how it is used that matters" (p. 5). Thus, Duncombe offers boundaries to the idea of cultural resistance by suggesting how it may function. First, cultural resistance provides "a sort of free space" – from the "constraints of the dominant culture" – for testing alternatives and for "developing ideas and practices" (p. 5). Second, cultural resistance can become a focal point for building community, since culture is something that exists by definition when shared among people. Third, cultural resistance can act as a "stepping stone into political activity" because it "often speaks in a more familiar and less demanding voice than political dissent" (p. 6). Fourth, cultural resistance can be thought of *"as* political resistance." As Duncombe contends, if politics is a cultural discourse, then "rewriting … that discourse – which is essentially what cultural resistance does – is a political act in itself" (p. 6).

Cultural resistance as political resistance. Contemporary social movements, including alternative agri-food movements, tend to be understood as 'New' Social Movements (NSM). While critics argue convincingly that there is nothing "new" about NSMs, neither chronologically nor qualitatively, they do agree that NSMs and NSM theory show a relative focus on culture and identity politics, compared to social movement activity and theory in the past (Calhoun, 1993; Pichardo, 1997; Scott, 1990). Other social movement theories – namely Resource Mobilization and Political Opportunity – tend to focus on institutional contexts and the role of organizations in gathering resources and challenging authority, at the expense of studying the more diffuse and non-institutional contexts that NSM theory is meant to address (Canel, 1997; Haenfler, 2004). That said, even those studies that are applying NSM theory tend to focus on institutional contexts over non-institutional contexts, studying formal organizations rather than culture as enacted in everyday life (Haenfler, 2004).

From an activist's perspective, Duncombe (2002) notes that, "[c]ulture has been cast in a supporting role to the 'real' work of organizing. … A new generation of activists … consider culture a key component of their tactics, strategy, and campaigns" (p. 333). He goes on to consider potential reasons for the shift: "culture, in the form of entertainment and information, is one [of] the leading sectors of the economy …. Activists have become cultural guerillas because this is the terrain of the battles they fight" (Duncombe, 2002, p. 333). Alternatively, Duncombe (2002) notes that cultural resistance can be seen as an escape from politics, or as simply impossible. Cultural expression can be viewed as an escape to a "private utopia" where "an ideal society is conjured up … but outside nothing changes at all" (p. 6). The impossibility of cultural resistance can be argued from the standpoint of a "complete ideological and material hegemony" of the dominant system, that will inevitably repackage any cultural expression into the status quo. Perhaps this is why from a cultural standpoint, the end goal of a social movement is complete social transformation (Scott, 1990). What constitutes such a revolutionary social transformation is, however, up for debate. Duncombe (2002) suggests that revolution occurs when the culture of resistance becomes "just culture" whereas Hardt and Negri

(2009) argue revolution occurs when both the dominant culture and the culture of resistance are transformed.

Duncombe (2002) outlines three "scales of resistance:" 1) Political self-consciousness; 2) social unit; and 3) results. The first is a continuum from inadvertent cultural resistance to explicit cultural resistance, that is, whether or not a culture was created with resistance in mind, and whether or not participants in the culture are aware of any political intent. Duncombe also notes that cultures can be "appropriated for ends for which [they] were not intended" (p. 7). The second is a continuum of the social unit engaged in cultural resistance, from individual lifestyle on one end, to subculture somewhere in the middle, and on the other end society as a whole. When the social unit reaches the level of society, Duncombe suggests two explanations: 1) "the dominant culture and the power it props up are bound to fall away at any moment; or 2) "cultural resistance has been so thoroughly incorporated into a society of spectacle that its practice is one of political futility" (p. 7). The final scale – the results of cultural resistance – can be understood on a continuum from survival to rebellion, to revolution. When the result is survival, cultural resistance provides a means to exist within the dominant system "while holding on to a semblance of dignity" (p. 7). Rebellion also occurs with the dominant system but here cultural resistance "contributes to political activity against the powers-that-be" (p. 8). And finally, revolution, or the "complete overthrow of the ruling system," which is when "the culture of resistance becomes just culture" (p. 8).

Similarly, Hardt and Negri (2009) argue that there are both revolutionary and non-revolutionary streams of identity politics. However, for them, revolutionary potential is distinguished by whether or not a movement is willing to abolish its own identity. Hardt and Negri argue that "revolutionary politics has to start from identity but cannot end there:" If a movement defines itself primarily in contrast to dominant discourses there is a tendency to want to retain the identity that was formed through resistance (p. 326). Hardt and Negri (2009) outline three political tasks of identity politics: 1) making visible power structures in society; 2) moving from knowing to doing or from awareness to innovation

by creating alternatives; and 3) abolishing self-identity through transformation of the social structures and institutions that define the conditions of possibility for both dominant and alternative identities and cultural forms. There is a tension within the alternative agri-food movement between changes made through daily engagement in political and social struggles to "accomplish what is presently possible given existing opportunities and barriers" and the "complete transformation of the food and agriculture system that many movement actors and academic analysts see as necessary" (p. 78). The central question is whether "pragmatic, incremental steps" have the power to result in lasting change (p. 78). In other words there is a tension between non-revolutionary and revolutionary streams of the movement.

As stated earlier, food justice seeks to create an alternative food system and has implications for broader systemic changes as well. Duncombe (1997) argues that,

> in the overdeveloped world at least, the great driving force of capitalism has shifted from production … to consumption … any critique of the existing order must also include a critique of consumerism, and any vision of a new world must include a new vision of how culture and products will be produced and consumed (p. 105).

According to Duncombe (1997) – and echoed in the literature on food justice – "we need to explicitly understand that the entire system of consumer capitalism is what stands between us and the many alternatives being created" (p. 120). Both cultural resistance and the food justice movement call for a shift from consumption to production.

Participatory agri/culture. Seminal to the idea of cultural resistance as dissent is the concept of 'participatory culture,' wherein people are the producers rather than consumers of culture. As Duncombe (2002) states, "the very *activity* of producing culture has political meaning" in "a society built around the principle that we should consume what others have produced for us" (p. 7). Duncombe (1997) argues that we learned to consume culture through the commodification of our cultural forms. Similarly, the commodification of food is a key element in the corporatization of the agri-food system to which food justice is creating alternatives. In a short time we have learned to buy rather than produce our food. Thus we might also think of participatory *agri*culture, wherein people produce their own

food, as central to the food justice movement. In short, growing food is a political act.

Yet, as Duncombe (1997) notes, “there is something about the critique of and resistance to consumption that fails to command respect … the critique of consumption seems a privilege of the privileged” (p. 105). How do we critique the consumption of food when people clearly need to eat? Not everyone has the desire to grow their own food, and why should they not be able to purchase it in a supermarket? Moreover, since the discourse of food security is about having enough food *available for purchase* by the world's hungry, a critique of consumption would threaten our dominant discourse of a morally just food system. Furthermore, even those who do produce food within the industrial agri-food system are most likely to do so through monocultures in order to keep pace, so that they too are required to purchase most of their food.

Duncombe (1997) argues that consumption was “democratized” when those who were “producing the wealth of society were finally able to share in some of the fruits it had to offer” (p. 113). With respect to food, the democratization of consumption occurred with the 'green revolution,' with its emphasis on increased food production within the market economy. Duncombe argues that through the democratization of consumption people learned to “buy their culture” (p. 112). In like fashion, we have learned to buy back our agriculture. In terms of food justice, sustainable agriculture is based in large part on pre-industrial agricultural practice, part of a culture and identity that many are now learning to buy back through organic and local food.

Consumer choice and gastronomy are large parts of the current food justice movement and certainly demand for sustainable food is a necessary piece of the puzzle. Expensive restaurants highlight organic and locally grown food (the latter is often 'exotic' to consumers as local food is reintroduced into our diets) and help to provide steady business for small-scale farmers on Vancouver Island as well as actively supporting farmers through grants and loans (e.g. the Island Chef's Collaborative). Supermarkets now carry foods labeled 'organic,' 'local,' or 'natural.' Sustainable agriculture is perhaps best known as a consumer phenomenon and one that is available to only the more

affluent in society. This is what many young farmers in Victoria call the 'bougie' (bourgeois) side of the movement. While I see the importance of what might be called consumer activism, consumption implies a certain distance from the functioning of the agri-food system.

Duncombe (1997) argues that we are living in a society where our lives are expressed through cultural forms made *for* us rather than *by* us; where we are represented by manufactured identities. Where consumer culture requires that we purchase our lives and identities from a market driven by profit, participatory culture requires that we make our own and present ourselves. The identities we purchase to express ourselves are the identities of the products we buy. Traditionally a product "received its character and value from the person who made it and the use to which it was put" (Duncombe, 1997, p. 117). Indeed, this is part of the current appeal for purchasing from small-scale organic farmers. In contrast, mass production occurs through convoluted and largely invisible means: Product identities are lost through mass consumption and rebuilt through advertising. As Duncombe states, "creating an image for a product is a necessary component of selling in a competitive market economy, for it is a product's identity that differentiates it from an untold number of nearly identical goods" (p. 117). The 'real' history of a product within mass consumption includes "market strategies, research and development, boring and repetitive labor ... overpaid executives, colorless engineers, [and] anonymous factory workers," but this is replaced by "a more appealing fantasy" (p. 117). Likewise, McMahon (2002) describes the contrast between public image and the functioning of corporate agriculture:

> When we think about farming, many of us think about green fields and fresh produce. It is disturbing to learn that the institutionalization of new globalized agri-food systems through World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) regimes means that agriculture and food production has less to do with growing food or feeding people and more to do with power and the restructuring of capitalism (McMahon, 2002, p. 203).

Our status as consumers above all else has implications for how we express ourselves, how we interact with each other, and how we engage with our world. Levkoe (2006) contends that our

consumer identity is a causal factor in the injustice of our dominant agri-food system. He writes: “A major theme within the analysis of the global food system, along with the world it illuminates, is that our current course … is unsustainable and unjust. This stems from the increasing focus on people, not as citizens, but as consumers” (p. 89). Duncombe's (1997) writing on participatory culture helps to illuminate Levkoe's argument. When a product's identity is lost it becomes a “thing: a disembodied commodity or a glamorous image” (Duncombe, p. 118). Duncombe makes an interesting link between our consumption of such 'things' and our sense of control over our reality:

> As things commodities become distant, magical, and mystical – extraneous of the will of individuals. This 'thingification,' or what Marx called fetishism, is a way of seeing the world that then becomes generalized. All human creation from products and culture to politics and society exist outside the influences of human kind. The politics that stem from this way of understanding the world are inherently conservative: Things aren't within our control, they can't be changed, and you might as well get used to it” (p. 118).

Duncombe (1997) argues that “the ability of modern capitalism to include the public in its consumer dream has allowed the continuation of a system which systematically denies that same access to the centers of political and economic power” (p. 121). In the case of food justice, food is accessible through consumption but not production, and we are distanced from the decisions made concerning our food system.

Youth and Political Resistance

On a broader scale, Levkoe (2006) argues that we value people as consumers over any other form of engagement with our world, including being a democratic citizen. We welcome young people into the economic sphere of everyday life as consumers of goods and services, but public perception is that youth are “incapable of engaging in productive democratic efforts to improve their communities” (O'Donoghue & Stobel, 2007, p. 465). Camino and Zeldin (2002) argue that contemporary beliefs about youth “convey the implicit message of youth as a source of worry or threat, not potential. Youth

are not seen as being integral to civil society" (p. 214). Citing a survey of adults in Washington, DC, conducted by one of the authors, Camino and Zeldin report that "almost half of all adults had little or no confidence in youth to represent their community in front of the city council or to serve as a voting member of a community association" (p. 214). These authors suggest that the segregation of youth and adult according to age can result in "an exaggerated view of youth as other" contributing to "acute role limitation and stratification, whereby the chief meaningful roles an adolescent can occupy in society is as a student or athlete, or consumer" (p. 215). Furthermore, such stratification is linked to "a lack of contact between youth and adults in civic affairs," which feeds back into negative beliefs about youth competence in the civic sphere (Camino & Zeldin, p. 214). As O'Donoghue and Stobel (2007) state, "many young people express frustration, feeling as though they are not taken seriously and presented with significant opportunities for public involvement" (p. 465). These views of youth participation in politics may be related to how we conceptualize youth. Within dominant discourses of development, young people are considered to be not-yet-finished human beings (Bucholtz, 2002; Lesko, 2001). Lesko (2001) describes the state of being 'not-yet-finished' as a "passive temporal position, always 'becoming,' waiting for the future to arrive" (p. 58). It is an "'expectant time' – a moratorium of responsibility and of power" (Lesko, 2001, p. 58). Lesko further argues that existing in expectant time "may effect the identity crises that, in turn, prove adolescents' need to be kept with little power and few decisions" (p. 59). Through this process we produce a relationship of "sovereignty and hierarchy between young people and adults" (Skott-Myhre, p. 7).

Within the developmental approach, researchers offer youth-adult partnerships as a means to increase youth civic engagement and frame this work in terms of youth- and community development. In this view "strong communities are built on active participation and civic engagement of members, including youth" and at the same time, youth development is enhanced through community participation (Camino, 2000, p. 11). In practice, food justice projects (including holistic education and work experience programs) designed to engage youth in public life also focus on a mix of youth- and

community development (e.g. Andrews, 2001; Green, 2004; Hung, 2004; Lawson & McNally, 1995). In each case, authors described programs designed by adults with the intention of working with young people on community-level change and on giving more decision-making power to youth. One of the challenges of this approach is unlearning the traditional distribution of power between adults and youth to create more egalitarian relationships (Camino, 2000; Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007). In their examination of effective adult-youth partnerships, O'Donoghue and Stobel (2007) note that adults must "continually check their sense and use of power" (p. 481). And as Evans and Prilleltensky state, without more youth power, youth-adult partnerships are "merely cosmetic" (p. 690).

As researchers and practitioners of youth- and community development work to build adult-youth partnerships within existing institutions in order to increase youth participation in the existing civic sphere, another form of youth citizenship is occurring, wherein youth power is not given, but rather comes from the creative expression of alternative values and practices (Feixa, Pereira, & Juris, 2009; Juris & Pleyers, 2009). Juris and Pleyers argue that what they call alter-activism "represents an alternative mode of (sub-)cultural practice and an emerging form of citizenship among young people" (p. 57). The authors describe several defining features of alter-activism, many of which relate to cultural resistance as expressed through the food justice movement, these are: "a commitment to horizontal, networked organisation; creative direct action; ... and the organization of physical spaces ... as laboratories for developing alternative values and practices" (p. 57). Cultural practice as citizenship provides another lens through which to view young people's political engagement and cultural resistance as political resistance. In particular, the concepts of DIY and participatory culture may provide an alternative means of exploring how youth enact resistance.

Do It Yourself (DIY). Do-It-Yourself (DIY) is the essence of Duncombe's (1997) concept of participatory culture, and surfaces repeatedly in studies of cultural resistances, in particular those related to punk and youth cultures (e.g. Culton, K. R. & Holtzman, B., 2010). Importantly, DIY is both a critque of "passive consumer culture" and the "active creation of an alternative culture"

(Duncombe, p. 124). As stated earlier, to provide for oneself in a consumer society is an act of cultural resistance. It is also an act of creativity, which as Skott-Myhre (2007) argues, is marginalized in our capitalist system. Similar to Hardt and Negri (2009), Duncombe (1997, 2002) highlights the act of creation in resistance – the importance of demonstrating what you are fighting *for* as well as what you are fighting against. The creative force in the food justice movement is, primarily, the reclamation of food production. The cultural expression of the movement is performed creatively in opposition to being positioned in the role of consumer through inability to access land and disconnection from modes of production. Skott-Myhre (2007) speaks to modes of production as they are ascribed to youth and adults, and how these ascriptions create a learned separation from creative production. He writes: "the world of the youth with its relative creative freedom and capacity for 'resistance' and 'rebellion,' must be created as not only unavailable to the adult but unattractive and unhealthy as well. The adult's 'childish' desire to be fully and playfully creative must always be turned to the benefit of the dominant system. *It is important to be constantly productive but not necessarily creative"* (p. 8-9, emphasis added). Skott-Myhre argues that youth comprise an "ambiguous category of social subjects that still maintains some freedom over their own creative production" (p. 5). Skott-Myhre proposes that we "recuperate youth and child as attributes of political force common to all human subjects rather than as binary, rigidly defined categories, contrasted to adulthood" (p. 9).

Mechanisms of Cultural Resistance

Free space. Returning to the proposed mechanisms of cultural resistance, free space refers to both physical and social spaces that promote the development of alternative practices and ideas (Duncombe, 2002). Importantly, these spaces occur outside of "the constraints of the dominant culture" (Duncombe, p. 5). An example of free space can be seen in the idea of "everyday politics" put forward by Riley, Griffin, and Morey (2010). As youth participation in traditional politics has declined, so it has

increased in “new, alternative forms of political and social participation” (p. Riley, Griffin, & Morey, 2010, p. 346). These alternative forms are activity-based, unofficial, and located at the individual or informal group level (Harris, 2001 as cited in Riley, Griffin & Morey). The authors argue that “neo-liberalism and its discourses around the rights and responsibilities to manage oneself and reduction in the efficacy of democratic representation, have come together to create the conditions of possibility for the practices of everyday politics to make sense” (p. 358). In the case of everyday politics: “One solution … is … not to engage with institutions associated with governance and power, but to create one's own spaces in which to live out alternative values, shifting political participation to the 'everyday' individual or informal group level” (Riley, Griffin & Morey, p. 347).

Riley, Griffin & Morey (2010) argue that everyday politics is political participation through consumption, which they frame as particularly relevant within a neo-liberal rhetoric that emphasizes individual choice over social structures (e.g. class) in how people are expected to understand and resolve problems. With respect to the food justice movement however, I argue that everyday politics, or sovereignty over one's own existence occurs through creative production more so than through consumption. There is certainly a consumer activism within the food justice movement that includes purchasing local and/or organic foods; however, this requires a socio-economic status that many young people do not have. Environmentally and socially just food, within a corporate food system, is the least accessible option. Moreover, the political core of everyday politics as defined by Riley, Griffin and Morey, is the emphasis on having sovereignty over one's own existence, which is by definition productive. Drawing from the concept of 'puissance' in neo-tribal theory, the authors define sovereignty of one's own existence as: “creat[ing] temporary spaces in which to participate in a set of shared practices” (p. 349). At the core of the concept is creation of space, not consumption of space. Furthermore, as Bucholtz (2002) would argue, culture is created through practice, thus the shared practices for which these spaces are created, serve to produce culture. Everyday politics represents a form of cultural production through social practice.

More specific to food justice, academics describe the movement as one that creates new institutions, new social identities, and democratic spaces (Hassanein, 2003; Mair, 2005). The question is, how? If free space is the realm in which these alternative forms of organization are tested, what form does it take? Duncombe (1998) suggests that zines function as a "virtual cafe" that provides space for communication around ideas; however, within the food justice movement it is necessary to also consider how physical space and place might function in creating alternative culture and agriculture. Indeed, one of the main features of food justice movements, is their potential to re-embed people in time and place through direct engagement with land and farmers (DeLind, 2008; McMahon, 2002). In Duncombe's analysis of zines, the means of production are accessible and so "the decision to create, not buy back, your identity has been democratized" (p. 129). In terms of food production, the means of production are more difficult to acquire, in particular, land access. As Patel (2009) argues: "in a country with equal rights to property for all, the fact that some have more resources than others, and therefore are able to command more property than others, reflects underlying, and persistent, inequalities in power that make the ability to trade property much less substantive than its neoliberal promoters would argue" (p. 670). Indeed, the biggest barrier facing young farmers on Vancouver Island is access to land, where land prices are too high and the pay too low for young farmers to be able to make ends meet. (Switch, Porter-Bopp, 2010; A Night Celebrating Young Farmers, May 8, 2011).

Building community. Duncombe (2002) also suggests that cultural resistance can be a focal point for building community, which can be seen throughout the food justice movement in initiatives such as community gardens and community supported agriculture (CSA). These are part of an intent to move away from the commodification of food and human relationships toward thinking about food "as the embodiment of relationships (McMahon, 2002, p. 204). Also, food is a social and cultural expression of identity and reflects how we organize ourselves as a society; as such, it is a useful avenue for examining social relations (Levkoe, 2006; Mair, 2005).Likewise, culture conveys its politics through form as well as content: *How* a message is conveyed can support or alter *what* it means to

convey (Duncombe, 2002). Understanding the relationship between content and form, social movement theory offers the idea of 'self-exemplification:' The values espoused in a movement are enacted in its structure and form (Calhoun, 1993). In the case of food justice, democracy is argued to be the core of the movement and so we can ask if and how democracy shows itself in the form as well as the content of food justice as cultural resistance. One example from an organizational perspective is La Via Campesina, which enacts values of democratic process by the "in-principle absence of a policy-making secretariat. Integral to the functioning of Via Campesina is the absence of a sovereign authority dictating what any member organisation [sic] or country can do" (Patel, 2009, p. 669). In the current study, the question is how people are organizing themselves and interacting with each other as they create and live an alternative agri-food system.

Politicization. Finally, cultural resistance can act as a 'stepping stone' into political activity. While I argue that the cultural resistance of food justice is already a political act, there remains the question of how involvement may lead to other kinds of political engagement. This is especially so given that food justice has wide-reaching political implications that extend beyond food to how we organize our society as a whole. Haenfler's (2004) study of the straight edge movement is one example of politicization through cultural resistance. The straight edge movement is a form of punk culture that takes maintaining a sober lifestyle as its core value. Members are brought together largely through the identity of being clean (straight edge) and also through music. In Haenfler's interviews with members of the straight edge movement, many described how their involvement in the community led them to particular places, spaces, and ideas. As a result, some members became more knowledgeable about and more active in a variety of political activities. One question, then, is how might people involved in food justice become politicized?

Chapter Summary

The context for this study is the commodification of food and culture and the associated

positioning of people as consumers first and foremost. Youth, in particular, have greater access to the role of consumer than they do to the role of democratic citizen. While work in community development and holistic education aims to increase youth participation in the public sphere through creating more egalitarian relationships with adults and engaging in meaningful work together, these approaches can also be limited by the institutional structures within which they function (Camino, 2000; Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007; O'Donoghue and Stoble, 2007). Another perspective on youth participation in politics looks outside of traditional forms of political involvement towards youth activism within food justice as a new social movement. Such a perspective focuses on the cultural expression of the movement and on young people's creative production of alternative spaces and practices, based on the values of social and environmental justice and democratic participation. In short this perspective looks at how youth are engaging in everyday politics. Food justice, through agri/cultural resistance challenges and creates alternatives to the commodification of food and culture and positions people as creative producers of our own livelihoods.

Chapter Three: Method

I have previously stated that food justice as agri/cultural resistance challenges and creates alternatives to the commodification of food and culture and positions people as creative producers of our own livelihoods. Central to this idea is the reappropriation of the modes of production from a corporatized food system; creating a shift from consumption to production. As Wekerle (2004) describes it, food justice frames local initiatives as a "means of de-linking from the corporate global food system" (p. 379). This research views the act of growing food in a sustainable way, at the local level, as an act of agri/cultural resistance and asks specifically about how youth are participating in the process. Although much attention is being paid to food in popular media and in local and sustainable initiatives taking place around the world, academic research into food justice and in particular its relationship to community capacity and youth participation is relatively limited. Moreover, illustrative examples of cultural resistance theory are limited to art as cultural production. In this study I aim to expand the scope of cultural resistance to include agri/cultural production and in so doing, further explicate cultural resistance in action, specifically with regard to how youth are participating in agri/cultural resistance in the particular context of the SpringRidge Common.

Research Design

This research aims to describe one way in which the food justice movement is enacted in everyday life. To do this I have chosen a case study design. As Yin (2009) states, "the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (p. 4). The subject of this study is the Spring Ridge Commons, a publicly accessible 'food forest' garden just outside of Victoria's downtown core. Out of the many alternative food projects in Victoria I chose to study the Spring Ridge Commons because of its history and uniqueness: The garden is a well-known and long-standing project that pushes the boundaries of what is normally considered alternative food

production. I have describe the Spring Ridge Commons in greater detail at the end of this chapter.

According to Yin (2009) case study inquiry "benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (p. 18). Likewise, Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that within-case sampling must be theoretically driven, whether prespecified or emergent. Guiding questions and within-case sampling for this study are based on the mechanisms of cultural resistance proposed by Duncombe (2002). As I outlined in the literature review, Duncombe (2002) argues that cultural resistance is political resistance. He also suggests ways of thinking about how cultural resistance functions, namely: a) by creating 'free space' for testing alternatives, b) by building community, and c) by acting as a 'stepping stone' into political activity.

Guiding research questions. 1) How does the Spring Ridge Commons allow for ideas and alternatives to be tested? 2) How does the Spring Ridge Commons foster community? 3) How are people organizing themselves and interacting with each other in relation to the Spring Ridge Commons? 4) How has experience in the Spring Ridge Commons (self-guided or through organized events) influenced young people's understanding of their activities as political? 5) How are young people engaging with the Spring Ridge Commons as a site of cultural resistance?

Within-case sampling. Miles and Huberman note that regardless of the definition of a case, "a qualitative researcher has many within-case sampling decisions: Which *activities, processes, events, times, locations,* and *role partners* will I sample?" (p. 29). Of these categories I was particularly interested in activities, processes, and events.

***Activities*.** The central activity in agri/cultural resistance is producing food at a local level either for oneself, within a community structure, or on a small commercial scale. In the case of the SpringRidge Common, food production activities include site care and maintenance such as soil preparation, weeding, and pruning, harvesting, and propagation of edible plants. Data sources for food production activities included participant observation during work parties as well as site observations and interviews. Spring Ridge is also a public space used for purposes other than food production.

During my observations and interviews I remained open to any ways in which people engage with the space, for instance for recreational purposes. In addition, one of the primary goals of the Spring Ridge Commons is to act as a demonstration site where people can learn about sustainable food production and it is often used as a venue for workshops facilitated by local groups. My data source for educational activities was limited to interviews as there were no scheduled workshops that I was aware of during my data collection period.

Processes. I was interested to know more about the organizational and decision-making processes that might illuminate how Spring Ridge functions as a common. The primary data source for organizational processes were interviews with coordinators of the project. I asked each coordinator an open question, "tell me about your experience as an organizer for the Common" and followed with more specific questions according to their experience. Also, cultural resistance suggests processes of community building and politicization. Again, the primary data source for gaining insight into these processes was interviews. I also used documents as a data source for organizational processes. Various organizations involved with Spring Ridge described the organizational structure of the Commons and provided documentation of decisions through meeting minutes.

Events. Events at the Spring Ridge Commons include work parties, educational workshops, and community gatherings. During my data collection period I observed work parties designed to engage community members in caring for the site. I also sampled from my own previous experience facilitating educational workshops in the garden. Educational events were also referenced by participants during interviews.

Participants

I recruited participants based on age and their relationship with the Spring Ridge Commons. My goal was to recruit participants who were either coordinators of the project / site stewards (group one) or regular users of the site (group two). Group one was of interest because of their support to Spring Ridge as a public, common resource. Group two was of interest because they provide insight

into how Spring Ridge is used by people in their everyday lives. Because of my focus on youth participation I also aimed to recruit participants between 17 and 30 years of age. I made an exception if a participant was currently or had been in a coordinating role, especially if they were in this role while between the ages of 17-30. I also felt that it was important to speak with the current coordinator of the project, although she is of retirement age, in order to gain a sense of the garden's current functioning. I spoke with five people for this study, including the creator of the garden, the current coordinator, two past stewards / regular users, and 1 regular user. All participants except for the current coordinator were between the ages of 24 and 35. The following is a list of participants according to their age and type of involvement in the Spring Ridge Commons. Names have been changed where requested to protect participant anonymity.

Deanna: age 24, past steward (at age 22), regular user

Trevor: age 25, regular user

Geoff: age 35, created the garden (at age 23), past steward, regular user

Tamara: age 35, past steward (in early 30's), past regular user

Linda: age 50+, current coordinator

I recruited participants through an "event page" on the Spring Ridge Commons' Facebook page as well as through my own contacts and people who were recommended to me. I contacted Linda and Geoff personally given their roles as current coordinator and initial steward respectively. In addition, two participants responded to the Facebook event page and one participant volunteered during a chance meeting in the Commons itself.

Procedure

In order to cover the range of sampling categories described above, I collected data from multiple sources, including interviews, observation, participant observation, and documents.

Interviews. I used semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews for this study. I conducted the interviews in a conversational way such that questions were asked in varying order and with a variety

of follow up questions according to the flow of each particular conversation. Interviews were conducted in participant homes, the Fernwood Community Centre, and the Cornerstone Cafe according to participant choice. Interviews lasted between 1 hour and 1.5 hours. Interview questions were a mix of open-ended and theoretically driven. I used open-ended questions to allow space for participants to articulate their experience of the Spring Ridge Commons outside of the framework of cultural resistance. Before beginning interviews I explained cultural resistance as the conceptual framework for the study; however, where appropriate I used common language rather than theoretical. For example, instead of asking about Spring Ridge as a "free space" I used descriptors for the concept such as "alternative" and "non-mainstream." I also prepared multiple questions to address each concept or area of study in order to increase the probability of asking the question in a way that would make sense to different participants. I also prefaced interviews by explaining my focus on youth, as such interviewees tended to reply with respect to the site as a whole and also with respect to youth in particular, or from the own experiences as young people involved in the Commons. Appendix A: Interview Schedule Based on Research Questions, shows the interview questions that I used and how they relate to the research questions of this study.

I transcribed the interviews verbatim using Express Scribe software. I left out any utterances such as "um" and "uh" unless they appeared to be related to how a participant was answering a question. For example, if a pause in speech seemed to indicate a response that may be sensitive politically and thus required care in articulating. In the transcripts I used "..." to indicate utterances left out of the transcript and ".." to indicate a pause in the participant's speech. In the excerpts used for analysis "[...]" indicates parts of the excerpt that I removed for the quote.

Observations. As a resident of Fernwood, my experience is that afternoons and weekends are busier times in the neighbourhood. I was also curious to see how students from the neighbouring high school interacted with the site during and after school and so focused my observations on afternoons (between noon and 4:30pm). I observed four periods of 0.5-1.5 hours, taking notes while on

site and then typing them out in full afterward. On several occasions I had conversations with people using the site and on a few occasions became a participant observer as I helped Linda with site maintenance. I also collected 3 hours of participant observation data during a scheduled work party. I did not take notes during my participant observations but wrote fieldnotes out in full after the work party.

Data Analysis

I conducted a thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), who describe both theoretical and inductive approaches to thematic analysis. The former involves coding data in a way that fits it to existing theory, while the latter involves a process of coding data without trying to fit it into a preexisting coding frame. The general process of thematic analysis is the same for both theoretical and inductive approaches: “1. Familiarizing yourself with your data; 2. Generating initial codes; 3. Searching for themes; 4. Reviewing themes; 5. Defining and naming themes; 6. Producing the report” (p. 87). I chose cultural resistance as a framework for this study through my interpretations of what Strauss (1987) calls 'experiential data' including my personal and professional work in sustainable agriculture and youth work, as well as my review of literature on the topic. I have used it as a conceptual orientation, which Silverman (2005) argues is a necessary part of recognizing the field of study, but I was aware that it may or may not appear as the most useful theoretical construct during data analysis. Also, because I had already sampled data based on cultural resistance theory and because I am attempting to flesh out the construct and apply it to a specific context, I was wary of coding using the mechanisms of cultural resistance. Indeed, Braun and Clarke state that “some of the worst examples of 'thematic' analysis [they] have read have simply used the questions put to the participants as the 'themes' identified in the analysis” (p. 85). As such, I engaged in an open coding process that included but was not limited to ideas from cultural resistance theory. During coding, I wrote in my process notes that “the theory of cultural resistance is not fresh in my mind right now” and so I felt that I would be more open to additional codes.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the first step in a thematic analysis is to familiarize yourself with the data. In order to do this I read over my field notes and personally transcribed my interviews, keeping theoretical memos along the way. I also kept a process log to document my thoughts, intuitions, and feelings about the research process itself, as suggested by Kirby, Greaves, and Reid (2006). During the second phase, coding, Braun and Clarke suggest working systematically through the entire data set, "giving full and *equal* attention to each data item, and identify[ing] interesting aspects in the data items that may form the basis of repeated patterns (themes)" (p. 89). As suggested by Strauss (1987), used open coding to *"open up* the inquiry" by "scrutinizing very closely: line by line" (p. 28). Likewise, Braun and Clarke suggest coding for as many themes as possible during this phase. Again, this may mean moving beyond the initial analytic construct of cultural resistance. I began with my observations and moved into the interview transcripts, open-coding by hand. Through this process I generated what seemed at first like an overwhelming number of codes. However, as I continued to code through the entire data set I started to find "a pattern ... from being with the data." That is, I had a feeling that something was there, but did not yet have a clear sense of what the main themes would be.

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe the third phase as identifying themes and mapping them to view their connections to each other. As I identified themes I used Strauss' (1987) coding paradigm to further assess each code's relevance "to whatever phenomena are referenced by a given category [theme]" (p. 27). During this second phase of coding I mapped how the themes connect or relate to each other, which helped to differentiate main themes and sub-themes. Phases four and five, assessing the validity of the themes and writing a detailed analysis for each theme, were simultaneous processes for me, building directly off of the third phase. I identified how themes and their representative codes appeared across individual participants (see Appendix B: Data Summary Tables) to help assess their significance in the study in terms of frequency. I then mapped these themes onto the mechanisms of cultural resistance proposed by Duncombe (2002), connecting the themes with the findings from the

data and the guiding research questions in order to assess their validity in terms of theoretical significance (see Appendix C: Analytic Category Development Tool). Braun and Clarke describe this as "identifying the 'story' that each theme tells" and "how it fits into the broader overall 'story'" (p. 92). Also in this phase, sub-themes may be identified, and themes must be refined to capture the "'essence' of what each theme is about" (Braun & Clarke, p. 92). As I played with the data and different ways of representing the themes that appeared to be significant the essential aspects of each theme became clearer and the definition of each theme more concisely related to the research questions and findings.

Case Description: The Spring Ridge Commons

"Oh it was a parking lot? Well, it's an improvement." (Trevor)

The Spring Ridge Commons is a publicly accessible food forest located at the corner of Chambers and Gladstone Streets in Fernwood, Victoria, BC. The land on which Spring Ridge exists is owned by Victoria School District 61; however the garden functions as a commons, or land held in common. Anyone is free to use or adapt the site at any time, with ongoing care taken on by the site stewards. The school district has leased the land for a dollar a year to three leaseholders since Spring Ridge was created in 1999: The Fernwood Community Association (FCA), The LifeCycles Project Society (LifeCycles), and now the Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group (NRG). Leaseholders are financially responsible for the site, meaning that they pay the $1/year lease as well as the water bill. Stewards, also called site coordinators, are responsible for all of the site's functioning: They maintain the garden, organize work parties, coordinate needed resources, and build community connections. All of this is done on a volunteer basis and, as such, stewards rely on community support through participation in work parties (e.g. for site maintenance) and donations of material resources (e.g. leaf mulch from city parks). Younger people in their twenties have been the principle stewards of Spring Ridge from its beginning in 1999 through to the fall of 2010 when the Transition Victoria food group took on stewardship. While interesting changes have occurred in the last two years, in order to remain

within the scope of the present research I have focused on the period from 1999-2010 when stewards were primarily younger people in their twenties.

The Spring Ridge Commons is difficult to describe neatly. Even the name itself is in question: Is it Spring Ridge Common? Or Spring Ridge Commons? The wooden archway leading into the garden has clearly read “The Spring Ridge Commons” in the past, with the ‘s’ having been ineffectively erased. LifeCycles and the current stewards of the site refer to it as Spring Ridge Commons, whereas both the Fernwood NRG and the FCA refer to it as the Spring Ridge Common, which is also seen on the descriptive signs and map placed inside the garden. How important the difference is and whether different groups are intentionally using one name over the other is not clear, although I have been corrected in conversation. Either way, it is interesting to note the nuance in definition between a 'Common' and a 'Commons.' According to the Oxford English Dictionary, something that is common belongs “to the community at large, or to a community or corporation;” another definition states that it belongs “equally to more than one; possessed or shared alike by both or all,” in some cases as “a result or sign of cooperation, joint action, or agreement.” Further definitions focus on use by the public, stating that something common is “free to be used by everyone, public ... In various semi-legal or statutory designations ... the original meaning appears to be 'existing for the use of the public' as opposed to 'private,' recognized by law to serve the public.” Each of these definitions applies (or has applied at some point) to the Spring Common(s).

Where the words 'common' and 'commons' intersect is with respect to land. According to the OED common has replaced commons in referring to “a common land or estate; the undivided land belonging to the members of a local community as a whole.” However, the term commons also has a specific historical meaning related to the English commons' that were enclosed and privatized during the 18th and 19th centuries. Geoff, who spearheaded the Spring Ridge Commons project in 1999, was interested in the history of the English commons, the enclosure movement, and moving away from what he had experienced in university, which was a narrow focus on the tragedy of the commons. For

him, the Spring Ridge Commons was a way in which to experiment with a present day urban commons, and to move away from the idea that they simply did not work. Interestingly, the OED definition of 'commons' focuses more on people than on land. Like 'common' it can refer to "the common people; community" and especially those of "the lower order, as distinguished from those of noble or knightly or gentle rank." In addition, and more directly related to the idea of common land, commons is also defined as "... the body of free citizens, bearing common burdens, and exercising common rights."

Hardt and Negri (2009) define the common in both material and social terms as:

> the common wealth of the material world – the air, the water, the fruits of the soil, and all nature's bounty – which in classic European political texts is often claimed to be the inheritance of humanity as a whole, to be shared together. We consider the common also and more significantly those results of social production that are necessary for social interaction and further production, such as knowledges, languages, codes, information, affects, and so forth. (p. viii)

The definition given by Hardt and Negri includes networks of social relations and forms of life or ways of living (p.117). And they focus on the "*production and productivity* of the common through collective social practices" (p. 121). Publicly, the Spring Ridge Commons is defined by land held in common and public access to that land. In practice, it exists as a common through the social organization of the space as much as through the land itself. I have used the title Spring Ridge Commons throughout this work in order to highlight both the physical and social characteristics of the Commons, focusing especially on the social practices related to the site.

In order to better understand the Spring Ridge Commons I reviewed websites and documents published by the three leaseholders mentioned above as well as the Spring Ridge Commons' website and social media profiles. The documents that I reviewed are as follows: The FCA website, FCA board meeting minutes from 2010-2011, the FCA's 2006 "Spring Ridge Commons Resolution", the LifeCycles website, the NRG website, NRG annual reports from 2010-2011, the Spring Ridge Commons (SRC) website, the SRC Facebook page, and the SRC SocialCoast.org member profile. I

have also drawn from interview and observation data as well as my own experiences as a Fernwood resident and my experiences in the food justice movement in Victoria.

Organizational structure. Most of the stewards that I interviewed were unaware of any formalized structure or written agreement between leaseholders and stewards and had varying degrees of contact with leaseholders ranging from no contact to ongoing conflict. There do not appear to be any stipulations on the relationship between leaseholders and stewards, suggesting that the organizational structure of Spring Ridge as a commons is based primarily on relationships of trust, outside of any legal agreements or remuneration. Interview data (from the perspective of stewards) draws clear boundaries between the role of steward and leaseholder, where the leaseholder bears financial responsibility but is otherwise uninvolved, as described above. Document data (from the perspective of leaseholders), however, seems to represent leaseholders *as* stewards, but gives no information about *how* they enact this role. It is reasonable to suggest that holding the lease for the Spring Ridge Commons is itself an act of stewardship, which may be the intended meaning; nevertheless, how stewards and leaseholders perceive each others' roles are not always in alignment with one another. While the beginning years were plagued with conflict (as I explore more fully in chapter four), later years showed movement towards a common purpose of maintaining the Spring Ridge Commons as a community space. The open structure of the Spring Ridge Commons means that multiple perspectives come together, sometimes in conflict. There are no formalized means for dealing with the conflicts that inevitably arise and so it is up to the stewards and leaseholders to define their relationships to the commons and to each other.

Background and history. I am asking how youth are participating in the cultural resistance of the Spring Ridge Commons, and so it is important to state that young people *created* the Spring Ridge Commons. The majority of documents that I reviewed (all but those of the FCA) and all of the participants that I spoke with describe Spring Ridge as having been started in 1999 by Geoff Johnson, who was in his twenties at the time. According to Geoff, he and a small group of like-minded friends

started the project, but he became the primary steward as he took on more responsibility. He was instrumental in the garden's development from 1999 until 2006, and continues to consult with those who take the project on.

During the first decade of the Spring Ridge Commons there were three main stewards: Geoff Johnson, Matthew Kemshaw, and a group of seven people who acted as collective stewards of the site. Geoff was the principle steward of the garden from 1999 to 2006. During this time the lease for the site was transferred from the Fernwood Community Association (FCA) to the LifeCycles Project Society (LifeCycles), a predominantly youth driven non-profit that supports urban agriculture in Victoria. Matthew Kemshaw became the primary steward of the site in 2007 when LifeCycles took over the lease. At that time Matthew was in his mid-twenties and was an employee of LifeCycles. For a period of a few months he was paid for four hours a week by LifeCycles to act as site steward. Afterward, he continued to steward the common on a volunteer basis (personal communication, Sept.18, 2012). In 2009 Matthew left Victoria and brought together a steering committee of volunteers to act as collective stewards of Spring Ridge. The committee was comprised of seven people, five of whom were in their twenties. According to Tamara - one of the committee members - Matthew recruited potential volunteers through his own involvement in the local food justice network: Those recruited had either been involved in work parties or were "food activists or had some training in permaculture or otherwise had an interest" (Tamara). I spoke with three stewards from the garden's first ten years: Geoff shared with me his experience of creating and maintaining Spring Ridge through its early years, while Tamara and Deanna spoke to their experience on the steering committee. I also spoke with Matthew Kemshaw who provided me with some details of his experience as a steward and reviewed this work.

Vision. Every document source that I reviewed shared the following description of the Spring Ridge Commons and the vision of the site:

> Designed as a permaculture demonstration site and community urban food forest, Spring Ridge Commons contains over 100 species of plants, many of which have food and/or medicinal value. A home for many native birds and insects, the

> commons is intended to be a place where community members can meet, engage and grow on land held in common, by everyone.

Several aspects of the site's vision, as they were expressed to me by research participants, are represented here – that it should act as a model of ecological agriculture and permaculture, that it should function as a community space, that it should provide a source of free food, that the space should be freely accessible, and that the space should operate outside of relationships of direct exchange (where what one puts in is equal in value to what one receives in return).

In addition, at least for some, the Spring Ridge Commons exists as a critique of the dominant food system as well as an example of a viable alternative to this system (one among many). According to Geoff the Spring Ridge Commons was created as a response to increasing corporatization, within the context of the anti-globalization movement of the late 90's and early 2000's. As Geoff describes it, the movement was resisting "what we now have, which is ... a merger of the state with corporations" and a "transfer of power to corporate elite" (G54). In our interview Geoff talked about his shifting participation in the movement against economic globalization, and how the Spring Ridge Commons was an opportunity to create something "real:"

> ... From the early 90's to the mid to late 2000's I was actually pretty involved as a political activist. I went to Seattle and in Fernwood, before it got really gentrified, it was a real hotbed of, I guess, kind of ... anarchism is a loaded word, but for people who understand what it actually is, understand a little bit of history, it's, there was a real scene and there was a real movement. ... I realized eventually I don't really have the nervous system for high stress, risking arrest, and the kind of paranoia that goes on. ... I felt ethically obliged to participate, but I also saw a lot of problems ... for me the shift towards permaculture had to do with accepting a smaller impact ... but I want it to be *real.*

When I challenged Geoff's use of the word "small" he qualified his statement as a comparison to the broader anti-globalization movement of which he was a part: "It's smaller than effecting some kind of ... social revolution, which at the time was really what people were talking about. A lot." (Geoff). Yet, he also points out that places like Spring Ridge are necessary to resisting corporatization.

> ... So, but I just, for me, permaculture and especially urban permaculture is closer to real autonomy or real sovereignty. We can talk about political sovereignty and decentralization and all this stuff but unless there is a biophysical aspect to it it's just thinking and talking. Unless

> we can *actually* grow more food and the things that we need closer to where we live then it's not real sovereignty is it?

Thus, for Geoff, creating the Spring Ridge Commons was an enactment of principles and ideals, such as food sovereignty (or control over food production). The act of creating the Spring Ridge Commons transformed ideas into reality.

Chapter Four: Thematic Analysis

The purpose of this study was to explore how young people engage in everyday politics through agri/cultural production. I used Duncombe's (2002) theory of cultural resistance to frame this exploration and his proposed mechanisms of cultural resistance as the basis for my guiding research questions. In review, these mechanisms are a) creating a free space for testing alternatives and developing ideas and practices, b) building community, and c) acting as a stepping stone into political activity. The research questions are: 1) How does the Spring Ridge Commons allow for ideas and alternatives to be tested? 2) How does the Spring Ridge Commons foster community? 3) How are people organizing themselves and interacting with each other in relation to the Spring Ridge Commons? and 4) How has experience in the Spring Ridge Commons influenced people's understanding of their activities as political? Overlaying these was a final research question, "How are young people engaging with the Spring Ridge Commons as a site of cultural resistance?" Therefore, for every question that I explored, I looked specifically at young people's participation.

In the following pages I present the main findings from this study along with the analytic categories or themes that represent them. Appendix C: Analytic Category Development, shows the relationship between research questions, findings, and analytic categories or themes. Each of the themes relates to multiple research questions, however I have linked them to the questions that they answer most directly. In addition, I have not presented any themes in relation to the mechanism of politicization. In part this is due to the way in which I worded the question in that I was not able to access how participants understandings of their actions as political *had changed through participation* in the Spring Ridge Commons. While some participants told of how they became more engaged in urban agriculture or how their understanding of their actions as political had changed, I could not illustrate causality between these changes and their participation in Spring Ridge. The findings and

interpretations presented here are organized according to three themes: 1) DIY Food: Creating an Alternative Foodway, 2) DIY Education: Reskilling for the Future, and 3) DIY Community: Taking Collective Responsibility.

DIY Food: Creating an Alternative Foodway

When Geoff was leading the creation of the Spring Ridge Commons, he had two primary purposes in mind. The first was to provide a source of decommodified food. The second was to have Spring Ridge serve as a model for urban permaculture; a 'food forest' that produces food in an ecologically and socially just way while maintaining the functions of a public park. In this section I explore the following research questions: 1) How does the Spring Ridge Commons allow for ideas and alternatives to be tested? or in other words, How does it function as a free space? and 2) How are young people engaging with the Spring Ridge Commons as a site of cultural resistance? I answer these questions based on interviews with participants as well as my own experiences with the commons' and boulevard gardens in Victoria and with the understanding that Spring Ridge is a small part of a larger movement. The Spring Ridge Commons produces free food in a publicly accessible way, testing alternatives in food production and use of urban space. As a source of decommodified food, Spring Ridge provides food for youth experiencing poverty and has become part of an alternative set of food practices, or an alternative foodway based on reducing consumption. Furthermore, as a model of how to grow free food in the city Spring Ridge has inspired several commons' and gardens on public land, expanding the network of alternative food sources in Victoria.

Decommodification.

> *... Mistakes were made but we got enough stuff right that there is now this source of decommodified food in this little grassroots generated park.*(Geoff)

One of the central ideas of the food justice movement, as I described in my review of the literature, is

that food is fundamentally a human right and need – not a commodity (e.g Patel, 2009). The Spring Ridge Commons is a practical experiment with this idea, offering a publicly accessible decommodified food source. All participants in this study viewed themselves and the Spring Ridge Commons as part of a larger food movement and perceived Spring Ridge as a source of free food. All but one saw the decommodification of food, in its political sense, as a primary purpose of the site. All participants in this study believe to some degree that current practices of conventional farming are unsustainable and that we need to engage with food production and consumption in new ways. To this end they believe in places like the Spring Ridge Commons as potential alternatives to our current and future realities, particularly with respect to our food system's current reliance on fossil fuels and government subsidies:

> ... on a cultural and a practical level it shows that food can be, some types of food can be decommodified. Cause really food shouldn't be a commodity at all. Until it's decommodified it should be a lot more expensive than it is. But ultimately it kinda shouldn't be this commodity. So .. that's I think, for me, the main value. (Geoff)

> ... it's a small part of a much larger story. .. This garden. And you said earlier that you see food as political, it is! It's the one thing that we really can't do without, well that and air and water. We really can't. It's really not optional. Like .. television is optional [chuckling], *supermarkets* are optional, conventional farming done on thousands of acres is optional .. oil is optional -- it's hard to do, it'll be hard to do without -- but it's optional, but food isn't optional. And if we're gonna do food without oil, [projects like the Spring Ridge Commons are] what it looks like. (Trevor)

While the Spring Ridge Commons provides many social and physical yields, at its core it provides a model for how to provide food in an alternative way, where its value is understood beyond a purchase price. The food produced at the Spring Ridge Commons is free to the public not only in terms of a monetary exchange, but also in terms of other kinds of exchange, such as barter or any scenario where what one gives is in direct relation to what one gets. In other words, in functioning as a commons, the space decouples input from output. This decoupling of input and output is a primary intention of the Spring Ridge Commons and has interesting outcomes both in terms of how the garden is maintained (input), which I address later under the theme “DIY Community: Taking Collective Responsibility” and in terms of how the commons is used, which I turn to now.

The commons is one example of a decommodified food source. Other examples include home gardens, allotment gardens and community gardens where produce is grown for personal use. Each model has costs associated with it; the difference between the commons and these other examples is in the relationship between costs (input) and benefits (output). For example, when I grow food in my own backyard it can be understood as free in that I do not have to purchase the food from anyone or anywhere else. I may even have been able to save my own seeds and gather material resources from other people's waste products. Nevertheless I will have put in a lot of time and effort and, in exchange, I receive the food that I have tended. Moreover, I would require enough capital to have either purchased or leased the land. Another option is to become part of a community garden; however, most community and allotment gardens in Victoria have waiting lists and even if I was able to get a plot I will still have "spent" the time and effort required to grow my own food. The Spring Ridge Commons, in contrast, yields harvests that anyone can access, regardless of what they have contributed to the site. As Deanna states:

> I think that a lot of examples of urban agriculture are on people's own property and so they, people will plant their own things and they have to take care of them and then they get the harvest. But with Spring Ridge it's all been done. You just go and pick what has grown. Everything is perennial so you'll .. there's some maintenance but other than watering and mulching and that kind of stuff, it's all there for everybody.

Those harvesting from the SRC do not own the land and may not have contributed in any way to the growth of the plants from which they harvest, yet they have equal access to the food produced there.

The decoupling of input and output enacted in the Spring Ridge Commons may increase access to local organic food for those who do not have the money, time, or resources required to purchase or grow their own. For example, the Growing Prosperity[3] research project cites the Spring Ridge Commons as a source of free local food for people experiencing low income and poverty ("Solution #2:

[3] The UVic Centre for Youth and Society in partnership with the Community Social Planning Council conducted a study titled "Youth Research and Engagement in Growing Prosperity" that seeks solutions for a more sustainable economy and offers 10 youth recommendations for alleviating poverty in the Capital Regional District (http://youthpovertysolutions.wordpress.com/).

Increase initiatives providing local foods" Faulkner, 2011). The study focuses on youth ages 15-29 who are experiencing low income and reports food security (access to food) as a growing concern for this population. The Spring Ridge Commons is featured in the study's list of solutions as a local and accessible food source. The study reports that youth, including young parents, "described how local and ethical foods and green products [are] an expensive fad aimed towards the already economically privileged." Furthermore, "having the time, knowledge and resources to build their own backyard garden as a method to alleviate youth poverty did not resonate with young people who are struggling to have a livelihood in Victoria" (Faulkner, 2011). Deanna, 25, explains how she was able to access certain foods only because they were freely accessible at the Spring Ridge Commons:

> Sure. .. I think my use of the Commons has changed in the past .. year because I have a full time job now and I'm working and I'm able to afford more food than I did when I was ... only working like 20 hours a week for minimum wage. And so at that time I actually would go to Spring Ridge a lot and harvest like berries and harvest different herbs and that kind of stuff and it actually was a part of my diet, like without Spring Ridge I wouldn't have had those types of things. I wouldn't have been able to afford it. Yeah, at that time it was very useful.

I had a similar conversation with Jake, 24, who harvested from Spring Ridge when he was working part-time near Fernwood. I know Jake because he was a participant in a youth apprenticeship program in sustainable agriculture that I coordinated through the Boys and Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria. During this program we had several discussions, both individual and as a group, about the difficulties of living on minimum wage (the wage received by participants in the program)[4]. Several participants were regularly dumpster diving (gathering food that has been discarded by restaurants and grocery stores) in order to meet their dietary needs. Other strategies included sharing rooms in communal houses to reduce rent, bartering work in exchange for rent, living with parents, and in one case remaining homeless. The Spring Ridge Commons, along with our program's garden and dumpsters throughout the city, provided an alternative food source for young people who were struggling to make ends meet.

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[4] It was during this time (late 2010) that the "living wage" campaign was underway in BC with the goal of raising the province's minimum wage.

Along with time and resources, the Growing Prosperity research project highlights knowledge as a factor in young people growing their own food. Acquiring the knowledge necessary to grow your own food takes time or in some cases money to take workshops or courses whereas no knowledge of how to grow the food is necessary at Spring Ridge, and as Geoff points out, the signs posted throughout the site provide "ecological literacy" by "point[ing] out the key trees and what they produce and when to harvest." There is also a map on site that shows all of the useful plants: "And it's like I can see all from above, like all the plants that I can go eat. So, it's good to have the road map. Gives you an advantage" (Trevor). And as Trevor notes, some of the knowledge necessary for gathering food at Spring Ridge is already eliminated by virtue of the space being designed as a food forest:

> Well people don't forage. People don't know how to *forage.* ... but it's easy 'cause ideally you've designed your forest area to be very productive. With the species that are good to eat.

While harvesting at Spring Ridge requires few material resources and little knowledge, it does require that people be able to access the site itself and have the time to forage. For example, both Deanna and Jake used Spring Ridge regularly when they lived or worked nearby and were working part time. Working part time both necessitated and allowed their use of the commons in that they were able to save costs on food, but also had the time required to harvest from the site. That said, even the time required to forage at a site like Spring Ridge is reduced in comparison to the time and resources required for other urban and wild foraging, such as dumpster diving -- you have to move around to several dumpsters throughout the city with little guarantee of what you will find -- and wildcrafting, which requires you to have the time and resources to leave the city as well as the knowledge to seek out what is edible.

Urban foraging. The majority of participants in this study harvested food from the Spring Ridge Commons and some foraged from the site on a regular basis as a supplement to their groceries. I have already given the examples of Deanna, 25, and Jake, 24, who harvested regularly from Spring Ridge. Likewise, Trevor describes foraging as his "primary interest" in the site:

> Well on an ongoing basis I take rosemary from there because I don't really have any space myself to do a lot of gardening. I'm working on fixing that by getting other people to give me their backyards, but I use it in this season for the herbs that are there, rosemary and stuff, and I used it in the summer for berries ...

The majority of participants described young people as those who were most likely to use the site as a regular food source. For instance, Trevor noted that the people he knows who are using the commons for harvesting "are even younger than [him]. ... all 21 year olds." During my observations in late November I encountered two people who were harvesting from Spring Ridge, both of whom were in their twenties. Both appeared to be middle-class, for instance, one young man had arrived on an expensive bike with new-looking panniers and was putting his harvests into a Market on Yates bag, which is a more expensive grocery store in town. He was picking herbs from the bee garden and herb spiral, as well as some nettles. I asked him what he was planning to make and he said he was collecting some spices for his parents for "the turkey." They were to be a gift because his parents live in Kamloops where it was "too cold to have a garden now." I also met up with an acquaintance who was harvesting material for bouquets. She told me that she had done this before and wondered aloud "why would anyone pay for this stuff?" As we talked I noticed a medlar fruit on the ground and she told me that she had harvested a bunch this year and made a medlar-apple pie.

Accessing Spring Ridge as a source of free food can be both out of necessity and/or out of choice. As a choice, foraging is guided by an ethic of reducing waste and is part of a set of practices that challenge consumption and corporatism. In the following excerpt Tamara describes, from her experience, the kinds of people who forage as part of their everyday food practices, noting that they are predominantly in the under 30 age range.

> ... If you're thinking about who uses the food there. I have ... quite a few other friends who are ... you know, well I'll just say hippies for want of a better word. They're people who have lived in and about Fernwood and don't typically have a lot of income and might not necessarily be employed. But they're also not homeless, you know, they're I think often maybe from middle-class backgrounds or whatever. That's just how they are living right now, and those people do a lot of harvesting there.... There are some people who identify explicitly with voluntary simplicity, but they are somewhat people just sort of living hand to mouth, sometimes couch surfing. Those are the kind of people who would do a lot of urban foraging and so Spring

> Ridge is a good place to go.... some of these people are very explicit about reducing consumption and stress by, you know ... yeah, basically not buying so much stuff. ... I think those are mostly people under 30 or close. (Tamara)

Tamara's description of 'hippies' could just as easily be written as a description of 'freegans.' According to Freegan.info, a popular website devoted to freeganism, “Freegans are people who employ alternative strategies for living based on limited participation in the conventional economy and minimal consumption of resources” (http:/freegan.info). Freeganism is a move toward living outside of capitalism and so encompasses all aspects of daily living including shelter and transportation as well as food practices. With respect to food specifically, freegans “resist the harm that is done to the earth and human health in the process of producing commodity food and work against the production of waste by buying bulk rather than packaged food, growing and gathering their own food, and rescuing items from the dumpster” (Gross, 2009, p. 58). Freeganism is often understood as a subcultural lifestyle but is also argued to be a social movement (Barnard, 2011; Edwards, 2006; Gross, 2009); either way, it fits within the food justice umbrella as another set of food practices that creatively respond to the industrial food system. I do not intend to say that all those who forage at the SRC identify as freegans, or that they would have any awareness of being part of a freegan movement. Nevertheless, urban foraging and the creation of the Spring Ridge Commons fit within those practices.

Urban foraging is the most well known food practice of freeganism, most notably through 'dumpster diving.' Gathering food from plant sources is a complementary practice:

> ... as an urban forager you're gonna take advantage of any source of food. .. Now you're not gonna get nearly as many calories, on a calorie basis from a place like the Spring Ridge Commons than you are from dumpsters, which is going to be food at the end of its large industrial supply chain, practically ready for you to eat, but it would be a good spice, a garnish, it would be .. fresh. Where else are you gonna get fresh food? Other than taking it, well a lot of them take it from our tomato area on Haultain and Asquith. We didn't harvest from our tomato area this year, they got eaten by people and that's fine. ... the tomatoes are kind of like, yeah this is for the people who are gonna put this in their network and that's totally fine. (Trevor)

In Gross's (2009) study of freeganism as an alternative agrifood movement, the freegans that she spoke with (who were all in their twenties) were “transitioning from gathering food from industrialized

society to gathering food from nature," partly for reasons of nutrition (p. 71). Respondents in that study "claimed to feel better when they foraged in [the] wild" (Gross, p. 71). Foraging from nature means traveling to food sources and following the seasons, which can add to the amount of time required for gathering and preparing food. Spring Ridge, however, provides space to forage from nature within the city. Moreover, it is designed to provide a "sum of yields" that provides harvests throughout the seasons, such that at any time during the year something is available for harvest. Freeganism supports an alternative form of cultural knowledge about food, including new kinds of foodways that are adapted to urban areas within the context of a corporatized food system. As such, freeganism is useful in articulating everyday food practices as cultural resistance. As a source of decommodified food the Spring Ridge Commons might help to localize freegan foodways in Victoria, in part by providing urban access to free and fresh food, and in part by inspiring more urban foraging sites, which I turn to next.

Sowing Seeds.

> *Spring Ridge is this ... relatively small space, but it's just, my original intention was just to demonstrate possibilities ... affect other people's thinking, make an impression, show what's possible.* (Geoff)

All participants described the Spring Ridge Commons as a demonstration of what is possible and a model for other similar projects. As an urban food forest, the Spring Ridge Commons represents an alternative form of food production, unique in respect to its accessibility by the public as well as its multifunctionality. According to participants, Spring Ridge is ideally suited to small public spaces in urban areas because it allows for a diversity of uses; producing food while maintaining the functions of a public park. Moreover, participants believe that spaces like Spring Ridge hold value in their potential to transform under-utilized, marginal spaces into productive spaces both in terms of biophysical yields such as food and medicines, and in terms of social yields such as experiences of beauty, nature and solitude, recreation, learning, a sense of belonging through contribution to a common space, and experimenting with new relationships to land and people. Spring Ridge has inspired other commons' within the city – some of which were created by young people – contributing to a network of publicly

accessible food gardens in Victoria.

Using the metaphor of a plant setting seed, Geoff describes the Spring Ridge Commons as an information source; designed to help people acquire some of the information and skills needed to change our food system and our ways of living. He explains that during the 1990's he was "starting to feel very disempowered" by the state of our culture and our relationship to our environment. He responded to these feelings by creating the Spring Ridge Commons.

> ... my ideal shifted from saving the world and trying to avoid catastrophe and collapse -- which I now think is inevitable -- it shifted from that to this idea of doing what a plant does during the onset of winter, which is to shift its resources into information, into seeds. That's what a plant does. It's like 'conditions are getting pretty rough, whatever I've got left in my root system, I'm not gonna start growing new leaves and expanding, I'm gonna put information into these little bundles of DNA that are wrapped up in this coating that can wait out these horrible conditions and that can germinate when conditions are right. (Geoff)

Thus Geoff transformed his sense of defeat into future potential by providing a space that others could learn from and create from, so that "when conditions are right" the ideas represented by Spring Ridge could spread. And they have. There are a multitude of seeds produced in and spread from Spring Ridge in the form of individual bits of information and ideas. In addition, the Spring Ridge Commons as a whole can be viewed as a seed in that it holds the information required to create similar spaces throughout urban areas. In this section I explore one of the ways in which Geoff's intention has taken effect. Specifically, I look at how the Spring Ridge Commons acts as a model for the creation of similar spaces.

One of the critiques of Spring Ridge is that it does not produce enough food for the number of potential harvesters. Because of this, participants in this study talked about the need for similar projects in the under-utilized spaces of urban geographies. The Spring Ridge Commons provides the inspiration and information necessary for similar sites to be built throughout cities, creating a network of localized foraging sites, and thus adding another piece to urban agriculture and alternative food systems. As Geoff states,

> ... let's put some trees that produce food in public space and see what happens. If there's

> problems with not being enough to go around well then I guess we have to overgrow the system and plant way more of these gardens throughout the city. Instead of being like 'oh well, it doesn't work. It's the tragedy of the commons.' Well, let's just enlarge the commons then.
>
> Yeah. Make it a normal thing (April).
>
> Yeah normalize it.

Such normalization has started, in small, already. Trevor, like others, acknowledges the critique of how much Spring Ridge is able to produce and like Geoff he views the creation of more publicly accessible food gardens as an appropriate response.

> ... the biggest downside of the Spring Ridge Commons is it's not nearly big enough. We need to have a Spring Ridge boulevard on every street. .. That would be effective. But you have to start .. with one small thing. And you have to get people to sign on to doing boulevards and that's one of our Pedal to Petal projects actually is permaculture in the boulevards, or perennial production in the boulevards that we don't have to maintain 'cause we don't want to maintain it. And that's the idea of permaculture is you don't have to maintain it, you just harvest. So when you have so many people gleaning from one small space you're not going to have food abundance and there are gonna be people who *can't* get food from there so they're gonna say 'oh Spring Ridge is stupid, you're supposed to be able to eat from there, but there's never any food there.' Well yeah ... because there's not enough of it. So, if you could do that in everybody's *yard* and boulevard, you'd have enough. (Trevor)

Moving beyond critique and visioning, Pedal to Petal (a youth run business) has begun to take action toward expanding publicly accessible food sources within the city. Similarly, other commons have already been created throughout Victoria, such as the Banfield Common in VicWest, the Wark St. Common in Quadra Village, and the Haultain Common in Fernwood. In each case the basic idea of permaculture design and collective stewardship remains, while adaptations are made according to those most directly involved and the local context. Unlike Spring Ridge each of these newer commons are on publicly owned land and so have negotiated with municipal government in order to exist.

Although similar spaces have already been created and precedents have now been set for working with municipal government, the political climate does not seem ready to include permaculture and food forests into city planning. For example, Tamara was involved in a feasibility study for bringing permaculture into city parks, but action based on this study depends on the worldview of those currently in power. For many, aesthetics are prioritized over function when it comes to public parks and

gardens. That said, the spread of commons' into public parks has begun and the idea of having publicly maintained food gardens was proposed by the majority of participants in this study. As local food and urban agriculture become more and more popular, ways of thinking may change.

> And then if people start thinking about it, they'll start questioning why our tax money is spent to pay parks guys to do precision rose trimming in Beacon Hill park instead of pruning fruit trees in the commons (Geoff).
>
> .... I think that all parks should actually be like Spring Ridge because then .. we all are paying taxes to pay for these things to be taken care of and then if we're able to harvest from every park the way we are in Spring Ridge I think that would be the perfect model, cause then behind the scenes are taken care of and then everyone can just use them. ... and I think, hopefully, in the next 20 years or something that is what will happen. And I can see that happening and maybe Spring Ridge exists to kind of be that teaching space to show what's possible, or something like that. (Deanna)

Creating cultural support. Through people's interactions with spaces like the Spring Ridge Commons and with each other, the network of like projects expands, as does cultural support for projects. In other words, as precedents are set and more people become involved, more avenues for projects open up. In addition, the possibilities created depend to some degree on the skills, resources, and social connections, that people hold. The following examples show how the Spring Ridge Commons (itself inspired by another garden in Vancouver) has been adapted to create new projects and the ways in which people supported each other in the process.

The Banfield Common is one of the clearest examples of the Spring Ridge Commons model being adapted to another site:

> ... Okay, the most inspiring thing I think that ever happened to me at Spring Ridge Commons, in my *entire* involvement with Spring Ridge Commons was Patti Parkhouse showing up to work parties. Kind of like, kind of middle class, professional mom. Like soccer mom! She is literally, Patti is like a soccer mom.... she came to Spring Ridge Commons cause she heard about it, came to work parties and was like 'so Geoff, do you wanna expand this?' And so .. basically she took, the light bulb went off over her head, she got it and *even better* she *adapted it* to her own style which was a lot more organized than me, a lot more through the proper channels, a lot less guerilla garden. (Geoff)
>
> ‘Cause Banfield is a city park. (April)
>
> Yah! (Geoff)

> So is it managed by city? Or? (April)
>
> > No. It's managed by Patti and volunteers ... and I organized all the first work parties and it's mostly my plants that are there. But that's the most inspiring thing is seeing someone be like 'cool, I could improve this and do it in my own neighbourhood.' And the other good thing that Patti did was she set a precedent for doing food forestry in Municipal parks in Victoria. ... She went through the process. I did the design for Banfield Commons and we worked together. We had to go back to the drawing board a few times to get, to pass it through parks, but now, in a way it's even cooler than Spring Ridge because it's like officially legitimized. So now if someone in another neighbourhood tells parks 'we wanna do that' it's hard for them to say no because they've already told someone else that they can do it. (Geoff)

Here Geoff points out the difference in methods employed by himself and later by Patti, he also makes note of her social position as "mainstream" and as a "soccer mom." It is interesting to contrast Geoff when he created the Spring Ridge Commons – a young adult in his twenties living a marginalized lifestyle – to the vision of Patti that he creates here. Spring Ridge was initiated through guerilla gardening with no formal permissions granted by the leaseholders, and it was a contested space for many years. Later, the Banfield Commons was created by working with city officials through formal channels. I cannot say whether age or social position influenced the methods chosen by Geoff and Patti, however I find it interesting to consider. Certainly the local political climate surrounding each of these projects would have affected process and outcomes, as well as what kinds of precedents had already been set. Participants in this study talked about how public support for the Spring Ridge Commons increased as the food justice movement became more popular and mainstream.

> ... I think it's part of .. a changing kind of culture around food and around .. how local food is important and how systems are important, like systems theory but in permaculture and how creating .. a whole sort of park that has all of these .. edibles in it, how that's good. ... that kind of [thinking] allows for a whole city block to be a permaculture garden. 'Cause in the past people might have said 'oh that's useless, why are we doing this?' But now people see the value of it. (Deanna)
>
> ... 100-mile diet became a mainstream phrase and Oprah and Al Gore started confirming that climate change is real and food security started becoming a mainstream thing and the spin off of that is that you didn't have to be entirely eccentric and on the fringes to want to be involved in something like that by 2007-2008. (Geoff)

According to Geoff, the amount of popular support for projects like Spring Ridge also affects who is likely to be involved. Although he states that there was a wide variety of people involved in the

creation of the Spring Ridge Commons, he also notes that those involved were “largely youth in their twenties and disproportionately women.” While it was primarily young people involved in the early stages of the Spring Ridge Commons, adults have always been involved, some who acted in support of the garden and some who acted in opposition.

Cultural support shows up in both the precedents that are set and the relationships built between people. In the case of Banfield Commons Geoff and Patti worked closely together to adapt the concept of the commons to a city park. But relationships of support can also be more removed, as in the case of the commons' expansion into boulevard gardens in Victoria. Fernwood has several boulevard gardens, including that created by Pedal to Petal, which I have already mentioned, the Haultain Common, and Kale Corner. I have visited each of these gardens and contributed regularly to the maintenance of the Haultain Common. The Haultain Common was created by a couple in Fernwood, Rainey and Margot, who built the commons on the boulevard adjacent to their home. In doing so, and through their engagement with city officials, they have set a precedent for boulevard gardening within the city's bylaws. As Geoff stated, public gardening in under-utilized spaces, where technically we are not meant to garden (i.e we do not have private/ individual ownership over the land) is in and of itself a way to grab attention. And the Haultain Common certainly does get this kind of attention. But Rainey and Margot have also been featured in local news (where I first saw them) and work with local politicians on issues of local food security. They have also been able to support young people experiencing similar kinds of confrontation with City by-laws.

> There was also the kale corner. They were trying to seed that but there was a fight. They fought it. And the CRD [Capital Regional District of Victoria] left them alone. They were gonna come in, rip everything out, and seed it with *grass* of course! Why not grass? Why not a monocrop? Margot and Rainey actually wrote a letter to the city and there was a big stink raised about it so they saved Kale Corner I guess.Which is right over here. I live by Kale Corner. I have two employees who live in that house. (Trevor)

Kale Corner is built on the boulevard of a community house where, generally, people in the 20-30 age range live. It is one of several houses in Victoria that host regular community and arts events and are

known informally as 'community houses.' Those who built Kale Corner were in their early twenties at the time. Again, I can only speculate about the effects of age and the social positions of youth and adult as they relate to the creation of boulevard gardens and the cultural support shared within this network. And this partnership was not based on age or meant as an act of 'youth engagement;' it was based on the practice of creating food producing gardens on public land. Nevertheless it is interesting to note the adult-youth partnership that occurred between the creators of the Haultain Common and Kale Corner as they both worked to increase availability of local food in their community. Whether Rainey and Margot's ability to lend support to Kale Corner came from age (they are in their 50's and 60's) or from their experience creating a boulevard garden themselves, the instance still represents partnership between younger and older that is outside of any programmed effort to engage with youth.

DIY food and young people. The Spring Ridge Commons is a physical manifestation of ideals and ethics: It was created as a space that could experiment with different ways of relating to land and to people. I have dealt with two original intentions of the site here: 1) providing a source of decommodified food, and 2) creating a model of 'the possible,' and I have explored some of the ways in which these intentions have come to life. I have suggested that Spring Ridge has the potential to provide food for young people experiencing poverty as well as young people using alternative food sources as a way to reduce consumption and waste. I have also suggested that in acting as a model for other commons throughout the city, Spring Ridge has contributed to a network of local foraging sites, supporting alternative foodways and practices (or ways of growing, acquiring and consuming food). Moreover, the expansion of this network has occurred through a process of creating cultural support, which includes building new relationships with public institutions and partnerships between youth and adults.

Farm and urban agriculture programs designed to engage youth generally describe their efforts in terms of enhancing nutrition, increasing access to healthy food, providing experiential education, the development of employment skills, and/or the therapeutic benefits of gardening. The potential for the

Spring Ridge Commons to increase access to healthy food for young people facing poverty seems to be a clear example of youth care in action. Less clearly linked to child and youth care are the everyday food practices of youth related to Spring Ridge, such as urban foraging as a means to reduce consumption. In this case harvesting from Spring Ridge is a political act: An act of cultural resistance. It is also an 'unprogrammed' act in the sense that Spring Ridge is not a program designed to engage youth, it does not fit within a youth care model of service provision in which youth act as the consumers of services. Rather, the Spring Ridge Commons is a youth-generated urban space that creates conditions of possibility for youth as agri/cultural producers.

This research suggests that youth are creating alternative foodways through urban foraging and expanding the commons. By taking this DIY approach to food these youth take an act that is usually an act of consumerism – the acquisition of food – and invert it. They become cultural producers both in terms of everyday food practices and in terms of creating new urban spaces. I argued previously that our current food system positions us as consumers through a disconnection from the modes of food production, including an ability to access land. Youth in this study are redefining their relationships to food through urban foraging and are also redefining land access through the production of publicly accessible food on both publicly and privately owned land. Rather than be positioned by the food system, these young people position themselves as foragers and growers. This research also suggests that the Spring Ridge Commons' allows for alternative ideas and supports young people engaging in alternative practices. What can we learn from this space about supporting young people who are attempting to meaningfully engage with their world?

DIY Education: Reskilling for the Future

Education is one of the social yields of the Spring Ridge Commons, both through formal and informal means. Here again I explore the question of how the Spring Ridge Commons acts as a free space, allowing for ideas and alternatives to be tested, and how youth are engaged in the process. The

idea of 'reskilling,' widely used in my personal food networks, relates to learning knowledge and skills required for alternative ways of living. Reskilling refers to the acquisition of "new" knowledge and skills (often old skills "that our grandparents took for granted") that prepare people to live in "a world of drastically reduced access to energy, and incidentally leading to a much lower environmental impact" (Pargman, 2012, para. 1). As an educational space, the Spring Ridge Commons contributes to reskilling by providing a freely accessible demonstration of ecological gardening and urban agriculture. All participants in this study described Spring Ridge as an educational space and had either facilitated or participated in both formal and informal learning there. Most participants described this educational aspect as one of the main ways in which youth have participated in Spring Ridge. While the space has been used in many ways as an educational site, by a variety of groups, I focus here on how it has been used by younger people.

Formal Education.

> *… it's the biggest most prominent example of what it is, in town. You know, if people want an example of [an urban food forest], you go there.* (Tamara)

As a proof of concept, the Spring Ridge Commons is a regular feature in urban agriculture tours and educational workshops, acting as a site of inspiration for urban agriculture and permaculture enthusiasts. In addition to being an example of permaculture design, the site acts as a classroom for particular topics including plant identification, food forestry, plant medicine, and plant propagation. Both tours and workshops occur formally and informally. First, I will focus on formal educational opportunities, which I define as those coordinated either by Spring Ridge stewards or by an officially recognized organization and are led by an experienced facilitator. People register for these events and might pay a registration fee or take part in an educational event as part of a course they have already paid for (for example, through a University or College). Money for registration is paid to the organization hosting the event, but there is no cost to the organization for using the Spring Ridge Commons.

Tours and workshops are offered by several organizations including Gaia College, the Greater Victoria Compost Education Centre, the Society for Urban Organic Land Care, the LifeCycles Project Society, and OUR Ecovillage. Educational events attract a range of people and some are geared towards involving children and youth. For example, event listings on the Spring Ridge Commons Facebook page and blog show work parties (where participants learn about caring for a permaculture garden in exchange for contributing labour to the site's maintenance) coordinated with elementary and high school groups. Geoff also notes that many of the participants on urban agriculture tours are younger:

> ... A lot of the permaculture courses ... organized through the ecovillage will do an urban permaculture tour day that I organize and ... a lot of those people are quite young. The LifeCycles urban ag bike tour that I did for a few years there -- usually it's a lot of youth.

As a youth worker and facilitator I have also used the Spring Ridge Commons as an educational space. As a volunteer with LifeCycles' Growing Schools program I helped to facilitate a workshop with a group of high school exchange students from St. Michael's University School. I also facilitated a SLUGS workshop on designing "guilds" within a food forest[5]. The SLUGS program was designed and coordinated by a CYC student as a youth program and was offered through the Greater Victoria Compost Education Centre (Compost Ed). The group that I worked with were all high-school students taking part in this program on their own time. After using Spring Ridge as a working model of a food forest we facilitated a design process with the SLUGS youth, which they implemented in the Boys and Girls Club food forest in Metchosin. We also used the Spring Ridge Commons as part of the Growing Skills program in sustainable agriculture for youth facing barriers to employment, which was offered through the Boys and Girls Club. As with the SLUGS program, we brought our group to the Spring Ridge Commons to demonstrate what a mature food forest looks like, to give the group an idea of what they were about to create. Feedback from the group was that the site acted as an inspiration, giving

[5] Groups of mutually supporting plants, usually centred around one main desired yield, such as a fruit tree.

them a clear vision of what we were creating and keeping them motivated during many hours of hard labour for minimum wage. In addition to formal education events held at the Spring Ridge Commons, informal education occurs through self-directed learning and knowledge-sharing among users of the space.

Informal Education.

> *Well [Spring Ridge is] important for the inspiration of other people. It's important for the education of other people. And when people can be convinced to eat something from it then they'll start talking about it and they'll start teaching other people about it.* (Trevor)

In terms of informal education, the Spring Ridge Commons is part of a knowledge-sharing network around food production and consumption practices. Younger people are introducing each other to the Spring Ridge Commons through informal tours of the site, highlighting how Spring Ridge is part of both a physical network of urban agriculture spaces and a social network of gardeners, farmers, and activists. From my own experience, I brought a group of young (early and mid-twenties) permaculture students from Washington to the Spring Ridge Commons to show them an example of permaculture in Victoria. They were permaculture interns at the homestead where I had taken a 3-week permaculture design certificate who had sailed to Victoria for the anarchist book fair. They already knew of and had been in contact with Geoff (who also interned with the Bullock's) and so we ended the day with a visit to his urban homestead. Spring Ridge is a well-known site for urban agriculture and permaculture and, partly through its use as an educational space, is connected to several organizations that support alternative food systems as well as to people who are engaged in alternative food. For example, Deanna was introduced to Spring Ridge through her involvement with the youth-driven organization LifeCycles, and her use of the site as a personal classroom was related to her immersion in urban agriculture, later she became a Spring Ridge steward. Even as a space for self-directed learning, the Spring Ridge Commons' existence within a network is evident:

> ... I started volunteering with LifeCycles and while I was getting into all these things I would sort of visit Spring Ridge sometimes and just see all these different plants and then started

> learning the names of them and stuff. I think it was a really good teaching tool for me. Starting from not knowing anything about plants to now .. ... Spring Ridge was a really good teaching tool for me while I became obsessed with urban agriculture kind of stuff. (Deanna)

Also within this network of youth-driven projects and organizations is Pedal to Petal, a permaculture-based business that collects residential organic waste to make compost, all by bike. Trevor, a participant in this study, is currently running Pedal to Petal and uses the Spring Ridge Commons to conduct interviews for cyclists. He uses this opportunity to show potential employees the edibles on the site, as he was shown when he first arrived to the city. Thus information is passed through a network of people who then have new knowledge about foraging in the city.

The Spring Ridge Commons also transforms into an educational space while people are foraging together. For example, having met up with an acquaintance (in her mid-twenties) while conducting observations at Spring Ridge, I decided to help with her harvest. As we moved around the site we talked with each other about the various plants and their uses. She introduced me to pineapple sage, which I had never seen before, we confirmed for each other that rosehips are high in vitamin C, and we realized together that neither of us knows what we can make with autumn olive, a permaculture "superstar plant." She also showed me several bay (leaf) trees that I did not know were on site. Likewise, sharing in the fruits of foraging creates space for learning new skills. For instance, when interviewing Geoff, I was treated to some bletted medlars that he had harvested from Spring Ridge and we shared how to prepare them and choose the most flavourful fruits. I shared with him the idea of baking them in a pie (a trick shared with me by a mutual friend), which he had never tried. He gave me tips on when to harvest (after a frost) and how to blet the medlars for best flavour:

> So waiting for a frost and then putting them all in a cardboard box and then checking it almost every day or every couple days because they don't blet up all at once and getting the ones that are just starting to blet like that one [pointing to medlar in bowl] has a tiny bit of solid left on it and it's not like mush, it's just starting to. I've realized that those taste *really* good. (Geoff)

These kinds of learning are helpful because foraging is an uncommon practice that can be hard to learn

until you meet the right people. Even with the signage on site that tells you when to harvest, really getting to know unusual plants, such as the medlar fruit, can be easier to learn directly from people who have tried them. Again, the idea of cultural support is relevant in that learning new ways of living and new ways of interacting with food can be difficult both in terms of acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills and in terms of the stigma that can be attached to living in ways outside of what is considered 'normal.' From my own personal experience, connecting to a community of like-minded people, who support each others' cultural practices is highly beneficial to maintaining a lifestyle that is based on my ethics and values.

While both formal and informal modes of education are part of larger networks (e.g. urban agriculture, permaculture, food justice), the informal knowledge-sharing that occurs on site does not require authority granted through the role of facilitator (and through the act of paying for learning). Rather, through informal learning a network of people, ideas, and skills is expanded at a personal level. People may meet each other through their involvement with different organizations, but the knowledge and skill-sharing that occurs is not mediated by these organizational structures.

DIY education and young people. The role of student is a dominant way of conceptualizing youth participation in the world, and rightly so, given that young people in high school and university spend time in school equivalent to a full time job. Likewise, participants in this study tended to talk about high school students when we discussed youth participation in the Spring Ridge Commons. That said, the kind of educational space afforded by the Spring Ridge Commons' open access structure creates a qualitatively different educational environment than what we typically consider for the role of student. Some aspects, such as workshops, function in a traditional format (with registration as a participant/student to receive information from an expert/teacher/facilitator). This kind of educational experience clearly represents child and youth care in action, for example the workshops specifically for youth that I facilitated as a CYC practitioner. However others, such as the informal learning opportunities that young people create for themselves and others, situate youth more as co-learners,

where power is more evenly distributed. This structure for learning is well-represented by the concept of "skill-sharing," which relates also to practices of reskilling and DIY. Watson (2012) defines skill-sharing as "being open to learning anything from anybody, anywhere. No need for teachers or schools, just the willingness to share what you know and can do, with others, who will likewise share their skills with you" (para. 5). As young people engage with the Spring Ridge Commons as a means to reskilling, they are sharing knowledge and skills through peer to peer networks, and they shift from the role of student to that of skill-sharer. Again, this represents a subtle shift from being positioned to positioning oneself. What does such a shift tell us about child and youth care, if anything? What does it mean for young people to pay attention to their own skills, including those that may be dismissed as eccentric in their everyday lives?

DIY Community: Taking Collective Responsibility

All participants in this study viewed the Spring Ridge Commons as a site for community building. Indeed, throughout the preceding themes, the idea of community has shown up in the networks formed by like-minded people and the cultural support that these networks create for alternative ideas and practices. In this section I explore the following research questions related to community building as a mechanism of cultural resistance: 1) How does the Spring Ridge Commons foster community?; 2) How are people organizing themselves and interacting with each other in relation to the Spring Ridge Commons?; and 3) How are young people engaging with the Spring Ridge Commons as a site of cultural resistance? Again, the concept of free space applies as alternative social structures are tested. The Spring Ridge Commons experiments with social structures in two ways: 1) through ways of being in community and 2) through modes of governance.

Creating Community.

> *In terms of the Commons part and how that relates to community I just think it's really important for people to have an experience outside of this obsession with private ownership, of everything. The idea that we're just being disconnected from*

> *where our food comes from ... it's a different way of relating to each other through a space. And relating to the actual land that you live on.* (Geoff)

All respondents in this study agreed that the Spring Ridge Commons is a community space, both in terms of the kinds of interactions people can have with one another within the space (e.g. as co-learners, as friends, and as strangers meeting through shared work) and also in terms of the relationships and networks that the garden supports (e.g. communities of interest and practice, such as freeganism, permaculture and food justice). That said, community is a ubiquitous term with many definitions and interpretations. In order to have a better understanding of respondents' experiences of the Spring Ridge Commons as a community space, I asked each of them to describe what community means. Although each respondent articulated community in their own way, they shared an emphasis on relationships of support and place-based community, both of which show up in the stewardship practices of the Spring Ridge Commons.

Previously, I addressed the idea that the Spring Ridge Commons decouples input from output in relationships of exchange. This means that food is freely accessible without any expectation of money or labour in return, and labour (as well as material resources and financial support) are given to Spring Ridge without any expectation of reimbursement. So why do people choose to act as stewards, volunteering their time, skills, and effort to maintain the commons? Most stewards that I spoke with described themselves as ideologically driven and motivated by their belief in the site's potential as a food source, a learning environment, and a community space. Along with a love of interacting with plants and a desire to learn through doing (with respect to both gardening practices and leadership practices), stewards described powerful experiences of community through their stewardship activities. In Linda's case, who views community building as the primary function of the Spring Ridge Commons, her first experiences as site coordinator included two “spectacular” work parties that she feels exemplify community building at Spring Ridge:

> One was the 10-10-10 event where we had probably about 30 people .. working together. And then the other one … Inter-Green sponsoring a Transition Victoria ..

> work party. And so, there was .. music, and there was .. people working, there were over 25 people working on .. doing different pieces of the commons, and ... there was .. hoola hooping .... We also had .. Qi Gong. (Linda)

For Linda, community building comes from the ability for people to gather at Spring Ridge in celebration, express themselves creatively (e.g. through graffiti and music), and work alongside one another to contribute to a shared space.

Tamara describes herself as "totally ideologically driven" but also states that she "enjoyed the time spent there, lots." And she fondly describes community events like work parties:

> ... When you get 25 people showing up over the course of an afternoon or a morning or whatever, some people playing music, and people harvesting and people just like chatting about other stuff and being there together and working together. It feels so great.

She also "learned a lot from the experience of trying to do the collective leadership thing," and experienced community in the process:

> ... the process of having conversations with people about how to care for a public space when none of us had any direct personal investment in what we got back from that space, that's a way of experiencing community that can be quite meaningful. Now they can be even more meaningful when there is long term commitment and follow through and we only sort of got that going ever.

The importance of community for the ongoing motivation of site stewards can also be seen in how they were affected by a lack of community support.

> I, no one showed up at a work party one day and I was feeling really disheartened and I was working there alone, just feeling overwhelmed. This neighbour comes out and is like 'hey Geoff, you still fuckin' around with that vacant lot?' like, get a life kind of thing and I was just like 'fuck.' (Geoff)

> You get this sense of, it's funny I think one of the ways I backed away was my whole belief about what's possible with humanity got tied up with Spring Ridge Commons in a certain way. And so when we had a lot of people show up it was like 'hey we *can* do this' and then when people didn't show up it was just like 'we're fucked.' I remember when somebody stole the wheelbarrow, I just cried. I was just like 'people can steal a wheelbarrow from a public commons, we're totally done.' (Tamara)

For Tamara, Spring Ridge came to represent a microcosm of our potential as a society, for better or for worse. By giving of themselves to support the Spring Ridge Commons, stewards are enacting their

vision of community. The above examples suggest that when this vision of community was validated, by the presence of others willing to do the same, their motivation and belief in the site's potential were bolstered. Likewise, when this vision of community seemed unsupported stewards experienced disillusionment.

Relationships of Support. Community as a set of supportive relations shows up in the basic ethic of the Spring Ridge Commons: That what you put into the site does not provide a direct return. Both Geoff and Tamara link this directly to the anarchist ethic 'from each according to their ability and to each according to their need.' Geoff puts it this way: “Some people can do more than others and some people need more than others and throughout the course of people's lives that changes and that's what makes us human” (Geoff). By choosing to create and maintain the garden in the structure of a common, Spring Ridge Stewards have made space to experiment with the practical implications of this maxim. Trevor has never been a steward of the garden but describes community in a similar way, using the economic concept of covenantal services.

> .. I guess that's what it boils down to is knowing ... the people who do the things that are done in your city. .. And there's an interesting economic school of thought that the most important services are done for free and they're covenantal services and what has happened in modern society is many covenantal services have turned into commercial services. ... So, community is those people who provide ... those valuable covenantal services: Education .. child care .. care of elderly is a good one, *food* production used to always be a covenantal service, it's commercial [now] and almost everything I just mentioned is commercial. ... It's an interesting school of thought.

The idea of covenantal services relates back to the Spring Ridge Commons as a source of free food in that those who steward the site are providing food that they may or may not benefit from directly, but which is consistently harvested in full. For Trevor these covenants are based on trust, a trust that is developed through relationships and consistent or continual interactions.

> A covenant actually ... It's like a contract that doesn't need to be written out. And contracts are important when both parties don't quite trust each other and probably because they don't know each other. ... Community and corporatism are different because you have covenants and you have contracts. So covenants are done in a community.

Relationships of support within the context of the Spring Ridge Commons relate to what Feenstra

(2002) calls relationships of trust in that stewards and leaseholders, as well as stewards who are acting collectively, must work together towards the care and maintenance of the commons, with no formal structure to guide these processes.

***Place-based Community*.** In theory anyone can engage in stewardship activities at any time because the site is both open to the public to use and open to the public to physically manipulate (e.g. through planting, pruning, creating garden beds). As Deanna notes, the ability to interact with the Spring Ridge Commons in this way, and even through the act of harvesting from the site, is one of the features that differentiates Spring Ridge from other public spaces such as city parks. Evidence of such interactions range from trees and annuals that have been planted to art installations, to harvested fruits. Interestingly, the open nature of the site may entail that those stewarding the space are unaware of each other except through the evidence they leave. Geographic community has been important in terms of regular maintenance activities such as watering, with those who lived close by being more likely to consistently perform these duties. Several people mentioned being more closely involved in the Spring Ridge Commons, either as stewards or as users of the site, when they either lived or worked nearby. Nevertheless, respondents spoke to a need for more neighbourhood involvement, including collaborating with the nearby secondary school, Vic High.

Neighbourhood involvement was considered low by the people I spoke to, although it is difficult to measure. Geoff had more to say about neighbourhood involvement, perhaps because of the quantity and quality of time he has spent on site. Geoff describes some of the neighbourhood stewardship that he witnessed in the early stages of the garden's development.

> ... Another one is, this guy named Dick who lived in the suite underneath the Chinese Canadian folks just to the East of the site. He was living in the basement suite and he had a degree in psychology but had never come into contact with any of this food justice, food security stuff and I just, I saw him out there drinking his gin and tonic one day and just sort of stroking his chin and we ended up chatting and he's just like 'cool' like 'right on' and he ended up being, for about 2 years while he lived there, the guy who made sure stuff got watered and it was his first gardening he'd ever done but he was just, he saw the people who came there and he just, I guess because of his background in psychology, it was really interesting for him to have something this kind

> of unusual as a space. And he really enjoyed watching people interact with it. He also went up there and asked rowdy teenagers who were vandalizing stuff to move on once in awhile. He became a steward in his own way of the site and it was sort of an overnight thing.

This example points out that stewardship is not only about caring for plants, but that it is also about protecting the space as a whole. Geoff speaks to the tension between what is ecologically appropriate in terms of garden design and what is culturally appropriate, for instance limiting the number of trees to enhance lines of sight and feelings of safety, and keeping plants back from the paths to limit possible damage by people passing through. He also gave an example of having left garbage bags full of weeds in the initial stages of the garden, which prompted people to dump their garbage on site. As we talk, Geoff notes that community stewardship in terms of protecting the space has increased over the years.

> ... this tension between trying to provide decommodified food for people but also protecting the plants that provide that food from the lowest common denominator -- from people. You're trying to like put food bearing trees in public space but you need to protect those trees from people because it only takes one. ... that arbour that Pete and I built in there, we wanted to grow grapes up it. I've planted grapes and kiwis about *six* times there. Because it's right in the middle of the Commons … that's the highest interface between the public and the site. And that's why it only takes one person coming home from Logan's one night to be in a bad mood, rip up the grape plant, throw it across the site, or just to break stuff. So it's the design, it showed me a lot about how to design things to protect them also. Kind of put them a little out of the way and don't hype them until they're really established. ... That's kind of interesting cause that's an urban issue. (Geoff)
>
> Yes. And it's interesting to me too because one of the things that I've picked up on was... a kind of respect and a different kind of stewardship. Maybe people aren't stewarding the plants there, but they're stewarding the *space.* (April)
>
> Yes. And people don't mess with it as much as they used to. There's a different attitude in general towards the space. It wasn't valued at first but as it came into its own, I'm sure there are people that, yeah I just think there's more of an ethic that generally people know like, this is a good thing, don't fuck it up. ... Don't mess with it, you know, don't be destructive and disrespectful to it. It's amazing. (Geoff)

Geoff gives the example of a neighbour who had "thought the project was ridiculous" offering help to Geoff years later: "... he was ... like 'hey do you need any tools?' ... 'do you wanna use the extension cord for that?' And he suddenly, it was almost like he didn't want to admit it, but he got it." At the neighbourhood level, currently, stewardship seems limited to a respect for and desire to protect the

space. In terms of more committed stewardship of the space however, the pool of people involved have been ideologically driven. As Geoff states: “the people who kept it going were people that didn't necessarily live physically in that community. They lived across town but they were really into it.”

Worth noting are the ideas of youth that surfaced during our conversations about place-based community. In the above examples Geoff mentions “rowdy teenagers … vandalizing stuff.” Similarly, Linda often mentioned her desire to engage Vic High students as contributors to the garden, as a way for them to 'give back.' Vic High students are considered one of the main users of the site, using it as a “hang out spot.” During my observations I noticed Vic High students walking through Spring Ridge regularly on their way to and from school. I also witnessed high school students having conversations about conflicts that had occurred at school. Twice during my observations I witnessed tagging and drug use by high school aged youth. Linda believed that engaging Vic High students as stewards might create a new relationship between them and the space. That said, graffitti was also considered by the stewards I spoke with as a positive aspect of the commons, representing creative expression. Linda, in particular wanted to find ways to support more graffitti art in the space. In general, high school aged youth were not seen as a 'problem' on the site, but there was a desire to engage them in the space in new ways.

While the ideals of community and intentions of creating an inclusive space are clear in the ways that people described the Spring Ridge Commons, it appears that the community involved in stewarding the Commons is based more on common interest than anything else. Some increase in place-based community seems to have occurred over the last ten years, but the project is predominantly cared for by those interested in urban agriculture and permaculture. This makes sense given that the idea of the common is unusual in our current context. We do not have many examples of publicly accessible space that we are held responsible for, other than through the abstracted process of paying taxes.

Experimenting with Power.

> *... it's interesting because what's political mean. Essentially it means managing power in some way and so yeah, there was an original intention to manage power in a different way by sharing it among a group of people. Power and responsibility.* (Tamara)

The Spring Ridge Commons was created as a "social experiment in cooperation" and its organizational structure was intentionally left open (Geoff). Having no formal structure the Spring Ridge Commons exists in the margins, with associated challenges and benefits. In terms of ecological design such margins, or edges, are sought after in designing resilient systems because it is in the edges that the greatest diversity occurs. In the case of Spring Ridge, multiple stakeholders are involved in its maintenance, bringing a variety of skills and resources with them. They also bring multiple perspectives that coexist, confront, and conflict, with no explicitly defined rules for engaging with each other. Such openness has allowed for experimentation with how to cooperatively manage space, including dealing with power and conflict. All participants related stories of negotiation of power and control over how the site is maintained and the majority of participants recounted points of conflict over the space. Where participants did not explicitly share stories of conflict, their selective silence implied controversial issues. All but one of the participants in this study were involved as stewards in cooperatively managing the Spring Ridge Commons; these participants experimented with how to take collective responsibility for a space and felt that they had experienced community during their participation. The majority of stewards were young people in their twenties. In this section I draw on interviews and observations as well as public documents such as leaseholder websites and board meeting minutes to explore power in relation to the Spring Ridge Commons.

The Spring Ridge Commons experiments with alternatives to private ownership of land, the commodification of food, and hierarchical power structures. In each case there is an attempt to distribute power and control: Of land, of the means of food production, and of decision-making. Here I will focus on the decision-making processes that have formed the site's governance. In addition, I

provide some examples of how a philosophy of distributed power has manifested in negotiating use of the space.

Decision-making. As outlined in the site description, the basic organizational structure for Spring Ridge includes two parts: volunteer stewards and leaseholders. Based on interviews and observations, it appears that stewards are responsible for garden maintenance, volunteer and event coordination and acquiring any necessary material resources while leaseholders are responsible for paying the lease at a dollar per year (to Victoria School Board 61) and paying for the water bill. Based on my review of leaseholder and steward websites and meeting minutes, and observations again, the relationship between stewards and leaseholders becomes more complex. For instance, during the beginning stages of the Spring Ridge Commons Geoff acted without formal permission from the leaseholder at the time, the FCA, and according to Geoff, much time was spent protecting the space from FCA board members who were sabotaging the garden by pulling trees and destroying infrastructure. The FCA contends that they began a community project on the Spring Ridge site as early as 1985 (FCA, 2012), and that they initiated the Spring Ridge Commons in 1999 (FCA website), yet they also "*re*commit" themselves to *stewarding* the site in a resolution passed in 2006 (FCA, 2006, emphasis added). In their resolution and minutes there is no mention of Geoff's efforts from 1999-2006, although he is mentioned in every other source I reviewed as the creator of the space and the site coordinator for the period of 1999-2006. The only other source listing the FCA as having initiated a community space where Spring Ridge now exists is the Spring Ridge Commons blog, and the year given is 1985. In general, I noticed that who is mentioned as a contributor to Spring Ridge within which public documents reflects the relationships between stewards and leaseholders. For example, the conflict between Geoff and the FCA that occurred during the beginning stages of Spring Ridge is reflected in the FCA's omission of his role in their written account of the site's history. Although the FCA publicly committed itself to stewarding Spring Ridge in 2006, the lease was transferred to LifeCycles in 2007. Conflict is occurring again between the current stewards and leaseholders, younger

people are no longer involved as stewards and so I focus instead on the years leading up to the current organizational structure.

During the time in which LifeCycles held the lease, roughly from 2007-2010, conflict between stewards and leaseholders seemed to subside. Two organizational structures occurred during that time: 1) an employee of LifeCycles acted as site coordinator and 2) a steering committee of volunteers practiced distributed leadership in managing Spring Ridge. In the first case, Matthew Kemshaw (in his mid-twenties) was an employee of LifeCycles and was being paid for "an hour or two" of work each week to act as site coordinator. This payment came from a grant that LifeCycles had received to steward the commons. Matthew was site coordinator for a year, from 2008-2009 and the funding ran out after 4 months, after which he continued to steward the site as a volunteer and continued to do so in affiliation with LifeCycles (personal communication, September 28, 2012). When Matthew left he brought together a group of seven people who would act collectively in his place. This 'steering committee' (as it was called at the time) was mostly comprised of individuals in their twenties. The goal of the steering committee was to engage in a distributed leadership model, making decisions as a group and sharing power and responsibility. For Tamara this model of social organization is linked to the idea of sharing land in common:

> … in terms of models of management and leadership, like that whole ownership way of doing things has kind of led to this authoritarian leadership structure as what we know and what we're used to.

According to Tamara their vision of shared power worked well, but did not last:

> … there was an original intention to manage power in a different way by sharing it among a group of people … And, that had a particular result which was that it worked really great for awhile and then it kind of dissolved because nobody really had the responsibility and people had all these other commitments where they *had* to show up for them. (Tamara)

Because most of the volunteers were students as well, the committee functioned well in the summer and began to fall apart in the fall when members were pulled back to commitments of both school and work. From Deanna's perspective, who was also on the committee, too much information was being

passed through email and it was difficult to keep up as a volunteer. All stewards that I spoke with described some level of burn out from their engagement with the site and most suggested that the site would function best with a committed champion or leader, to provide direction. In the end, this is what Tamara did when LifeCycles realized they could no longer afford the water bill and the lease needed to be transferred elsewhere:

> Then the ownership and who pays the bills is what it comes down to in the end so when that came up it was a real crisis and I really stepped in there because no one else seemed to be doing anything and was probably the main person who was involved in getting the lease transferred to NRG ... at the time it seemed like the best idea. (Tamara)

Interestingly, the open organizational structure of the Spring Ridge Commons also means that stewards have little legal power. They also have little financial power. There are no formal structures in place to guide relations between stewards and leaseholders and although some participants felt that leaseholders were meant to stay "behind the scenes" the websites and meeting minutes concerning the space seem to imply that leaseholders can be involved as stewards as well. As Tamara states:

> ... you know there's a tension in the power and control of the place between the leaseholders who have all the legal power and the, you know, [stewards] … There's not a whole lot of weight there to use.

Even throughout years of conflict, though, Spring Ridge has functioned as a commons, not through any legal authority to do so, but through social practice. In other words, leaseholders, whether working in conflict or in harmony with stewards, have never exercised any legal right to change the open access structure of the space. There have been actions by the current leaseholder that shift how the site is governed, for example hiring food security coordinators who managed Spring Ridge as a part of their work for the NRG; but while their vision conflicted with that of stewards, their work on the commons occurred alongside governance by stewards rather than replacing it.

***Negotiating Space*.** Experimentation with power also appears in everyday stewardship practices, especially in terms of how access to the space is negotiated with respect to 'problematic' uses, such as drug use and camping. In addition to its role as a foraging site and educational space, the

Spring Ridge Commons provides a space relatively outside of surveillance. As mentioned previously, high school age youth regularly pass through the site, coming and going from the neighbouring secondary school; they also use the space for 'debriefing' conversations about conflicts at school, tag the sign and arbor area, and smoke cigarettes and pot. For youth coming from Vic High, no teachers are on site. In addition, the space offers some privacy because of the trees and shrubs. As I spent time in the site I overheard people, as they sat together sharing a joint, talking about feeling "exposed" now that the vegetation had died down (in November). During my observations it appeared that people (young and old) smoking pot was a regular occurrence at Spring Ridge and people that I spoke to both on site and in interviews told stories about other drug use as well. In addition, participants described the use of the Spring Ridge Commons as a living space. One man, who regularly comes to Spring Ridge to scavenge for the ends of joints (sometimes twice a day) and to buy marijuana from his dealer, shared with me that the police rarely come by the site. For him, this was a type of refuge from the other spaces of his everyday life, such as the shelter where he lives. Geoff also noted this absence, saying that "there's been very few times [he's] ever heard of cops coming on to [the Spring Ridge Commons] site."

With respect to drug use there seems to be a site culture and unwritten rules about what is acceptable. I mentioned previously that there seemed to be another kind of stewardship occurring at Spring Ridge, whereby regular users of the space respect and care for it in their own way. One woman that I met, who was smoking medicinal marijuana and sharing her joint with a man who appeared to be homeless, stated that the Spring Ridge Commons has a "special spirit of some kind … a sense of positivity" and she explained that no one comes here who is mean or bosses people around. She also explained that people come here to smoke pot but that people do not allow other kinds of drugs, like crack – "that's not okay." Similarly, an older man who described himself as homeless, sat with me as he rolled and smoked a joint and described finding needles on the site as "scary." He told me that one time he saw someone doing crack here, and that another time he asked for weed on the corner and "the guy"

said “only crack.” His facial expression following this story seemed to say that he found that shocking. And while there is evidence of drug use beyond marijuana, a certain level of stewardship still remains, as Geoff states:

> … you find a lot of sharps that are bent over in a cautious effort that it's not gonna jab someone and even if someone does out of desperation just need a fix or whatever, that's, you know because people in that crisis survival mode, it's just human nature when you're in that space, you're not thinking about future consequences. You're thinking about right now and how to get by and so for me, it seems ridiculous, but for me when I see a sharp with a needle bent over so that no one's gonna get jabbed, that actually does say a lot. That this person actually is doing their best to kind of still consider the consequences of their actions for other people ...

That said, not all users of the site practice stewardship in this way, which can impact people's ability to feel safe and welcome in the space. As Geoff said:

> ... sometimes I actually wish [the police] would [come by the site]. Because I know I've showed up there to do work and been stared down by these like serious dudes because they're in the middle of a drug deal. And .. I don't like telling people what to do but I think we can safely say that's not cool.

Without the usual forms of surveillance, the Spring Ridge Commons exists somewhat autonomously, allowing stewards to experiment with ways of relating to multiple uses of the site, including drug use and camping. Their decisions appear to be based on an ethic of inclusion.

> I've seen a lot of people, it looks like they've just come from a very stressed out place and they're decompressing. Sitting in the sun against that rock underneath the fig and why is it less valid if that's a homeless drug-addicted person who's finding solace there than, you know, some middle-class neighbour. Both, both, both do. (Geoff)

> ... the homeless guy who has nowhere else to sleep, I'm not about to tell him not to sleep under those bushes. I will ask him not to drag like a mountain of junk in there cause he's got mental health issues and stuff because that starts to really weigh the project down and it can draw a lot of heat … (Geoff)

> ... pretty much every summer, people camp out in the Commons and often it's people who are addicts. Sometimes they'd put up tents, sometimes not. Sometimes they just crash. But one year ... I think it was 2009, they had tents there for quite awhile ... there's an up side and a down side. The up side is that the culture we had developed of people who were managing the Commons and were responsible for it decided that was okay. ... we said well look, there's some problems, we're finding needles, that's a

> problem, and people are pissing just right around their tent and sometimes they're even like taking a shit somewhere in the garden. ... We were like, 'how do we deal with this?' We're not just gonna be like 'get out of here, you're ruining our garden' because we recognize they need to be somewhere. So we left them a note saying 'this is a food garden, please treat it like it's your food garden'. ... we're not asking you to leave we're just asking for a couple of specific things. We eventually spoke to one of them because they happened to be there when we came ... and they were like 'yeah, okay.' And I think it did change after that. (Tamara)

That said, police, city, and public health officials have exercised their authority, which can be thought of as another form of neighbourhood stewardship since not all people using the site will have the same ethics of inclusion and perceptions of safety. Nevertheless, when city officials "cleaned out" the same people that Tamara had just been in conversation with about their use of the space, she felt as if their efforts to "develop an alternative way of relating to [people tenting on site]" was "stamped out."

DIY Community and Young People. Young people interact with the Spring Ridge Commons as a community space both through their use of the space and their stewardship of the space. In terms of use, participants in this study focused on high school students' use of the space as a "hang out spot" and most participants felt a desire to build a partnership with Vic High in order to include students in stewardship activities, with the hope of building a new kind of relationship between them and the space. Tamara described the existing relationship as a "child's relationship to community … where it's someone else's job to take care of it" but was still happy that they were using the space. Other secondary school groups have been involved with Spring Ridge, participating in work parties as either educational experiences or for their community service days. Again, these kinds of activities are clear examples of how Spring Ridge can be a site for youth work.

In terms of stewardship, young people in their twenties become social innovators attempting to enact an alternative vision of community, experimenting with distributed leadership and organizational structures, and experiencing community politics. Young people's participation in this way is unprogrammed and situated within uncertainty. The uncertain organizational structure of the Spring Ridge Commons allows for experimentation with community relationships, decision-making, and

dynamics of power, including learning how to deal with conflict. Such experience can be contrasted with youth engagement and leadership programs for youth which tend to prepare young people to function within existing social structures and modes of governance. Moreover, the Spring Ridge Commons was created and is maintained according to ideals of a better society, one based on cooperation and relationships of mutual support. Involvement in the site's functioning is an act of cultural resistance wherein new relationships to food, land, and people are tested. In contrast, activism in youth programs is often limited and sometimes explicitly denied. For example, as a staff person with Katimavik, a national service-learning program (generally understood as a leadership program), we were told we could not engage in activism, a stipulation given by our funders, the Department of Canadian Heritage. Even if funding does not deny the use of activism in youth programs, grant conditions can be very specific and in this way direct program activities (France and Wiles, 1997). In the case of the Spring Ridge Commons the project was self-directed by youth who engaged in the creative production of a physical and social space of experimentation.

Chapter Summary

The goal of this research was to explore how young people are participating in the cultural resistance of the Spring Ridge Commons. The results I have presented here focus on two out of three proposed mechanisms of cultural resistance: creating a free space for alternative ideas and practices to be tested, and building community. Participatory agri/culture and DIY are overarching themes in this study as they relate to the cultural production of space, food, and social structures. I have reported *how* the mechanisms of cultural resistance function in the case example of Spring Ridge through three analytic themes: 1) DIY Food: Creating an Alternative Foodway; 2) DIY Education: Reskilling for the Future; and 3) DIY Community: Taking Collective Responsibility. The findings and interpretations I have presented here look at the intentions and ideals that form the foundation of the Spring Ridge Commons and how these ideals have manifested in practice. More specifically, I have reported the

ways in which young people engage in everyday politics as DIY agri/cultural producers.

In summary, the results of this study suggest that through participation in the Spring Ridge Commons young people are: 1) engaging in alternative forms of everyday food practices based on an ethic of reducing consumption, which include urban foraging and growing food that is openly accessible and free to the public; 2) engaging in learning opportunities aimed at reskilling for local and urban food production and sharing their knowledge and skills with one another through a peer-to-peer network; and 3) experimenting with ways of being in community and cooperative management of community space.

It is important to note that this study draws from a small sample of those involved with the Spring Ridge Commons. I have analyzed documents published by both stewards and leaseholders and I have spoken with site stewards from all periods of the Commons' existence, as well as users of the site, but I have not spoken with any leaseholders. Thus, this study represents the perspectives of the Spring Ridge stewards who are invested in the space as both an ideal and a reality. In addition, my position within the food justice movement and as a resident of Fernwood gives me a particular perspective on the Spring Ridge Commons and the themes that I present here. I have been careful to examine codes and themes both within and across participant responses and to represent themes that are most prevalent among all participants in the study, however my background and experiences undoubtedly affect what I see in the data (as is the case with any qualitative analysis) and my underlying assumption is that the Spring Ridge Commons is a positive space.

Chapter Five: Discussion

As an example of young people creatively producing spaces, practices, and processes of social organization, what does the Spring Ridge Commons say about youth care? In what ways does the Spring Ridge Commons constitute youth work? And why is it important for youth to be engaging in these practices? In this section I explore ways in which young people's experience with the Spring Ridge Commons relate to child and youth care theory and practice. Overall, I focus on the shift from youth-as-consumer to youth-as-cultural producer and the implications of this shift for youth participation in 'real life,' youth-adult relationships, and young people's experience of democracy.

Everyday Politics

The Spring Ridge Commons is a youth-generated open-ended social experiment that operates separately from, but in relationship with, dominant social structures and systems. This marginal and uncertain position entails a certain level of vulnerability, or risk, but also creates the conditions for ongoing experimentation with alternative ways of living in and contributing to our world. It provides an opportunity for youth to experience an unprogrammed arena for creating and practicing alternatives. According to Juris and Pleyers (2009) the structures and processes taken up by Spring Ridge stewards are those particularly appealing to young activists, including non-hierarchical organization, peer to peer networking, and social change through everyday practice. In relationship with the Spring Ridge Commons, young people are practicing alternative foodways like urban foraging; creating decommodified food sources; sharing skills and knowledge with one another; building community; and experimenting with non-hierarchical forms of social organization.

As mentioned earlier, Camino and Zeldin (2002) report a “lack of contact between youth and adults in civic affairs” and argue that this distance is connected to “persistent and entrenched negative

beliefs about adolescents" as well as both an amplification and denial of age differences (p. 214). They suggest that negative beliefs result in adults distrusting youth ability to participate in community, amplification of age differences result in limiting youth roles to that of student and consumer (and manifests as token youth participation in programs design to promote youth civic engagement), and denial of age differences result in denying guidance and support to young people participating in politics. Furthermore, Camino and Zeldin contend that the lack of contact between youth and adults in politics is particular to our current context, in which young people are segregated from 'real life' through longer periods of time spent in school and youth organizations. In response, practitioners and researchers suggest a need to create youth-adult partnerships within youth programs and youth services that promote youth civic engagement.

Similar to the youth- and community development approach above, Magnuson, Baldwin, Baizerman, and Stringer (2003) note that segregation of youth "from adult life and from real life" has increased, at the same time that adult control over young people's time has increased. These authors argue that such segregation and control "remove[s] young people from the very places where maturity is practiced and where meaningful experience is located" (p. 64). Instead, young people "find themselves in a world where much of what they have experienced and know is a result of how the world has been previously organized" (p. 67). As a youth-generated, unprogrammed space, the Spring Ridge Commons facilitates experiences in which young people have access to the means of organizing their world, albeit in microcosm form. Further, it provides opportunities for partnerships between youth and adults based on shared experience with a cause. I have already described the support that Rainey and Margot were able to give to the younger creators of Kale Corner regarding city by-laws. Another example occurred during the original conflicts over the space, between the young people building the garden and the leaseholders at the time. A key element of the Spring Ridge Commons' eventual acceptance by the FCA was a partnership between Geoff and one board member of the FCA, creating a bridge between the stewards and the leaseholders.

> G36: ... largely because of the help of Ben Isitt, if I hadn't had Ben Isitt as an ally -- and I really want that to be on the record, that he was just doing that for free -- he was just on the board of the FCA and he .. became the inside person on the FCA who kind of put everyone else at bay and really helped to protect the site.

Here, Geoff was able to gain institutional support by partnering with an adult, and did so through their mutual involvement in the politics surrounding the Spring Ridge Commons. Following Geoff's partnership with Ben, the FCA formally recognized its support of the Spring Ridge Commons.

By functioning outside of formalized programs and institutions, Spring Ridge creates the conditions for young people and adults to engage with each other both through relationships of support and through conflict. In so doing, Spring Ridge gets at the root of the problem identified by Camino and Zeldin: A lack of interaction between youth and adults in politics. In the case of the Spring Ridge Commons, as well as newer commons that are being created, young people are interacting with peers and adults as they participate in negotiations of power, negotiations of space, community decision-making, and policy development on appropriate uses of public space. It is important to note that in our stereotypes of youth and adult, adults are also segregated from "youth life" and its associated forms of cultural production and politics.

Agri/Cultural Production

Resistance is generally understood as a force that exists in opposition to something else. Cultural resistance, though, occurs through creative production and expression, and moves toward the possible. Likewise, the Spring Ridge Commons is generative – it is about creating that which we feel is possible. And it is through this generative capacity that the site offers a response to corporate agriculture. As a free space, Spring Ridge offers a venue for experimentation with different values, practices, and ways of living, that offer examples of new ways of being in and creating our world. Through participation in this space, the kinds of meaningful roles available to youth expand from that of "consumer, athlete, and student" to include the creative role of cultural producer. As cultural

producers young people participating in the Spring Ridge Commons become foragers creating new foodways, gardeners building publicly accessible sources of free food, skill-sharers building community capacity, and community organizers enacting relationships and networks designed to reduce power inequalities.

Magnuson, Baldwin, Baizerman, and Stringer (2003) state that young people are:

> ... at an age and in a social context that is optimal for exploring the world, evaluating different alternatives for their lives, and developing good judgement about lifestyle, values, and life goals. ... Look for purposeful, meaningful, honorable opportunities. ... [and] can imagine alternatives to the existing way their world is organized and lived and can imagine alternatives for their future. (p. 67)

The imagining and practicing of alternatives is a requirement of DIY, cultural resistance, and what Graeber (2009) refers to as 'prefigurative politics.' Prefigurative politics create “futures in the present” by combining critique, vision, and action to build now the world one wants to see, through a process that is consistent with the desired ends (Lawrance, 2011; Shantz, 2008). Through these processes daily behaviours such as how we produce and acquire food become a challenge to the status quo while creating a microcosm of new relationships to land and people.

How the Spring Ridge Commons came to be is an important example of cultural production by youth. Duncombe (1997) argues that the division between producers and consumers is “normally reinforced by the professionalization of cultural creation, which divides the world into those with the talent, skills, and authority to create, and those without” (p. 131). While those who created Spring Ridge were already active within urban agriculture, they were beginners in the field and especially with respect to designing an urban permaculture garden that would be open to the public. Moreover, no formal permissions were granted to build the space. As such, Geoff and those who worked with him had no 'authority' to do what they were doing either through expertise or through law.

> ... it started off just with a few of us being like 'yeah, that space could be so awesome.' ... And just ... like 'well, let's just do it' and we just started sheetmulching. … Shortly after we started we kind of checked in with the FCA [leaseholder]... cause we kind of didn't, we didn't want to step on any toes unnecessarily, but we also weren't gonna be looking for reasons we weren't allowed to do this. (Geoff)

While some members of the FCA board supported the project, others did not. Knowing this, Geoff and the other volunteers "just went ahead and did it anyways" (Geoff). Thus, Spring Ridge began as a guerilla garden[6], with no permissions granted by the leaseholders, and it was a contested space for several years. Eventually, as Geoff states, they were "allowed to carry on working for *free* to increase the food security in [their] neighbourhood." Geoff highlights the grassroots nature of the gardens' growth, saying that it is less about who holds the lease for the land and more about "people seeing what needs to be done, getting inspired, and doing it."

Returning to the idea that youth are particularly well suited to cultural resistance, those who valued the Spring Ridge Commons during its early stages were "eccentric and on the fringes." According to Geoff, they were also mostly young people in their twenties, who he describes as living an experimental life:

> ... there seemed to be a lot of people that were just maybe a bit divergent from societal mainstreams. Which in a lot of ways is great but sometimes it also means that you're living this kind of experimental life. So I would say it was really largely youth in their twenties and disproportionately women. ... But there were all kinds. There were all kinds. (Geoff)

When Geoff was most involved with the Spring Ridge Commons, the site was caught up in conflict and community politics, and it pushed the boundaries of urban agriculture. It was a marginal space supported by people willing to experiment with possibility. From Geoff"s perspective, being young facilitated his ability to give so much time and effort to the project and also gave him "license" to be eccentric.

> ... It was, I did feel a lot of the time like it was really thankless but I also knew that, I just had a really strong conviction and I was younger and I had a lot more motivation and a lot of drive and willingness to be eccentric. That always gets difficult when you get into your thirties. I kind of feel sometimes like people in their twenties, they have license to be eccentric and subcultural but then if that really is who you are, it's not just a fashion statement, when you get into your thirties it's like you really stick out more and you really feel the cultural oppression.

[6] According to Wikipedia, guerilla gardening "encompasses a very diverse range of people and motivations, from the enthusiastic gardener who spills over their legal boundaries to the highly political gardener who seeks to provoke change through direct action" . The Wikipedia entry also notes that one strategy of guerilla gardening is to be active during visible hours in order to be seen by community members and the public. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerilla_gardening)

> ... I didn't have the problem of being in my thirties and being seen as .. somehow like not moving on with my life because that was still what I was into, right? So I'm just saying it was easier to be that way because, it's just more culturally acceptable for younger people to be a little bit on the edges in terms of what they think is important. (Geoff)

Geoff's experience of cultural oppression fits with Skott-Myhre's (2007) argument that "acts of creative force [are] inherently transgressive under capitalism" (p. 12). According to Skott-Myhre, creativity within capitalism is available to children (under adult supervision) and to a lesser extent youth, but is otherwise "turned towards the business of making money" (p. 5). Skott-Myhre writes that youth hold a "relative creative freedom," which includes a capacity for resistance and he argues that this creative force separates youth and adults because it is positioned as "not only unavailable to the adult, but unattractive and unhealthy as well" (p. 8). The ability to display creative force is tolerated if not supported in youth but is expected to be under control by the time of adulthood.

The idea that youth are more likely to engage in acts of resistance and adults are more likely to be perpetuating the status quo is evident in comments by Trevor and Geoff:

> I think young people are always more keen on something new. And older people are always more invested in status quo. When I'm older I'll probably be more invested in whatever the status quo is. ... Everybody alive today .. almost everybody alive today grew up with industrial food so that's the status quo. ... everybody in power today grew up with industrial food. So, it's younger people who are gonna change that and then it'll be my kids that change whatever it is we have ... (Trevor)

> ... So that was, and for me it always was, like I wanted to be youth driven because the whole idea is that we're supposed to respect our elders but they've completely messed up our planet and there's very few that I've been able to find that I can respect. Before [food justice] was cool they were more a part of the problem than a part of the solution. So Spring Ridge was, in my mind at the time, was about 'well, this generation has to start doing this because no one else is going to do it.' (Geoff)

These statements illustrate how we think about what practices are available to youth and to adults as well as the divide that can result. If youth are positioned as those who must take up a cause while adults are positioned as those who must be productive within the given system, this can result in the kind of "us – them" thinking that Geoff expresses above.

Yet, while youth are given greater space for creative production and resistance, they are at the

same time delegitimized. Skott-Myhre (2007) argues that “constructions of youth that suggest they are capable of offering viable alternative constructions of society ... are discounted as not meaningful on the basis of idealism, lack of maturity, or emotional instability attributed to youth” (p. 13). Again, Geoff's experience articulates these ideas:

> Well, let me say that I am [sigh] ... When I started up with this whole Spring Ridge Commons business I had very little experience and a lot of passion and inspiration, and a lot of idealism. It's natural in life for people's idealism to be chipped away at, but I made a very firm decision very early that .. it's a very sad thing to lose your idealism and once you've lost it .. how interesting could life possibly be? I committed very early to, I don't want to end up one of these bitter older people who just kind of like, is cynical about younger people trying to create a better world. I really, I mean and I feel it creeping, but I made a decision a long time ago to really challenge that and to try to allow my ideals to change but not to let go of them as a driving force in my life.

Geoff's comments also illustrate creative force as the interface or edge between the social categories of youth and adult. Participatory culture requires subjects who are, in Skott-Myhre's (2007) words “free to creatively act” (p. 5). The creative force of such subjects “cannot be found in the singular subject alone as creative genius, or child, or in the special circumstance of talent” (p. 6). Returning to Duncombe (1997), the positioning of someone as expert divides people into those with the authority to create and those without, whether such authority is granted by cultural mythology of where creativity exists (e.g. within an individual), or through commodified processes of legitimization such as professionalization through education. Skott-Myhre argues that the subject who is free to creatively act “can only be found in the intersections where we come together to produce the world. Certainly one place where that occurs is in the sets of relations between the social categories called youth and those called adult” (p. 6). Geoff's experience demonstrates the struggle to sit comfortably with a continual meeting between constructions of “youth” and “adult” within himself in order to maintain his creative force. In this way Geoff denies the “idealized utopian maturity that is stable, continuous, and responsible to a core identity and function” (Skott-Myhre, p.6).

DIY and participatory culture are practices that transform everyday lived experiences of consumption into acts of production. Again, youth are understood as consumers over cultural producers

and politically engaged citizens. Furthermore, just as youth are primarily understood as consumers, youth services function as a market providing consumer choice (France & Wiles, 1997). In his discussion of radical youth work having been lost by youth services that are guided by capitalist interests, Skott-Myhre (2005) suggests that we can come back to youth work through "the actual shared lived experience of youth and adults as an infinitely creative community struggling together to produce the world" (p. 149).

DIY Democracy

> *... to democratize the food system is to recognize that there are spaces of resistance and creativity in which people themselves attempt to govern and shape their relationships with food and agriculture (Hassanein, 2003, p. 79).*

The idea of democracy shows up throughout food justice literature as a primary goal of the movement. Moreover, cultural production through DIY activities and participatory agriculture "tend to present a vision of a desired society which is participatory and democratic" (Shantz, 2008). As Duncombe (1997) states, "freedom from the 'professionalism' that [is] supposed to accompany any creation of culture in our society ... asserts the possibility of a participatory and democratic culture" (p. 131). As a site of food justice and an enactment of participatory agriculture, *how* is the Spring Ridge Commons a democratic space? What activities associated with the Spring Ridge Commons might indicate democracy?

Creating social spaces. As I mentioned in the literature review, food justice research tends to focus on democratic participation as enacted through institutional forums for democracy, such as decision-making and policy building. The Spring Ridge Commons facilitates these kinds of democratic participation, although they occur independent of the institutions of government, through its experimentation in creating community relationships based on mutual support, and in non-hierarchical governance. Moreover, the Spring Ridge Commons is a manifestation of the ethic "from each according to their ability and to each according to their need," creating a source of decommodified food

and “experimenting with communit[y] that [is] not organized around market principles of exchange value” (Shantz, 2008, p. 28). In so doing, Spring Ridge enacts a 'deep democracy' “in which the notion of the public good takes precedence” (Allen, 2010, p. 303).

Diversity of perspectives and inclusion of a broad range of citizens create conditions that promote democratic participation (Camino & Zeldin, 2002; Feenstra, 2002; Levkoe, 2006). Feenstra describes the social spaces created through alternative food system projects as places where people learn to voice their own and listen to others' ideas, to plan together, problem-solve, compromise, and create. Further, Feenstra argues that relationships of trust form out of opportunities for “diverse people ... to come together ... in the context of a common purpose or vision” and that it is in these meeting places that “democratic theory and practice come together” (p. 102). The organizational structure of Spring Ridge as a commons is based primarily on relationships of trust, outside of any legal agreements or remuneration. It is also open to adaptation with no formally defined roles for those involved. As such it requires ongoing negotiations of vision and practice. According to Hardt and Negri (2009) putting democratic government into action is done through being “engaged collectively in constituting social life” (p. 376).

In his writing on “the democratization of everyday life” Melucci (1989) writes of “the diffusion of political instances” wherein authoritarian regulations are replaced by political relationships (p. 165). He defines political relationships as “procedures of negotiation which, by means of confrontation and the mediation of interests, produce decisions, whereas before there were only mechanisms for authoritatively transmitting regulations by means of power” (p. 165). Such 'political relationships' can be seen in the ways in which young people as stewards of Spring Ridge engaged with each other and with users of the site to negotiate acceptable uses of the space. Likewise, Camino and Zeldin (2002) suggest that influencing choices in collective action is a “bedrock value of democracy” (p. 214).

Localizing and connecting to place. Some authors also point to participatory and 'deep' democracy as forms that move “beyond formal democracy” and are based on active participation in

alternative food practices (Allen, 2010, p. 303). According to Appadurai (2002), "*deep democracy* suggests roots, anchors, intimacy, proximity, and locality" (p. 45). Likewise, Allen (2010) argues that the conditions for participatory and deep democracy can be "favourable and facilitated best at the local level" (p. 303). According to Allen, (2010), some of these conditions include awareness of how the food system affects one's own local region and motivation to participate at the local level because of the "visible, tangible" ways in which people can effect change. In other words, "for some, working at a larger political level may be too abstract, frustrating or disempowering" (Allen, p. 303). These ideas were expressed by Geoff when he spoke of his motivation to create the Spring Ridge Commons: He was already engaged in food justice and anti-globalization movements, but wanted to create something 'real.'

The Spring Ridge Commons serves as a place through which people can experience participatory democracy. It is a "common landscape ... critical for ... democratic and political action" (DeLind, 2006). According to Feenstra (2002), one of the ways in which democratic theory and practice come together is through opportunities for "regular citizens and residents ... to participate in their food systems in new ways" (Feenstra, p. 102). This kind of engagement is what moves us toward what Feenstra calls a "participatory food system" or what I have been calling "participatory agriculture." The Spring Ridge Commons supports this kind of citizen participation through acting as an urban foraging site and providing a space for alternative food practices through stewardship. In addition, as I described in the results of this study, the site's public accessibility affords neighbourhood acts of stewardship, representing both place-based community and place-based participation in alternative local food production. In this way the Spring Ridge Commons provides the conditions of possibility for reconstituting citizenship and generating new forms of politics based in community.

Levkoe (2006) discusses the idea that social movements are "schools for democracy," wherein people "learn about democracy through active participation" (p. 93). Likewise, the ideas of democracy and democratic participation described above suggest that the Spring Ridge Commons is a place in

which young people can both experience and enact democracy.

Chapter Summary

This chapter builds on the results presented in chapter four by considering what we might learn from the Spring Ridge Commons as a site of child and youth care. Tentative answers explore reconnecting youth and adults through shared practice and meaningful work in “real life” politics and community building, reconceptualizing 'youth' and 'adult' in terms of creative force and cultural production, and creating spaces in which young people and adults can share experiences of democracy in everyday life. The next question is how do we include projects like the Spring Ridge Commons in the field of child and youth care?

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule Based on Research Questions

How are youth participating in the cultural resistance of the Spring Ridge Commons?

1. How is cultural resistance enacted in the Spring Ridge Commons?

1. **a) How does the Spring Ridge Commons allow for ideas and alternatives to be tested?**

    - *In what way do you think the Commons acts as an alternative (or non-mainstream) place?*
    - *In what ways do people use the Commons?*
    - *How does the SRC represent an alternative form of local food production?*
    - *How do you use the Commons for food production?*
    - *How do you use the Commons in your daily life?*

1. **b) How does the Spring Ridge Commons foster community?**

    - *How do you define 'community?'*
    - *What role does the Commons play in building community?*
    - *In what ways do you think the Commons supports community?*
    - *Do you consider the SRC a community space? Why / why not?*

1. **c) How are people organizing themselves and interacting with each other in relation to the Spring Ridge Commons?**

    - *How would you describe your relationship to the Commons?*
    - *How is the Commons cared for?*
    - *How did you become involved with the Commons?*
    - *What helps you to stay connected to the Commons?*
    - *Tell me about your experience as an organizer for the Commons? (for organizers/coordinators)*

1. **d) How has experience in the Spring Ridge Commons (self-guided or through organized events) influenced people's understanding of their activities as political?**

    - *What do you see as the purpose of the Commons?*
    - *Why is the Commons important?*
    - *How would you describe the Commons to someone who had never heard of it?*
    - *Would you describe your involvement with the Commons as political? (if yes or no, ask for explanation)*
    - *Do you consider yourself to be a part of a food movement?*
    - *Can you describe any experiences you have had with the SRC in which people seemed to become aware of food as political?*
    - *How does the SRC contribute to food justice?*
    - *What role has the Commons played in your relationship to food?*

2. How are young people engaging with the Spring Ridge Commons as a site of Cultural Resistance?

- In what ways do young people participate in the Commons?
- How would you describe the ways in which young people use the Commons

Appendix B: Data Summary Tables

The following data summary tables display the core categories or themes of this study and their related codes, and where these codes show up across participant interview responses. Codes are listed along the top of the table and participants along the side.

Corresponding findings statements are written below each table as well as the research questions(s) addressed by each finding.

Category: "Alternative Foodway"					
	Foraging	Decommodification	Freegan	Alternative Practice	Foodways
SRC01-L	x				
SRC02-C	x	x	x		
SRC03-G	x	x	x	x	
SRC04-T	x	x	x	x	x
SRC05-D	x	x	x	x	x
N = 5	# = 5 100% (all)	# = 4 80% (a majority)	# = 4 80% (a majority)	# = 3 60% (most)	# = 2 40% (some)

FINDING 1:
The majority of participants viewed the Spring Ridge Commons as a source of decommodified food and engaged in urban foraging from the site. Some of the participants foraged from the site on a regular basis as a supplement to their groceries. The majority of participants described young people as those who were most likely to use the site as a regular food source.

RESEARCH QUESTION(S): 1.a) How does the Spring Ridge Commons allow for ideas and alternatives to be tested?; 2) How are young people engaging with the Spring Ridge Commons as a site of Cultural Resistance?

Category: “Education and Reskilling”						
	Educational	Network	Seeding	Meme	Youth as Students	Propagation
SRC01-L	x	x	x		x	
SRC02-C	x	x	x	x	x	x
SRC03-G	x	x	x	x	x	
SRC04-T	x	x	x	x		
SRC05-D	x	x	x			
N = X	# = 5 100%	# = 5 100%	# = 5 100%	# = 3 60%	# = 3 60%	# = 1 20%

FINDING 2:
All participants described the Spring Ridge Commons as an educational space and had either facilitated or participated in both formal and informal educational opportunities. Most participants described this educational aspect as one of the main ways that youth have participated in the SRC.

RESEARCH QUESTION(S): 1.a) How does the Spring Ridge Commons allow for ideas and alternatives to be tested?; 2) How are young people engaging with the Spring Ridge Commons as a site of Cultural Resistance? (this also extends beyond the research questions/original conceptual framework to add the dimension of 'knowledge production and transfer' to cultural resistance).

Category: "Collective Responsibility and Stewardship"										
	Community Building	Power/ Control	Stewardship	Conflict	Collective/ Shared Leadership	Collective/ Shared Responsibility	Site Culture	Social Experiment	Inter-dependence	Youth Leadership
SRC01-L	x	x	x			x	x			x
SRC02-C	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
SRC03-G	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
SRC04-T	x	x	x	x	x				x	
SRC05-D	x	x	x	x	x			x		
N = X	# = 5 100%	# = 5 100%	# = 5 100%	# = 4 80%	# = 4 80%	# = 3 60%	# = 3 60%	# = 2 40%	# = 2 40%	# = 2 40%

FINDING 3: All participants viewed the Spring Ridge Commons as a site for community building. All participants related stories of the negotiation of power and control over how the site is maintained and the majority of participants recounted points of conflict over the space. All but one of the participants were involved in cooperatively managing the Commons; these participants experimented with how to take collective responsibility for a space and felt that they had experienced community during their participation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS(S): 1.a) How does the Spring Ridge Commons allow for ideas and alternatives to be tested? 1.b) How does the Spring Ridge Commons foster community?; 1.c) How are people organizing themselves and interacting with each other in relations to the Spring Ridge Commons?; 2) How are young people engaging with the Spring Ridge Commons as a site of Cultural Resistance?

** in this finding statement I have collapsed collective leadership and collective responsibility (as I have also done with my codes).

Appendix C: Analytic Category Development

Research Question		Finding Statement	Outcome/Consequence	Analytic Category
1.a) How does the Spring Ridge Commons (SRC) allow for ideas and alternatives to be tested?	2. How are young people engaging with the SRC as a site of cultural resistance?	1) The majority of participants viewed the SRC as a source of decommodified food and engaged in urban foraging from the site. Some of the participants foraged from the site on a regular basis as a supplement to their groceries. The majority of participants described young people as those who were most likely to use the site as a regular food source. All participants described the SRC as a demonstration of what is possible and a model for other similar projects.	The SRC becomes a food source that provides free food to anyone. Youth as consumers become anti-consumers (specifically, foragers).	1) Alternative Foodway (DIY Food) Youth as anti-consumers and DIY food producers. (cultural producers)
		2) All participants described the SRC as an educational space and had either facilitated or participated in both formal and informal learning there. Most participants described this educational aspect as one of the main ways that youth have participated in the SRC.	The SRC becomes a source of ideas and knowledge that can be applied to other projects and to ways of living. Youth as students become learners (both student and teacher) and producers of knowledge.	2) Education and Reskilling (DIY Education) Youth as skillsharers. (cultural producers)
1.b) How does the SRC foster community?		3) All participants viewed the SRC as a site for community building. All participants related stories of the negotiation of power and control over how the site is maintained and the majority of participants recounted points of conflict over the space. All but one of the participants were involved as stewards in cooperatively managing the Commons; these participants experimented with how to take collective responsibility for a space and felt that they had experienced community during their participation. The majority of stewards were in their 20's.	The SRC becomes a social experiment in ways of being in community and modes of governance. Youth as leaders (prepared for existing social institutions) become activists, change agents, and community builders (creating new social spaces).	3) Social Experiment (DIY Community) Youth as social innovators. (cultural producers)
1.c) How are people organizing themselves and interacting with each other in relation to the Spring Ridge Commons				