Discourses and Practices of Whiteness in the Alternative Food Movement in Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Abstract

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The alternative food movement is a collaborative effort to build more environmentally and socially just food systems in order to enhance the health and resiliency of communities. Contemporary trends in food politics have emerged in Canada over the past 40 years, as people work to develop equitable alternatives to the dominant agrifood system. This thesis intervenes at this point and interrogates the discourses and practices within the alternative food movement with the aim of illustrating how race and class based oppressions can be unknowingly embedded in the workings of an organization. It does this through discourse analysis and participant observation, which forms the basis of a case study of The Food Action Committee (FAC) in Halifax, N.S. Drawing on an interdisciplinary literature with a particular emphasis on critical geography, this thesis demonstrates that the circulation of whitened discourses and practices in FAC can inadvertently naturalize and reinforce exclusionary processes which may engender particular exclusions. These forms of inequality - including historical processes of dispossession and racial and other exclusions – are felt most strongly in the marginal communities the committee aims to support. This occurs through an adherence in the organization to discourses of universalism and colour blindness, as well as to universalizing practices such as exclusionary conceptualizations of community and participation. While it is clear that FAC is well intentioned in regards to diversity within the organization, this critique opens a path towards a more genuine form of social inclusion in the organization and in the alternative food movement.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The alternative food movement is a coalition of initiatives that jointly challenge the corporate industrial agrifood system (Feagan 2007; Allen 2004; Alkon 2011). While food activism did exist before the 1970s (as will be illustrated when we look at the relevant history), the movement really found traction during this period and expanded to include many on the ground projects and initiatives (Miller 2009). Indeed, a wide range of projects such as: community supported agriculture (CSA), urban farms, farmers' markets, produce delivery services, 'good neighbour' programs, nutritional education programs, new immigrant farming projects, and farm-to-school projects have all come about in the past 40 years or so (Miller 2009). The movement is further made up of campaigns such as fair trade[1], local food[2], anti-Genetically Modified Organism (GMO)[3] food security[4], and food democracy[5] (Alkon 2011: 68; Guthman 2008b: 432; Feagan 2007; Levkoe 2014). In essence, alternative agriculture is a movement of small decentralized movements. This decentralization has been fostered by many community food groups who maintain that this focus can allow them to better support the communities that they are based in (Arsenault, et al. 2010; EAC 2011). Ultimately, the food movement can be of particular interest to community organizers as food politics are a strategic space for organizing for social and

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[1] Fair trade is a business practice that attempts to achieve equitable trade relationships, especially between producers in the Global South exporting to consumers in the Global North.

[2] The local food movement advocates for the consumption of food produced within close geographic proximity, to mitigate the social and environmental effects of global supply chains caused by resource expenditure and labour exploitation.

[3] Resistance to the development of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in agricultural industries (to create crops and livestock that are more productive and resilient) manifests in calls for regulation, labeling, or further scientific study. Anti-GMO campaigns invoke the nascent development of genetic modification technologies as reason to scrutinize the long-term health and environmental effects of GMOs.

[4] Food security concerns the access to the supply of food by individuals, communities, and society at large, and the effects that access has on health, politics, and economics.

[5] Food democracy is the application of democratic practices and tenets, such as collective decision making, to the production and distribution of food.

environmental justice. Indeed, gains made in articulating democratic processes in the food movement are often transferable to other struggles (Miller 2009; Feagan 2007).

However, the movement is limited in many respects — it is overwhelmingly white and affluent, focused primarily on anti-corporatism, and disproportionately concerned with environmentalism and sustainable agriculture. As well, participants in the movement tend to proceed without a marked acknowledgement of how these goals cannot be reached without simultaneous attention to the social aspects of food justice. Priorities within the movement tend to shift every few decades (as will be outlined in chapter 2). Of late, many initiatives within the food movement based in or funded by governmental or reformist non-governmental organizations focus predominantly on food security and sustainable agriculture (Guthman 2013). Further, organizationally, farm security and food security goals often seem to be at odds. In other words, there is a difficulty in reconciling the competing needs of farmers attempting to make ends meet by catering to wealthy customers who can afford organic and otherwise artisanal products, and people living with a low income being able to access fresh and affordable food options.

In this context, an emergent stream of literature argues there is a disconnect between the practice and discourse of food movement initiatives, and their goals of supporting marginalized communities (Guthman 2008a; Levkoe 2014; Schiavoni 2016; Slocum 2006; Wekerle 2016). These race and class-based critiques within the literature are useful in supporting the formulation a more self-awareness in organizing and a greater understanding of the current limitations of the alternative food movement. Scholars point to the unreflexive usage of certain discourses and practices, which inadvertently normalize and reproduce racial and other exclusions. While the

full extent of these discourses and practices will be outlined over the course of the thesis, it is useful to outline two discourses that in fact proliferate into many others. First, colour blindness is "the absence of racial identifiers in language" and functions to perpetuate epistemic violence through the erasure of white privilege and racist histories (Guthman 2008a: 390). And second, a focus on the discourse of universalism (the assumption that values held by white communities are normal and universal) pressures people of colour to conform to the dominant white culture if they are to receive access to resources (Guthman 2008a). In essence, the work of these scholars describes the underlying perceptions of race and class in relation to food and the food movement. An adherence to these perceptions can inhibit predominantly white food-based organizations from more closely connecting to communities of colour and race struggles. This translates to an inability to foster genuine social inclusion within the structure and programing of these organizations. In this way, organizational spaces become most accessible and beneficial to affluent, educated, urban white women and exclusionary to people of colour and low-income communities.

Notably, the foundations of these discourses – as well as the colour blind and universalizing racial dynamics that proliferate them – have roots in Nova Scotian agricultural histories dating to the beginning of the era of the colonialization of North America. Communities of colour in Nova Scotia have faced long histories of slavery, the exploitation of their labour, and the subjugation of their agricultural projects. However, these histories have remained largely unacknowledged and instead whitened cultural histories and geographies have been prioritized through an active process of social memory and erasure that, over time, has sedimented into our Canadian national mythology. This national mythology, and the hierarchies of white communities and communities

of colour are placed within, have become so entrenched that they continue to play out in cycles of social inequality to this day. The poverty inherent in these social inequalities affects the perception white communities and predominantly white food organizations have of the capacity of communities of colour. This construction limits the manners in which people of colour are seen as able to participate which, in actuality, further upholds and solidifies their decreased capacity by limiting their agency and access to resources in organizations.

In this thesis, I contribute to this academic work on food, race and power through examining the dominant discourses and practices within the alternative food movement in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I argue that the discourses and practices utilized by the alternative food movement inadvertently naturalize racial and class based exclusions, which hail white subjects to the Committee and exclude people of colour. Within this context, I investigate the ways within organizations to acknowledge and begin to deconstruct exclusionary discourses and practices. Further, I look at the challenges associated with developing anti-racist practice and acts of genuine solidarity with communities of difference. The motivation to examine these processes arose from a reflection of my own position as a white woman organizing within the alternative food movement in Halifax. During the initiation of this project, I was both bolstered by what my peers and I had been able to accomplish in the initiatives we worked within, and also frustrated by what we had not. This project is in many ways me creating the space to reflect more deeply on issues of race, class and food, which I felt were foundation to both the limitations I felt in my work and in moving towards different ways of organizing.

To accomplish this end, I have carried out a case study - using discourse analysis and participant observation - of The Food Action Committee (FAC) of the Ecology Action Centre in Halifax. The food movement in Halifax is one of the more developed and robust political movements in the city. The Food Action Committee (FAC), founded in 2004, is a subcommittee of the Ecology Action Center (EAC) and a prominent part of this movement. The committee aims to promote locally produced foods through education and outreach surrounding the economic, environmental, and social benefits local food offers. Furthermore, they aim to promote similarly socially and environmentally just ways of growing, processing and distributing food to round out the food system cycle. Notably, The Food Action Committee is the most active committee at the Ecology Action Centre and produces a lot of literature, runs campaigns, and organizes projects on local food issues predominantly in the North End of Halifax. Further, they undertake research on a variety of projects ranging from food miles to urban gardening to support these objectives (Food Action Committee, 2011). FAC is one of the longest running organizations in Halifax dedicated to working to promote local food initiatives and has sustained a sizeable membership of 20-30 members over this period. It is a consistent recipient of governmental grants and in this way is able to sustain its projects and a relatively sizeable staffing budget. The committee has two full time and (depending on funding) upwards of 5 part time staff persons, as well as access to the Ecology Action Centre building. It has access to more resources than is typical of a food movement organization based in Halifax, and as such, is an interesting point of reference into the food movement in Halifax.

This work is important for both marginalized and more privileged communities in Halifax because currently, the food movement in the province fails to genuinely engage with many

communities of colour or those living on a low-income – which is a situation that ultimately detrimental to everyone involved. This failure to acknowledge or address how social identity affects the ability of marginalized communities to genuinely participate precludes the food movements' ability to be as socially transformative as it could be. Further, the way many of these networks are structured and the discourses they employ tend to result in the further entrenchment of structural inequalities and disparities in access to fresh, affordable and nutritious food. As Slocum argues, "without attention to social relations, community food and similar movements will remain limited in scope no matter how welcoming or inclusive they aim to be" (2006). Indeed, without a genuine commitment to reflecting on how discourses and practices of whiteness are embedded in histories and organizational frameworks, this shift towards food democracy begs the question: democracy for whom? It is my hope that the findings of this thesis, reached through a thorough examination of the practices and discourses of the Food Action Committee, will help to sketch out more broadly applicable strategies for resisting and disrupting race and class-based exclusion in the community agriculture movement.

This thesis will be organized as follows: chapter two will begin with an overview of the historical context of the food movement since the 1920s. While food politics is something that has arguably existed as long as there has been food, and its production and distribution has long been an issue of contention, this research addresses a particular moment (the 1920s onwards) in that long history. This chapter offers context for the case study of the Food Action Committee in its examination of the role of the community food movement - including its beginnings and how it has evolved over time. Following the historical contextualization, chapter three will situate the project within interdisciplinary literature (with an emphasis on critical geography) that describes

how the social identities of race and class interact with food politics within the movement. This research in particular will become important to examining the discourses and practices of the community food movement as it looks explicitly at the relations of race, food, and oppression. Following this, the thesis will provide a theoretical framework (chapter four) on social memory and agricultural exclusion in Nova Scotia. This chapter acts as an introduction to the processes that have perpetuated the historic racial inequality that is foundational to the food movement in Halifax. In Chapter 5, I look at theories of reflexivity in research and position myself within the project. The methodology and methods chapter (six) begins with an overview of the feminist methodologies that generally inform the research design, and then moves on to an in depth look at the research methods of discourse analysis and participant observation utilized in the thesis. Finally chapter seven provides an in depth empirical rational for my research and relays my research findings. Namely, that the unexamined discourses and practices of the Food Action Committee code its organizing spaces as for white members and reinforce and perpetuate racial and other exclusions. Following this, in chapter eight I conclude by providing an overview of my contribution to the literature, their implications, and my ideas for future research.

Chapter 2: A History of Food Politics

The Food Action Committee of the Ecology Action Center has been created within the broader context of transnational food politics. This chapter examines the history of food politics and movements in order to situate the work of the Food Action Committee within this history. For our purposes this history will begin with the depression-era food assistance programs of the 1920s and will end with the present. This period has been chosen because tendencies that arose as far back as the 1920s continue to inform FAC's policies currently. Major trends in food politics (the reformist, neoliberal, progressive and radical trends) – emerged during this period and this chapter will be organized with priority given to delineating these trends. FAC has been influenced strongly by the reformist trend and thus the characteristics of this trend will be outlined in the greatest detail. In comparison, FAC has been influenced by the neoliberal trend only in the sense that it has been structured in opposition to it and therefore this trend is covered in less detail for our purposes. Notably, prominent discourses within the progressive and radical trends are covered more fully in the following chapter and so are similarly touched on more briefly here.

This historical overview will allow us to better understand the conventional wisdom within the alternative food movement, the major political trends that influence food-based organizations, and thus, some of the origins of FAC's policies and discourses. However, it is important to note the imperfect nature of drawing these inferences, as trends within the alternative food movement, and indeed, the movement itself, are not homogenous concepts or bodies.

The alternative food movement is made up of various initiatives, organizations and projects that draw from a range of theoretical discourses to form their political basis of unity. One of the major reasons for examining a social sphere through discourse analysis is its focus on how power is created and reinforced. This reinforcement occurs both the context in which an emerging political discourse is embedded, and, through the content and subsequent social effects that the discourse produces. Foucault argued that this productivity of discourse disciplines those subjected to it into specific fixed ways of thinking and acting (Rose 2007). Therefore, understanding the agency of discursive formation is invaluable for mapping socio-political processes and will be useful to us in our historical analysis of the food system.

The varying approaches of the alternative food movement aim to combat the detrimental aspects of the industrial food system, and employ different strategies based on theoretical and ideological divides. Some alternative food organizations fall squarely within the categories of neoliberal, reformist, progressive, or radical. However, others are much less fixed and are harder to define based on their differing political stances across issues. For instance, an organization may take a reformist position on bio-fuels, a transformative position on GMOs, and still others on foreign aid, domestic hunger programs, land reform, trade, and so forth (Patel 2007). The position they take on these various issues is based on factors such as their political awareness, base of support, ideology, and funding. Moreover, organizations will often – consciously or unconsciously – align themselves with other groups who hold different mandates and political positions. This can further complicate the process of defining a particular group's social positioning.

The Reformist Trend

The reformist approach within the alternative food movement has its roots in the depression era food assistance programs of the 1920s. These programs were conceived to deal jointly with farm surpluses and rapidly deteriorating access to food for those in the working and middle classes (Hughes 2010: p.33; Allen 1999). This, coupled with the growing awareness of social and environmental issues in the decades that followed, led many aid organizations to begin to mount reformist responses to these issues. Currently, the reformist trend is populated by food banks, the corporate sectors of the fair trade and organic foods industries, UN agencies, some more socially conscious politicians and private sector entrepreneurs, and all or most of the humanitarian organizations: Oxfam-USA, World Vision, Care. These organizations aim to address hunger and environmental degradation with incremental changes to the current free-market agenda (Holt-Giménez 2011).

The idea behind this trend is that less damaging products and practices (which right now exist within usually high end market niches) will through consumer choice and a process of "voting with our forks" become the new industrial standards. This method relies upon consumer persuasion and corporate self-regulation. Organizations most likely to be firmly rooted in the reformist trend are those who receive the majority of their funding from corporations, neoliberal philanthropic foundations, or government (Holt-Giménez 2011). Essentially, these organizations can be understood as part of a broader social reformist trend that works to fix existing social safety nets as opposed to prioritizing structural change. Proponents of the reformist trend rely on a food security discourse. This discourse, which calls for reliable access to sufficient, nutritious

food, has become a driving force of much of the policy within food movement in the last century (Holt-Giménez 2011).

In the late 1940s, food security became a central focus of international development work. Through the Marshall Plan the United States sent food and monetary aid to European agricultural sectors struggling following World War II. These food surplus shipments continued until European agricultural markets recuperated and could function fully without US aid (Hughes 2010; Patel 2007). Following this, the United States transitioned to a policy of directing agricultural surpluses to countries in the global south that were in the midst of colonial independence movements. This was a politically motivated approach, as many of these countries were struggling with food shortages brought about by monoculture export agriculture that was imposed on colonized countries. Many policy makers in the United States were concerned these countries would turn to communist countries for support or transition into communist modes of organizing their governments altogether (McMichael 2004, Patel 2007).

In 1954 the United States solidified this policy by creating the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act. The act was passed amid widespread controversy and has resulted in the dismantling of local systems of food production in much of the Global South (Patel 2007; McMichael 2004). The deterioration of these food systems occurred because local agricultural economies were flooded with subsidized artificially cheap grains, which made it impossible for local producers to compete and stay in business. In contrast to the food and monetary aid that was sent to Europe during the Marshall Plan, those receiving this aid in the Global South were not allowed the agency of deciding how best to allocate funds but were instead pushed into a

dependency power dynamic that stunted local production systems. The United States has continued contemporarily with the policy of providing food aid in the name of food security through its involvement in international institutions. This has primarily served its own interests and in many ways has entrenched the United States as a global agricultural hegemon (Hughes 2010: 34).

During the civil rights and right to food movements of the 1960s, the food security discourse within the reformist trend shifted to focus on hunger in North America. Within this context much more attention was paid to hunger faced by marginalized populations in Canada and America. This period saw a rise of anti-hunger programming including food stamps, WIC, and free school lunches (Allen 1999). These programs were able to garner support among the working class who benefited from the food programs and populous agricultural policies (Allen 1999; Patel 2007; Hughes 2010). By the 1970s, the responsibility of a country to provide its citizens with enough food to meet their nutritional requirements became a solidified narrative (Allen 1999). Defining food security in this way reinforced the apparent need for global markets and international trade to make up the difference for countries who were experiencing food shortages (Bellows & Hamm 2002). This was beneficial to the North American project of proliferating and strengthening international agricultural trade agreements; however, it removed the focus from local food systems, placing it instead at the national level. This had widespread negative consequences including undermining the self-determination of food systems within communities (Bellows & Hamm 2002).

In 1981, Amartya Sen interrupted the food security narrative by arguing that food shortages were not in fact due to a lack of available food but were instead due to a lack of political willpower to organize the distribution of food along equitable lines (Mechlem 2004; Patel 2007; Bellow & Hamm 2002; Hughes 2010). This was one of the first times that a connection was drawn between hunger and other factors such as the health of democracies, structural oppression, and inequality. Furthermore, a focus on the different ways food insecurity could manifest (such as chronically vs. temporarily or seasonally) gave social theorists and policy makers a better understanding of the landscape of individual hunger (Mechlem 2004). During this time a new definition of food security was suggested: "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" (Mechlem 2004: 636; Hughes 2010). It is notable according to this definition that the quality of food is seen as important as well as a political and economic context in which people are accessing food.

The Neoliberal Trend

Generally, neoliberalism as a political economic project involves mass reductions in funding for the social sector, scaling back of environmental regulation and labor protection, the privitization of public resources, and a movement toward decreasing state responsibility for social programming (Guthman 2008c: 1172). However, the tenets that make up neoliberal ideology do not completely translate to the specific sites of neoliberal practice. In fact, the difference has been so pronounced as to require scholarship that looks at "actually existing neoliberalisms" (Brenner & Theodore 2002). This work focuses on the embeddedness of neoliberal restructuring

projects in the socio-political as well as regional and local contexts. It further contends that to understand the nature of "actually existing neoliberalisms" we have to look at the contextually specific sites of interaction between the market-oriented neoliberal projects and the current regulatory practices, institutional frameworks, policy practices and political struggles in any given local context (Brenner & Theodore 2002). In effect, the landscape of a region intervenes in the implementation of the neoliberal ideology to such a degree that it creates multiple iterations of the neoliberal project across various geo-spatial boundaries. Therefore, neoliberalism is always a contingent, changing, and unfinished process. The term neoliberalization is often used to represent this lacking of an end state (Guthman, 2008c: 1173).

Since the 1980s, neoliberal markets have become entrenched as the default manner of organizing the trade and economics of communities in the Global North (Peck & Tickell 2002: 385). The industrial food system began to be characterized by the neoliberal market-based trend during the same period. Neoliberal ideology posits that world markets will bring prosperity through economic growth. If we look specifically at how food is traded, we can see a widespread reliance on markets in organizing the production, distribution and consumption of food. Proponents of neoliberalism argue that the market-based economic system produces better food and increased access to food for the socially and economically marginalized (Halwell 2002: 7). Based on this logic, food security discourses have been subsumed into the international trade project (McMichael 2004: 170; Holt-Giménez 2011). However, the manner in which markets function has created in most communities an economic and social inequality which limits their access to nutritious foods (Peck & Tickell 2002: 386). Meanwhile, farmers are experiencing record

decreases in net farm income and many risk losing their farms as farming becomes economically untenable for small scale farmers in Nova Scotia (Rice, et al. 2009: 1)

The neoliberal food regime is made up primary of development and international finance institutions as well as many governments, philanthropists and major agri-food corporations based in the Global North (Holt-Giménez 2011). The corporate food regime, based on its alliance with market-led economic development, utilizes a food enterprise discourse. This position argues that the solutions to the ills of the food system can be solved through technological innovation and the expansion of markets through globalization (Holt-Giménez 2011). The neoliberal approach ultimately supports the monopolization of the food system by corporations, one of the results of which is the displacement of rural, poor, indigenous, and otherwise marginalized communities from agricultural lands (Holt-Giménez 2011). This process of displacement began with the shifting of local trade policies, which protected farmers from insecure global markets to the prioritization of international trade. The 1994 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), was a major turning point as it was at this time that food supplies were included in free trade agreements which further entrenched the commodification of food (Bellows & Hamm 2002: 34; Hughes 2010). As many farmers found themselves more subject to the whims of volatile international markets, many smaller scale farms were forced to fold and mass transfers of land ownership occurred. The environmental and social externalities of the neoliberal approach necessitated and prompted the progressive and radical trends within the food movement as a response.

The Progressive & Radical Trends

Contemporarily, while the corporate food regime remains adamantly supportive of the neoliberal approach, much of the alternative food movement argues that this approach is both socially and environmentally damaging (Guthman 2008c; Holt-Giménez 2011). Therefore, alternative food proponents call for the corporate food regime to shift its policies from neoliberalism to be more in line with the progressive and radical trends, which prioritize a food justice discourse and food sovereignty discourse, respectively. In this vein, the narrative of the contemporary alternative food movement generally begins with a critique of the modern system as destructive to “local, sustainable and smaller-scale farming, local economics and ecological, public and animal health” (Slocum 2006: 328). The progressive trend is, at its best, a grassroots expression of the food movement that works for citizen empowerment (Holt-Giménez 2011). The food justice discourse aims to centre the experiences of people of colour and low-income communities who bear a disproportionate amount of the burden of the current food system. To this end, while this discourse does endorse some market-based strategies such as farmer’s markets and CSAs, it argues that these projects should be designed and managed by marginalized communities (2011). Further, it prioritizes the needs of rural and urban underserved communities in its push for a more equitable food system. This approach to the food crisis also calls for an improvement of social safety nets like food stamps, food aid, and food banks, as well as for increased citizen involvement in community food decision-making processes.

Proponents of the progressive trend maintain that access to culturally appropriate, nutritious, and sustainably produced food as a basic human right (Holt-Giménez 2011). Common institutions who follow this trend are small-scale farm organizations, urban gardens, farm-to-school

programs, community and farmer's markets (especially in underserved communities), and community supported agriculture (CSA). Moreover, food policy councils – which aim to parlay citizen participation into equity and sustainability in the food system – are at the forefront of the progressive trend. These institutions and initiatives are usually most active at the local, provincial and national scales and tend not to focus their work at the global scale of the food system.

Working on the food movement at the global scale are the primary actors within the radical political trend. This approach is similar to the progressive trend in its focus on social justice within the organization of food systems, but tends to emphasize the effects of international trade and agricultural policy and frames solutions in terms of the redistribution of land and natural resources. Because of its global focus, it also tends to focus more strongly on the rights and roles of women within the food system, which further differentiates it from the progressive trend (Alkon, 2011). Organizations that populate this trend such as the Via Campesina, and the international peasant-fisher-pastoralist federation are strongly rooted in agrarian and labour struggles in the Global South (Holt-Giménez 2011). The primary discourse underlying the radical trend is food sovereignty, which seeks radical political transformation of the global food system. To proponents, this means an acknowledgement of the root causes of poverty and hunger, as well as of every individual's right to food and the resources necessary to produce it. This leads necessarily to the aforementioned redistribution of wealth and resources (Holt-Giménez 2011). The main model that proponents call for is one in which the power of corporations in the food system is disassembled through genuinely democratic community participation in all levels of the food system: local, provincial, national, and global. Activists working within the radical trend have employed a variety of strategies ranging from seeking advocacy from international bodies such as the UN and FAO, to engaging in direct action

resisting the WTO, to protecting indigenous lands from GMO contamination, and rejecting the exploitation and appropriation of indigenous lands for extractive industry (Holt-Giménez 2011). Both the progressive and radical trends aim to discredit the racialized histories and geographies of the corporate food regime by disrupting whitened historical narratives and replacing them with people of colour centered narratives.

Conclusion

The approach of the reformist trend - incremental food reforms such as increasing aid to the Global South or increasing funding for food stamp programs - cannot address the inequitable power relations in the current food system. In order to interrupt these power relations, those involved in food movement will have to engage with the immediate food crisis while also moving towards change at a structural level. Within the corporate food regime, the reformist trend maintains and reinforces many of the most damaging aspects of the neoliberal trend, thus cementing a natural accord between the two approaches. In contrast, the challenge for the food movement will be to build alliances between the progressive (primarily based in North America) and the radical (globally situated) trends, both of which rely heavily on decentralization and as a result, can sometimes be fragmented.

For our purposes it is important to note the positioning of the Food Action Committee within the various approaches outlined. The Food Action Committee, in line with the fluidity described of many food-based organizations, falls between the reformist and the progressive trends in food politics. The committee prioritizes initiatives that work incrementally within the current free market agenda and calls for consumers to "vote with their forks". Further, in part because the committee is a sub-group of a larger organization whose primary focus is environmental

degradation, environmental concerns tend to be prioritized over social concerns in FAC's organizing. FAC is similar to many other organizations that fall within the reformist trend in that it receives the bulk of its funding from federal and provincial governmental grants. However, much more in line with the progressive trend of food politics, FAC is also a major proponent of CSAs, supports calls for a local food policy council, and runs a community garden. An appreciation of FAC's heterogeneous political nature will allow us to examine how the practices of the organization have been informed by prominent discourses within both the reformist and progressive trends.

Chapter 3: Language & Social Identity in Alternative Food Politics

This chapter will examine some of the key terms and language used in the alternative food movement. Special attention will be given to critiques of the progressive and radical trends outlined in the previous section. Following this, the chapter will examine the manner in which the social identities of class and race interact with the current food system and the effects of this on those that hold these identities.

Questioning Key Categories

A large body of work within human and critical geography focuses on breaking down concepts and examining the broader impacts of language on food systems and movements. Scholars aim to complicate simplistic dichotomies such as 'alternative and conventional', 'fast and slow', and 'reflexive and compulsive' which ultimately produce 'good and bad' eaters. This work is undertaken to illustrate the instability and transience of these dichotomies (Ilbery & Maye 2005; Allen 2004; Feagan 2007). And moreover, to demonstrate the intersections between these categories and a politics of class, race, and gender that are often neglected (Guthman 2003).

Proponents of ‘alternative’ food movements use the term to differentiate their projects from the industrial and corporate agricultural model. Many scholars are critical of the use of the word 'alternative' when describing initiatives that make up the alternative food movement. They cite that small businesses engaged in these movements can hardly be called alternative in a true sense as these businesses most often interact to some degree with the dominant agro-food system (Maye & Holloway 2007; Ilbery & Maye 2005). In addition, as more and more processes fall under the umbrella of alternative – including community development, organic food, and

sustainability – the term itself risks losing meaning (Venn, et al. 2006). This is exacerbated by the tendency of neoliberal capitalism to co-op would-be alternatives to its economic and political logic. Words that at one point referred to projects that were positioned as alternatives to the corporate food regime, become used to describe projects squarely within that model, that only somewhat resemble their predecessors (Holt-Gímenez 2011). Essentially, alternatives to neoliberal discourse must be consistently re-established and preserved as such. To this end, there is a growing body of work attempting to pinpoint and clarify what alternative in a community food context means (Venn et al. 2006; Ilbery & Maye 2005). This study by Ilbery & Maye clarifies the term "alternative" by arguing that a wide variety of businesses and organizations use this label while in actuality being forced by economic imperatives to associate with conventional food supply and distribution chains. Further, Venn et al. also examine the term "alternative" and argue that one of the major differences between the alternative and conventional supply chains is that the food and programs described in this manner arrive at the consumer with quality cues and value judgements attached.

Further, the focus on alternatives present in the movement is critiqued on the basis that it is grounded in the universalization of whitened norms. As Guthman argues "the insistence on alternatives may well reinforce a sense of exclusion and stigmatization – as if residents of food deserts are not even deserving of what others take for granted: a Safeway" (Guthman 2008a: 441). Indeed, food-based organizations can stress the importance of alternatives to the point that it pressures people of colour to conform to these dominant narratives to an extent that can engender discomfort or a lessening of status. In this way, the manner in which the term

“alternative” is utilized in the food movement can be understood to create and reinforce exclusion.

Recent work critical of alternative agriculture has also complicated the idea of ‘the local’ (Feagan 2007; Anderson & Cook 1999). The local movement itself is heavily critiqued based on an oversimplified understanding of food systems which assumes 'the local' to be automatically 'alternative' and thus progressive. These academics argue that this conceptualization causes us to mistakenly claim that the ‘global’ represents the universal logic of capitalism while the ‘local’ represents a resistance to this logic (Feagan 2007). Scholars are increasingly critical of this framework as it counter-productively homogenizes both sites and erases the inequality and injustice that can be present at the local (Goodman & DuPuis 2005; Anderson & Cook 1999). These authors call for a questioning of 'unreflexive localism' as well as move towards a politics of the local which keeps social justice at the forefront of its work.

Another common local food strategy that receives criticism is the call for a move to decentralized planning and local decision-making (Alkon 2011: 333). While this strategy does have positive aspects, it is complicated by the fact that when organizations employ discourses of local control, often, these discourses are not read by people of colour to be community-based and independent (p.333). For instance, some discourses of local control recall a more conservative form of defensive localism. Defensive localism is characterized as the prioritization of embedding agrifood systems in a local region over all other considerations - such as a turn to quality or cultural appropriateness in production (Allen 2004). A defensive approach to localism often fails to collaborate with other food based structures and organizations at different scales.

Therefore, it is unable to address changes needed in economic structures or the needs of low-income communities and communities of colour (Allen 2004)

Also in terms of the local, geographer David Harvey argues that acknowledging the small scale is "insufficient to understand broader socio-ecological processes occurring at scales that cannot be directly experienced" (1996: 303; in Allen 2004: 174). The inverse of this is also true as structures of power, gender, and race do not disappear if experienced in a local place. Harvey goes on to argue that "the contemporary emphasis on the local, while it enhances certain kinds of sensitivities, totally erases others and thereby truncates rather than emancipates the field of political engagement and action" (1996: 353; in Allen 2004: 179). In this vein, Holloway and Kneafsey (2000) propose that the "valorization of the 'local'... may be less about the radical affirmation of an ethic of community care, and more to do with the production of less positive parochialism and nationalism, a conservative celebration of the local as the supposed repository of specific meanings and values" (p.294). In some cases these meanings and values are racially exclusive and both reflect and result in reactionary efforts to deny African Nova Scotian communities.

Organizations tend to exhibit a variety of approaches to conceptualizing community. Some of these are conscious and explicit prioritizations; while others are less conscious, and are more quietly defined by social constructions (whether productive or otherwise). While the term "community" can convey numerous subtexts, scholars have been attempting to more fully define our shared understanding of the concept. To this end, they argue that communities are not homogenous, but instead are made up of constellations of genders, economic classes, and other

identities; and further, that these various social actors have widely divergent material needs and roles (Hinrichs & Kremer 2002, Shucksmith 2000).

Academics have outlined the difficulty many organizations have with focusing substantively on geographic community, class, race, and other identifiers simultaneously (Hinrichs & Kremer 2002). In many situations, an organization will concentrate its attention on one locus of identity to the detriment of others. This is especially true in organizations with an added interest in a locally based focus for their programs and projects. As argued by Hinrichs & Kremer, these types of community organizations tend towards emphasizing the agency of communities in bringing about their own socio-economic development (2002). It is important to note, that while this manner of social organizing helps to divorce a group or movement from a sometimes unhelpful or unsustainable reliance on external bodies, it does little to account for socio-economic or cultural inequalities within a given geographic region or 'community' (Hinrichs & Kremer 2002).

Academics further problematize the reliance on framing community within a geographic region. As Shucksmith (2000) notes, "'communities of place' are far from homogenous and include many 'communities of interest' with highly unequal capacities to act" (p.208). It is this capacity to act that translates into an individual's ability to access both the benefits of projects and the internal workings of organizations and movements themselves. In this way, place-based conceptualizations of 'community' can hide entrenched inequalities and variant layers of access between members of any given community. This variance in access has to be illuminated because, as Allen argues, the idea of a shared community interest is a myth (1999). It is based on

the presumption that communities will make decisions that benefit all members of the community if they know each other; and further, will base these decisions on compassion and "a shared commitment to place and the expectation of continuing encounters" (Campbell 1997: 43). While it is possible for communities to function for the greater good, there are plenty of everyday examples of ways in which they do not. In situations where community members have varying needs and goals, the manner in which these needs are prioritized is often lacking. For instance, Allen argues that community food security coalitions - tasked with representing the various stakeholder needs of food in a community - are often disproportionately weighted towards the needs of farmers and food producers. Otherwise, these coalitions face an uphill battle in convincing these producers to participate (Allen 1999). Essentially, an emphasis on the idea of 'a community of place', can lead community groups to reproduce within their organization the same social and economic exclusion of marginalized groups they attempt to ameliorate.

Recent writing has also focused on breaking down the idea of participation in community food organizations. There has been a move towards illustrating the various degrees of access and involvement, which can all fall under the heading of participation. As Allen states,

> the presumption that everyone can participate (much less equally) is a magician's illusion, even if the effect of direct material power is excluded. Participation cannot simply be formally decreed. Having rights does not necessarily mean being able to exercise them. At all scales of decision-making, the audibility of people's voices is modulated by cultural relations of power. People whose perspectives, ideas, proposals get heard are often the most aggressive, loudest, and most confident, not necessarily those with the best ideas" (1999: 121).

This quotation speaks to the differences in accessibility within organizations and indeed, movements. This accessibility can be affected by how meetings are organized, what spaces they take place in, the rules of order that are imposed, and the types of dress or speech respected and

implicitly required. For instance, there is a widespread prioritization of arguments presented with linear reasoning and distinct points as opposed to stories that respect situated knowledge (Young 1995).

Organizations often consider participation a straightforward path to social inclusion and as such generally put most of their energy into outreach in order to broaden participation. While the underlying motivations of these organizations vary, seeking broader participation is usually wrapped up in either sharing the benefits of their project more widely with their local community, or, in increasing the legitimacy of the organization to the public by way of diversifying its membership (Hinrichs & Kremer 2002). However, broader participation does not necessarily lead to substantive social inclusion. Many organizations get stuck at this point due to limited resources and awareness. In their examination of social inclusion in the Midwest United States, Hinrichs and Kremer define social inclusion as "an ongoing and reflexive process of full and engaged participation by all interested or affected social actors, regardless of their socio-economic or cultural resources" (2002: 68). In order to move towards substantive social inclusion, organizations need to overcome these challenges and begin to genuinely support members of diverse communities in building their own capacities so that they may actively participate in said organizations on their own terms (2002). Further, social inclusion is reliant on the respectful consideration of a community as a whole, as well as its various constituent groups including those based on gender, class, or race (2002).

The ideological narrative of the alternative food movement is based on sets of assumptions and implicit knowledge that while mostly invisible, define the structure of the movement and

constrain for whom it may function (Hughes 2010). The work undertaken to complicate terms such as alternative, local, community and participation will hopefully bring greater clarity regarding the effects of the language we use to describe the movement. The movement would benefit from a continued emphasis on bringing these embedded assumptions and language to light; and further, on a reflection of values and the social truths of the communities it seeks to serve (Hughes 2010).

Inequality & Class Issues

I now want to turn attention toward examining the ways power and privilege affect and give context to alternative food initiatives, specifically in relation to inequality within the movement. As Patel (2007) argues, it is important to look at how social relations play out in food systems; and in fact, set the scope and limits to the manners in which they can operate. Those most affected by hunger are most often the poor, young and elderly, women, and ethnic minorities (Nestle & Guttmacher 1992). At this point it makes sense to speak in more detail as to how these marginalized social groups interact with the current food system and movement. For clarity's sake, I will separate forms of identity that in reality, are much more fluid, co-constitutive and intersectional than I am able to articulate otherwise. Acknowledging privilege and inequality is an important step towards undoing problematic tendencies in the alternative food movement that entrench structural inequality and social disparity.

The alternative food movement can be characterized in part by its lack of inclusivity to those living in poverty and the working classes. Indeed, the movement is overwhelmingly populated by white, middle-upper class, female participants whose influence informs the shape and dynamic of programming to an extensive degree. While these varying influences play out in

many different ways, in this section we will look at two major problems in the connections between food and class in Canada. It is impossible to determine which of the problems is more pressing, as they are intricately interwoven and in fact reliant on one another. First, we will look at is the limits income places on one's ability to access the types and amounts of food necessary to meet one's nutritional requirements. Second, we will examine the disconnect present between the food movement and infrastructure that would allow people living on a low-income to access or reconfigure it.

Limits to Accessing Food

Living on a low or fixed income represents a major factor in a citizen's ability to access nutritious, culturally appropriate food. The flexibility of food relative to other bills and commitments means that those with financial constraints are often forced to deprioritize it in order to make ends meet (Magdoff 2008: 7*)*. As Magdoff (2008) argues, in a hierarchy of needs, housing insecurity necessarily trumps food insecurity. In practice, bills like rent and utilities are often put first as food is one of the only budget lines that is not fixed; and therefore, can be relied upon as a variable that can be shifted when necessary. For those living in poverty, this might mean that once they pay for the other fixed expenses they have no money left for food. People in this position are often forced to rely on emergency structures such as food banks, church groups, and soup kitchens. These systems are inadequate to meet both the increasing demand for their services and also the nutritional requirements of the people accessing them (Magdoff 2008). For those in the working class who might still have funds left to buy food, the limitations of their budgets dictate where they are able to shop and for what kinds of foods.

Some policies supported within the food movement would serve to exacerbate problems of access such as these. For example, many food movement proponents call for a shift away from cheap food and wish to see the cost of food reflect the real cost of production in order to support farmer's livelihoods. However, given the lack of municipal and federal support for farmers and the lack of subsidies for food production, the real cost of food that these proponents call for is one that is prohibitively, in fact impossibly expensive for those from poverty, and, in many cases the working classes. The other mechanism critics see for gaining such foods relies on trading cultural cache for food through mechanisms such as barter and work trades. This is also generally only possible for those in the middle-upper class with extra time and transferable labour, or, for the advantaged portions of the poverty class.

Limits to Participating in Food Movement

If we turn our attention to limits in participating in the food movement, we find even more challenges. One of the major limits people on a low-income face in terms of participation in alternative food movement is the lack of availability of cheap and extensive forms of transportation in the areas they live in. Many people struggle to afford the high costs of shared transportation such as subway and bus systems. Those on social assistance in Halifax receive an allowance for transportation costs that fails to cover the cost of a transportation pass for the month. With the allowance they can purchase sets of tickets that often do not even cover the amount of transport trips required to get groceries, meet with social workers, attend doctor's appointments, etc. Once these tickets are used, residents – especially those living in more isolated communities – can end up effectively stranded in their neighbourhoods (Johnson Interview 2015). This creates limitations to being involved in community organizing to better

their local food situations, but also in some cases limits access to vital social networks like friends and family.

This lack of a presence in organizing spaces leads to issues and concerns important to citizens living with a low-income being underrepresented in the alternative food movement (Allen et al. 2003: 67). The focus tends to be on the proliferation of various kinds of market-driven solutions. This approach does give consumers more choices in how they can interact with local food; however, it fails to make structural changes to the local and alternative food system and fails to bring into question "who gets to make which kinds of food choices" (Allen et al. 2003: 72). This can be understood in tandem with Guthman's point that there is a widespread prioritization of the needs of farmers over those of people living on a low income. For instance, in her studies of CSAs in California, Guthman found that managers were reluctant to make changes that would make markets more accessible to people with a low income, as these people attending the market in greater numbers might deter upper class market goers who are able to spend more per trip and therefore contribute more to the farmer's daily profits (Guthman et al. 2006). Furthermore, Guthman found that market managers' perceptions of lower income citizens were classed in that they tended to understand the absence of low-income people from markets as based on their personal choice. They also in many cases held the patronizing view that people with lower incomes did not participate in markets because they were not as concerned about health and the quality of their food as they "should" be (Guthman et al. 2006). All of this has led critics to argue that the movement speaks to affluent consumers more readily than those in the lower classes as many of its programs are in the vein of 'voting with your purchases' which precludes participation for those facing financial insecurity (Guthman 2011).

Race & Racialization

The aforementioned critiques of the alternative food movement provide a helpful perspective for understanding some of the ways the movement could benefit from change. However, missing from the narratives until more recently was a strong anti-racist critique. This critique is particularly important because the lack of diversity within the alternative food movement severely inhibits its ability to confront its classist and elitist foundations. Essentially, if the people most affected by the shortcomings of the food movement are not included in the process of its redefinition, it is unlikely that their needs will be met in any meaningful way. This section begins with an overview of the social construction of race and then chronicles literature which looks at the various ways people of colour are currently excluded from the alternative food movement through its discourse and practice. Finally, it presents how the literature currently proposes that community food activists move forward.

The Social Construction of Race

Before I begin, a caveat is in order. Much work completed in the literature thus far uses essentialist ideas of race and racism that ignore its socially constructed and lived dynamics (both of identities and oppressions). Race as an idea is rooted in medieval religious practices and was used as a means of creating and furthering social stratifications as early as the sixteenth century. However, it is generally agreed upon by critical race scholars that race became a more prominent (and violent) way of organizing human difference during the early eighteenth-century shift from theological power to that of scientific authority and what followed; exploration and colonial exploitation. Colonialists relied upon the conflation of 'European', 'Christian', and 'civilized' to make up their racial identity and secure their power over the people of colour whom they portrayed as 'dark', 'dirty', and 'unintelligent' (Winders 2009). Since then, race has been

articulated and employed in various manners ranging from justifying slavery, to functioning as a component to contemporary uneven development and exclusionary projects (Winders 2009).

In fact, individuals perform their own identities and memberships of particular groups (Douglas 1996). Moreover, food is deeply entwined with both personal and cultural identities. For example, both the Black Panthers and the Black Muslims performed and pushed for their respective understandings of black identity. The Free Breakfast Programs conducted by the Black Panther Party throughout the United States in the 1960s and 70s were a significant expression of their political strategy against the deprivations of the food supply in cities ruled by white supremacist governments (Katsiaficas 2001). Though racial identity often contributes to an individual's relationship with food, that relationship is not predetermined but contingent upon the specific, socially constructed context of their identity. Furthermore, the individual has authority to reorganize their position in regards to food while defining their identity on their own terms, demonstrated by the Black Panther's Free Breakfast. It should be noted that these understandings are varied and therefore there is no essentialist link between racial identity and food.

The analysis of this thesis works from this perspective that racial divisions are inventions and are socially constructed categories. While these categories are not grounded in biological essence, they have thoroughly material consequences that can in fact be matters of life and death (Kobayashi & Peake 2000; Winders 2009; Peake 2009). Further, that race itself is a slippery concept that can be understood as "a chaotic, yet powerful, collection of ideas and practices through which peoples and places have been organized and ranked across time and space,

according to a dynamic set of embodied and social characteristics often linked to skin color and always structured by unequal power relations” (Winders 2009: 53).

Although terms and phrases such as 'white', 'whiteness', and 'people of colour' are used in this thesis, I recognize that race is constructed and wish to maintain these terms as complex and non-essential. Of primary concern to this proposal is that the alternative food movement is predominantly white and that people of colour are consistently excluded from it. While attending to racialized inequities is important to my analysis, there are dangers to this approach which I wish to outline (Kobayashi & Peake 1994). And secondly, I recognize there is a danger that using these terms sets up a misleading binary which centres white people and homogenizes people from communities of colour under one unified heading (Kobayashi & Peake 1994). This representation depicts people of colour – who are racialized in different ways and for whom the intersections of oppression manifest differently – as having a singular experience which they do not. It should be noted that I have chosen to use the phrases 'people of colour' and 'communities of colour' because they are often used by these individuals and groups in the left to identify themselves, and are strategic as a means of unification across difference (INCITE! 2011). Thirdly, while the focus of this paper is racism, white privilege and the food movement, it is important to not oversimplify and present all of the problems of the alternative food movement as based on these processes.

Beyond the theoretical need to recognize the parts of social formation that are fundamentally linked to racialization, there is a need to acknowledge that racism makes it more dangerous to be a person of colour. Right-wing white supremacist parties such as the Australian One Nation

Party, white militia groups, the Trump administration in America, and parties registering in Canadian provincial elections such as British Columbia's Cultural Action Party, represent an increasing threat, as does violent and racist treatment from the legal system and a lack of access to health care. Further, our society's racist food institutions make it increasingly difficult for people of colour to provide their families with sufficient caloric intake and nutrients. Marginalized people of colour are allowed little avenue to ameliorate this problem as they are routinely subjected to laws that inhibit or completely take away their ability to own land. This occurs concurrently to them being encouraged into and drafted for farm labour. In many instances, the people farming on organic farms cannot themselves afford the foods that they are growing. Furthermore, these kinds of foods in grocery stores are often more expensive in lower-class neighbourhoods compared to affluent ones. These stories start to illustrate the many 'racial projects' that exist in the food movement (Omi & Winant 1994). It is in this context that Kobayashi and Peake call on us to "'unnaturalize' geographical stories in which the effects of racialization are left out or normalized" (1994). To this end, what follows is a preliminary deconstruction of race and whiteness.

Whiteness

Racial identities, and the histories and practices they conjure, are produced through a process of racialization. Whiteness is one such racial identity that is often invisibilized and held as normal or unmarked. Therefore, in order to de-center whiteness it is important to make it visible and marked as an outcome of racialization (Guthman 2008a). However, much critical race scholarship has rightly critiqued the attention given to whiteness and argues that it effectively acts to re-center whiteness as the basic racial identity (McKinnley 2005; Sullivan 2006). As noted earlier, the food politics literature has thus far failed to engage meaningfully with antiracist

theory (Slocum 2006, 2007), and as such, critical reflection concerning whiteness and race is still necessary and pending. It is important to acknowledge the tension between decentering whiteness and denormalizing it as the racial default. This chapter will name and render visible white racial identity, while future chapters focus on the experiences of people of colour in an attempt to balance that tension.

Whiteness has at least three defining dimensions (Frankenberg 1993; Kobayashi & Peake 2000; Peake 2009). First, whiteness is a position of structural advantage that confers onto white people a host of basic and extensive privileges. Privileges such as "higher wages, reduced chances of being impoverished, longer life, better access to health care, better treatment by the legal system, and so on" (Frankenberg 1993). Second, whiteness is an epistemological 'standpoint' – a place from which to view oneself, others, and society (Frankenberg 1993). Thus, white people can draw on this position to "construct a landscape of what is same and what is different" (Kobayashi & Peak 2000). Lastly, whiteness is "a set of cultural practices and politics based upon ideological norms that are lived but unacknowledged" (Kobayashi & Peake 2000).

These dimensions, when taken together, form whiteness as a way of being in the world. They form a cohesive cultural identity that can be strategically drawn upon by certain light skinned individuals in Canadian society. This identity is often not explicitly named as 'white' by white people; instead, it is positioned as the 'natural' or 'normal' state of being. In this way, whiteness is centered as the invisibilized position from which all other racialized categories can be looked out and gazed at (Peake 2009). The discourse of normalcy, along with other discourses mobilized

by whiteness such as; freedom, beauty, purity, cleanliness and morality, are meant to signal the superiority of whiteness (Peake 2009).

Whitened Histories, Spaces, & Organizations

Much of the food movement literature invokes a white, liberal, affluent history of food that fails to resonate to communities of colour. The words used in the pamphlets and at meetings hold a different meaning for many people in these communities. In this way, exclusivities are woven into the narrative of the food movement. An anti-racist critique can be helpful in calling for a recognition and acknowledgement of the long-standing history of racism in our food systems. The direct loss of land, increase in food insecurity and increase in mortality rates of the black population can only be properly understood when juxtaposed to the increase in land ownership and food security of white communities (Slocum 2006; Pulido 2000). To illustrate, in the 1980s the number of black farmers in America declined by 30% while during the same period the number of white farmers declined by only 6.6%. By 1999, black farmers owned less than a quarter of the land that they had owned in 1989 (Slocum 2006). In essence, processes of land concentration have occurred in this period and affected whites and people of colour differently based on class, race, and other factors. While these statistics refer to the United States, similar processes have occurred in Nova Scotia during the same period (Levkoe 2014). Whitened cultural histories often do not include these occurrences and as such serve to solidify white privilege and perpetuate the erosion of land away from black farmers.

An anti-racist critique of the alternative food movement can also shed light on the manner in which spaces within the movement are coded as 'white'. By white spaces I mean spaces that are inhabited primarily by white people and in which whitened histories and discourses are

dominant. In the case of the food movement, Guthman has observed that initiatives locate themselves in relatively affluent areas and as such – based on connections between oppressions – are usually coded as white spaces. Farm-to-school programs are an example as they are usually located in these same affluent neighbourhoods unless they are heavily subsidized by the public sector or by private foundations (Guthman 2008b). Further, many initiatives in the alternative food movement have been "designed and [located] to secure market opportunities and decent prices for farmers" (Guthman 2008b; p.431). It is a problematic and defining feature of the alternative food movement that it serves white, middle-upper class, relatively well educated people within white coded spaces and is inaccessible to those facing genuine food-insecurity (Guthman 2008a, 2008b).

Another anti-racist intervention in the field looks at how privilege factors into the positioning of people in hierarchical organizations. For instance, people from communities of colour do not often hold leadership positions and are instead generally the objects of community food work (Slocum 2006). Further, as Slocum states, "many community food organizations act as service providers that answer to funders rather than as organizations that are truly accountable to and directly involved in building leadership and shifting power in the communities with which they work" (2006: 330). While some of these community food organizations recognize this situation - the solutions presented usually relate to diversifying the existing movement instead of interrogating what embedded racist processes currently constitute community food.

Discourses of Whiteness

Situating alternative food institutions in affluent geographies is only one manner in which spaces are coded as white - the discourses used by the movement also help to keep those spaces white. To illustrate this idea, the following are discourses in the alternative food movement that are ignorant or insensitive to the ways in which they reflect whitened cultural histories and practices. Idioms such as “getting your hands dirty” or “if they only knew” point to an agrarian past that is far easier for white people to romanticize than it is for people of colour (Guthman 2008a: 395). These discourses presuppose a universal desire to tend the land as well as centralize farming as the utmost in vocations. While people from a variety of cultures have historically tended the land, holding this value as universal is insensitive to racialized agrarian histories ripe with displacement, appropriation and disenfranchisement (Guthman 2008b). For a white audience, ‘dirty hands’ may signify an agrarian and land-owning past, but to many they hold the negative connotations of slavery, serfdom, and indentured servitude that takes the work of generations to escape. Therefore, these discourses hail a particular white subject and are read as exclusionary by other subjects. Because this positions white subjects “to define the rhetoric, spaces, and broader projects of agro-food transformation”, spaces are perpetuated as white spaces. Indeed, these white spaces and white discourses are mutually supportive and create discomforts that may reinforce broader exclusion (Guthman 2008a: 395). This dictates which bodies are hailed to organize in the movement, which in turn affects the possibilities for any new discourses to emerge. People of colour who have participated in alternative food initiatives have had to overcome this discomfort wrought by exclusion and differentiation (Guthman 2008a).

Another prominent discourse within the 'white spaces' of the alternative food movement is the rhetoric of 'paying full cost' (Guthman 2008a). The rhetoric of paying full cost is based on the notion that food in the Global North is artificially cheap because of direct and indirect agricultural subsidies and that food produced in more ecological and socially ethical ways would cost more (Guthman 2008a). However, this rhetoric is problematic because it is generally situated in a de-racialized, apolitical space that takes equality for granted. Both historically and contemporarily, all else is not equal as much of the 'success' of conventional agriculture is predicated on white privilege and disproportionate access to resources (Guthman 2008a). Many of the people now being asked to pay full cost have historical connections to those that have in fact already paid for US agricultural development with their bodies or livelihoods many times over. Furthermore, the rhetoric of paying full cost erases histories of displacement for many communities of colour, which saw them at times forcibly removed from the lands they are now meant to be reconnecting to through "knowing where their food comes from" (Guthman 2008a: 388).

A third discourse scholars wish to complicate is the idea that there are 'good' and 'bad' eaters. Food can create and exacerbate social and economic hierarchy: when people use food to perform identity they do not just bring about connection to their own group but also the exclusion of others. In this way those who eat differently are marked as less worthy others. This process occurs based on food movement narratives when they combine the critique of industrial agriculture with a consumption driven response. In essence, the food movement marks particular foodways (organic, local, slow) as right and proper and condemns 'industrial eaters' as less worthy 'others'. This conceptualization is problematic because is assumes foodways are

individual choices removed from social and economic constraints. People living on low or fixed incomes need to be able to access both the mechanisms to alter the alternative food system and an adequate amount of nutritious food to feed themselves and their families.

There are two interconnected manifestations of whiteness that supply the values and symbols characteristic of the alternative food movement's political imaginary. First, colour blindness is "the absence of racial identifiers in language" and is largely seen in liberal thought to be non-racist (Guthman 2008a: 390). However, colour blindness perpetuates its own epistemic violence through the erasure of both white privilege and the violence of racist pasts (Guthman 2008a). And second, universalism is the assumption that values held by whites are normal or widely shared (Guthman 2008a). People in communities of colour are pressured to conform to the universal values of the dominant culture. However, the values being universalized may not always resonate with communities of colour, which marks them as different (Guthman 2008a). In this way the missionary project of "bringing good food to others" serves to reinforce inequality that is grounded in difference (Guthman 2008).

Moving Forward

Highlighting alternative imaginings of the food movement is a worthwhile project. Along these lines, there is a call from the food justice movement for us to develop explicitly race conscious approaches to food access and food sovereignty. As stated, the food justice movement expands the food movement analysis to include critiques of class and race. It focuses predominantly on food access (defined as the "ability to produce and consume healthy food"; and food sovereignty defined as a "community's right to define their own food and agricultural systems" (Alkon 2011). Taken together these tenets make up a system that promotes "communities exercising their right

to grow, sell, and eat [food that is] fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate, and grown locally with care for the well being of the land, workers, and animals" (Alkon 2011). Food justice as a movement has had to be community based because of the lack of will in government to change the food system through policy intervention and, as some would argue, because of the tacit support of government for industrial agriculture (Pothukuchi 2000; Buttel 1990).

Some of the alternative imaginings of the food movement that the food justice movement has pushed for include: initiatives that are firmly rooted in low-income communities and communities of colour; initiatives that include in their analysis both environmental justice principles of access to environmental benefits and principles of creating sustainable alternatives; and finally, initiatives that aim to provide equal protection from environmental pollution and a right to procedural justice around how food policy decisions are made.

Furthermore, the food justice movement calls for an acknowledgment of privilege in organizing communities, which might lead to different questions being asked and different strategies being proposed. Organizers in the community food movement identify corporate power as the primary object of struggle. Notably, their comfort level with concepts such as class and poverty is higher than with racism (Slocum 2006). This analysis lacks an understanding of the intersections of race, class, and gender and represents an entrenched limitation of the anti-corporate, environmentalist and local empowerment movements (Slocum 2006). Slocum argues that of central importance is that people learn how to be allies across difference in their work. She supports projects such as ones working to undo the problem of 'food desserts' by making healthy nutritious foods available in communities of colour that "in some cases, bring people together

across difference" (2006: 329). Lastly, it is important that communities of colour are supported in organizing around their own struggles and allowed ample space for leadership and solutions to develop (Slocum 2006).

Conclusion

All of the works mentioned represent important steps in advancing the dialogue of the community food movement so that it may respond more fully to the needs of varied communities. Having a clear outline of what kinds of initiatives make up the alternative food movement and part of the history behind their development helps us to form a shared understanding of what the food movement is. The critical attention given by many scholars to the movement has garnered a rich body of work on the current limitations of how the food movement is constituted. Finally, work by authors linking these critiques with an anti-racist and class-based theoretical lens has deepened the dialogue to include how race and power interact with other oppressions to shape the community food movement.

The aforementioned internal critiques and complications have undeniably impacted the course of debate in the community food movement. However, at this point it is important to look at the next points of departure in the investigation. To begin, currently most of the work being done linking food, race, and power is written in a United States context. Few studies have been completed in Canada (but see MacRae & TFPC 1999; Hall & Mogyorody 2001; Levkoe 2014) and none have been completed in the Maritimes. Further, while some of what I find to be the most successful studies utilize semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis, few focus on the perspective of community organizers within alternative food organizations and include reference to the work and challenge of attempting to unlearn racist discourses. Lastly, this study

is also contextualized within a theoretical framework that works to question and unmap whitened cultural histories in Nova Scotia, which form the foundation of the movement in this province. Unsettling this history is a crucial step in breaking down exclusionary codifications in organizations and creating space for people of colour to have agency in the movement. These are gaps in knowledge that will have to be filled if we are to better understand the role the community food movement might have in productively reorganizing our failing food systems.

This study means to intervene at this point by conducting research that connects ideas of race, food and power to the Halifax context through a case study of The Food Action Committee — one of the city's principal alternative food movement organizations.

Chapter 4: Social Memory & Agricultural Exclusion in Nova Scotia

The ways in which a society remembers its past is consequentially related to the oppression of its citizenship. By erasing the experiences of specific social groups, a society collectively impacts the ability of its citizens – marginalized or otherwise – to adequately respond to that oppression (Fraser 2008). Of course, it is often the most marginalized communities that are the subject of this erasure and are most affected by the prioritization of culturally dominant accounts of both the past and present (Razack 2002). In this chapter we will look at the theory and material processes that have occurred on the land in Nova Scotia that have helped to make whitened histories and geographies available; and indeed, taken for granted, by those in the alternative food movement. We will further examine how the prioritization of these whitened cultural histories and geographies through an active process of social remembering and erasure can, over time, sediment into a national mythology that centers the experiences and narratives of white settler communities.

These social processes are in actuality so related and entangled they can hardly be separated into linear steps. National mythologies – the stories told by a nation about its own past – are typically portrayed as neutral, historical accounts of a country's history. In reality, such stories almost always reflect a high degree of bias towards the interests of those in power. Canada's national mythologies, like those of many developed nations, motivate white settler communities to actively remember white-centric histories and forget, mute and erase the histories of indigenous communities and people of colour (Razack 2002). The continued entrenchment of whitened histories and geographies feeds back into and reinforces the national mythology. In essence, these processes function relative to one another in a co-constitutive manner. Further, importantly,

these narratives solidify over time and affect the perception white communities have of communities of colour.

Drawing on theories of memory and erasure, the second section of the chapter outlines the agricultural exclusion of people of colour in Nova Scotia during the 1700s and 1800s. Exploitative slave and sharecropping systems are looked at in depth as a means of unmapping a historical narrative that posits the white settler colonies as industrious, hardworking and ultimately good citizens. It is necessary to look at this history in the context of social memory and national mythologies to illustrate how these processes create cyclic social, economic and political exclusion in communities of colour that continues in present day Nova Scotia. In recounting the history of dispossession of Black farmers, this section provides an example, which opens a space for telling the histories of other marginalized communities.

From Social Memory to National Mythology

Social memory is made up of a heterogeneous collection of elaborate and interconnected individual discourses regarding an understanding of the past (Huyssen 2003). As Rose states, a discourse "refers to groups of statements which structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking" (2007: 142). In the Foucauldian sense, cultural discourse can represent more than simply spoken or written words. It can be understood to include institutions, objects, practices, and all forms of representation in that culture that are spread and shared (Cresswell 2009). Discourses are active in that they shape people's understanding of politics, race, and sexuality instead of just describing ideas that already exist. In other words, discourses perform reality instead of simply reflecting it and in this way produce "truth" (Cresswell 2009). Societal memory, as a sum of many discourses held collectively, functions similarly to an

individual discourse in that it is able to create and reinforce power. The cumulative effect of multiple discourses is the potential for the discursive construction of social identity. These constructions can then be utilized in various ways, including suppressing some social identities while aggrandizing others. In this way, the social construction of identity and social memory should be understood to be generative as well as reflexive. Indeed, when social memories are built on a foundation of whitened cultural histories and national mythologies, they can function to maintain the racialization of communities and increase prejudice and the normalization of inequality (Fraser 2008).

Societal memory is an ever-changing and fluid social construction. The recollection and sharing of memories varies between different people in different contexts. Further, various iterations of this process come with their own set of social rules (Fraser 2008). Social memory is often referred to as historical memory to make clear the ways in which this long-term, fluid process of remembering has transformative consequences (Fraser 2008: 287). The changeable nature of societal memory means it can be interpreted, employed, reviewed and commodified in a variety of manners to meet a host of economic, political, social, and personal means (Connerton 1989: 15; Huyssen 2003: 28). From an agricultural politics perspective, social memory is an active process that both describes conceptualizations of the food movement, and reproduces itself in order to transform agri-food systems according to the political logic of its constituent discourse.

In order to avoid responsibility for wrongdoing, privileged portions of communities will often actively discredit the positions of marginalized populations and engage in the erasure of histories that fortify these claims. The privilege and cultural practice associated with whiteness (coupled

with the power inherent in its discursive dominance) afford the white population the disproportionate ability to determine various cultural narratives. In this way, cultural histories become whitened when filtered through these systems of power and processes of racialization. These whitened cultural histories fail to acknowledge and sometimes even deny the existence of structural racism and the resistance of people of colour to this racism. These histories rely on the dominance and invisibility of whiteness to reproduce themselves as stories that are simply "racially neutral" and "true". Various renderings of history are made hierarchical, with socially dominant perspectives taking precedence and thus solidifying the prominence of the whitened version of events. In this way, which prioritizes whitened cultural histories, society perpetuates racism and other forms of oppression through an active form of forgetting. Such forgetting is not the product of a deliberate, intricate racist plot, but instead reflects something more subtle: a retelling of events that favours those doing the telling, and gradually becomes understood over time as the whole and simple truth.

These whitened cultural histories, over time, can sediment into national mythologies. In Canada the primary national mythology is that of strong, rugged, self-reliant northerners. These supposedly enterprising settlers developed communities on "empty land" with their own toil and ingenuity. In this construction, European settlers to Canada are the bearers to civilization while aboriginals are a nation from "a time before" (Razack 2002: 3). National mythologies tell stories that reinforce the inclusion of white members of society and the exclusion of people of colour (Razack 2002). These mythologies help white Canadian citizens understand themselves as belonging to a broader community as well as being more entitled to the resources of this land. In order to justify this inequality, white settler societies engage in the active forgetting and denial of

histories of slavery and exploitation. Often this occurs by simply omitting large tracts of history. A Canadian geography textbook from 1946, for example, summarizes the history of the western world thusly: "From [Europe's] shores went the great sailors and adventurers who opened up whole new continents for settlement" (Ministry of Education of Ontario 1946). This "opening", which includes the colonization of North America, is attributed to the "superiority" energy and "eagerness" of the white races without word of the widespread exploitation of both Indigenous peoples and African slaves (Ministry of Education of Ontario 1946). While not wholly untrue—European sailors did land and colonize North America—such a narrow retelling of history reflects the power of omission in historical accounts. By simply "forgetting" the parts of the story that involve nonwhites—namely the brutal and widespread exploitation of other peoples—the story told is starkly different from that which includes the voices of non-white, and non-dominant races. Such historical accounts, which present an exclusively white perspective, can now be seen as "colourblind". In Canada, colourblindness remains one of the primary means of societal forgetting. It serves as a means of reinforcing the long-standing, whitewashed Canadian national mythology.

Colour blindness is a sociological term that describes the neoconservative position of refusing to use racial identifiers in language and refusing to see or admit racial differences as social mechanisms. It functions to foster a meaning of racial discrimination that is limited to explicitly restricting individual rights. Systemic racism, social discrimination and pervasive, violent micro-aggressions are not considered under this contemporary characterization of racism. In this way whiteness makes racial discrimination something that applies to white people and people of colour, but that can not readily be invoked by either (Omi & Winant 1994). Colour blindness

initiated as a means of defence for whiteness against social criticism that might erode its power (Guthman 2008b). It works in two primary ways: obscuring/erasing acts of racism both past and present, and simultaneously not acknowledging the benefits conferred to white people through white privilege.

To further reinforce white privilege and power, understandings of past versions of racism that have been made visible and explicit are continually co-opted. For example, our current construction of whiteness has been influenced by lessons from the civil rights movement. The segregation laws of the Jim Crow period allowed for recourses to be made against explicit institutionalized inequality and prejudice. In order to avoid this type of indictment and maintain white privilege, discursive formulation works to erase racial differences, thus making ethical claims by radicalized groups appear unfounded. This has also consequently made it easier for white people to avoid recognizing the benefits of their white privilege, which allows them to maintain a sense of moral good (Sullivan 2006).

The drive to make race invisible – and our society thus racially neutral - limits how we can see our communities. If race is not discussed, the avenues we have to be critical of racially inequality are limited and change is unlikely (Kobayashi & Peake 2000). The erasure of people of colour centred narratives occurs through an extensive and pervasive series of leveraging whitened cultural norms and narratives, which are thoroughly reinforced through every facet of our deeply racist dominant culture. In practice, this looks like news reporters within the mainstream media insisting they “can not see colour” or, businesses and organizations maintaining that their spaces

are open to everyone when little to no effort has been made to balance the overwhelmingly white cultural norms of these spaces.

Dominant understandings of race are also articulated materially in landscapes. Through examining an analysis of imperialism, colonialism, and landscape while maintaining a concern with race, geography scholars found that dominant understandings of race are essential to the production and politics of landscapes (Winders 2009). As Winders argues, "race works geographically, parceling out bodies and spaces, and is itself responsive to geographic scales and borders" (2009: 53). Indeed, human geography has a prominent focus on examining racialized landscapes – or, places where "dominant understandings of race assume material form in the landscape (Winders 2009: 54). This occurs through a process whereby racial formations become inscribed into physical spaces through the actions and behaviours of individuals acting on their immediate environments over time. For example, in Halifax the understanding and usage of one piece of land – Africville – has shifted over time based on the racialization and displacement of its residents. What was once a vibrant and accessible community for people of colour is now a dog park for the largely white affluent population of the city. In this way, these racialized landscapes influence subsequent ideas of race as well as the collective past, present and future possible within that space (Winders 2009).

In this way, socially constructed ideas of race have become entrenched in our collective histories and geographies. The consequences of this are structural violence and oppression of all people of colour - though the oppression is not uniform, and some people of colour have a more privileged position than others. Furthermore, these racialized histories and landscapes inform other forms of

politics and culture that can have imbedded in them the dominant, essentialist understanding of race. Acknowledgement is a step towards building a more full and unified social memory of the past rather than competing accounts wherein the narrative with the greatest degree of social privilege is allowed to dominate. Further, holding a given social body accountable for its past actions has the effect of showing communities that have suffered from injustice that those who have perpetrated that unfair action understand their behaviour as problematic. This illustrates a support for all portions of the community initially harmed, as well as the capacity of the perpetrators of harm to move forward. Oppressive trends in action or thought in a community can only be truly challenged and dismantled when they are looked openly and with a more full understanding of historical context. Otherwise, any gestures or actions undertaken to reconcile wrongdoing are superficial in nature. Having a shared historical positioning and shared language is an important factor in segregated communities becoming more connected to one another.

A History of Agricultural Exclusion in Nova Scotia

In the Halifax context specifically, an acknowledgement of racist agricultural histories and local policies could contribute to the process of building alliance across difference. A romanticized agrarian history has worked to erase the racist underpinnings of the food system and still works to bolster white title to local farming lands. This whitened history describes a past in which white colonial settlers came to Nova Scotia and tamed a largely empty and wild expanse of terrain. The labour of people of colour that was primarily used to develop this land as well as the violent subjugation of its original inhabitants are both absent from this history. In an account of its own history, the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture (NSFA) for instance makes no mention of any farming occurring in the province prior to its foundation by a group of New England immigrants. (NSFA 2011) On its website the NSFA states that “since 1895, the Nova Scotia Federation of

Agriculture has represented the interests of Nova Scotia's agricultural community" (NSFA 2017). While the NSFA's account of its history is broad enough to cover how the federation confronted the problem of unfair judging at county fairs (NSFA 2011: 16), it fails to make any mention of questionable labour practices and the exploitation of people of colour that were the cornerstone of the formation of agriculture in the province (NSFA 2011).

These erasures have modern day impacts in terms of the narratives employed in society and local organizations. Indeed, while it is common for locals to believe that if one is nominally non-racist, one is unable to contribute to racism in society, unacknowledged whitened agricultural histories proliferate raced and classed discourses which in turn preserve racial and other exclusions. In order to make connections between the relative homogeneity of the alternative food movement in Halifax, the narratives present in the movement, and the cultural defensiveness against admitting racism, it will be useful to give an account of agrarian history in Halifax in which the experiences of people of colour are centered.

Race-based discrimination has deep roots in Nova Scotian agriculture. Since the 1700s, communities of colour in Nova Scotia have been systematically disadvantaged by local agricultural policies and damaging racist discourse. Discriminatory practices in Nova Scotian agriculture were (and are) near ubiquitous - experienced in some form or another by all non-whites. This can be seen from the history of indigenous dispossession to the use of border imperialism to create conditions for those from the global south to engage in agricultural labour without access to the privileges of citizenship. A prime example of discrimination is told through the story of black farming in the province, which while it represents only a partial history of

racist practice, it is a powerful aid in attempts to unmap white national mythologies. Further, it serves as an example of the kinds of exclusions that are normalized by whitened histories of agriculture in Nova Scotia.

Historically, there has been widespread discrimination against African Nova Scotian farmers in terms of ownership, agency in decision-making, and the scale of production (Gilbert, Sharp, & Felin 2002). Culturally, African Nova Scotians have been portrayed in local narratives as being less good or less worthy than white farmers. These narratives emerged during the slave-trade era and later gained traction through discriminatory tenancy and sharecropping systems. The effects of these prejudicial policies, and of the long-standing discrimination that motivated them, is evident in contemporary N.S. agricultural practice. Contemporarily, power relations and policies restrict access to resources and pathways within the food system for particular groups. While, race is highlighted specifically in food justice analysis, it is only with the understanding that people of colour are disproportionately poor. Restricted access results in greater vulnerability for people from marginal communities who are forced to struggle against these constraints. In this way, the cultural disadvantages of being a person of colour are amplified in the agrifood sector (Alkon & Agyeman 2011).

Historically, people of colour in Nova Scotia have been rigorously excluded from agricultural practice. While the fledgling Nova Scotian economy could not sustain a plantation system, there were hundreds of slaves in the province during the 1800s that were forced to work as agricultural labourers, ship hands, domestic workers, and small-scale gardeners (Library & Archives Canada 2017). Further, an economically disadvantageous system of sharecropping - in which people of colour laboured - was hugely prevalent at the time.

This situation was not in keeping with what had been communicated to incoming black residents by the British government. Black Loyalists sent to the Atlantic Colonies were meant to receive 50 acres of farmland in more central areas and 200 acres in less settled rural areas. This was a similar land allowance to that given to a disbanded soldier at the time. In reality, urban plots given to Black Loyalists were approximately 20-40 acres in size and most who settled in rural areas did not receive farming plots at all. Those who did received remote and small plots of land with poor, acidic and rocky soil - land that was almost completely unsuitable for farming (Library & Archives Canada 2017). These acres were not distributed until all of the white settlers had been accounted for and received their land allocations. This meant that in some areas there was a delay of up to three years for black settlers to receive plots.

Many were unable to survive this waiting period - three harsh winters - and entered into domestic labour or sharecropping contracts that made them unable to claim land when it did become available. For many who did hold out and eventually received plots, much of their agricultural experience was based on their time spent as slaves in plantations in the American south. This experience was largely with tobacco and cotton crops that could not be grown in Nova Scotia's short, cold growing season. Thus, even those fortunate enough to eventually receive land were often unable to make a viable living farming in Nova Scotia. This created an intense poverty among the Black Loyalists with many forced to sell clothes and tools to stay alive. This further limited their ability to make ends meet farming independently and forced many more into sharecropping or indentured servitude contracts. (N.S. Archive 2017).

In these sharecropping arrangements, black Nova Scotians laboured on land owned by white settlers and received a portion of the crop as a stipend in return. The seed for the following year's entire crop was to be taken from the harvest of the Black Loyalist labourer. This meant that there was very rarely any surplus to sell or save to increase one's position (Library & Archives Canada 2017). This system also prejudiciously protected the assets of the white settlers as the terms of the British land grants required lands to be worked and improved before ownership could be acquired. White landowners would often rotate black Nova Scotians around to their various plots of land in order to do the most difficult clearing work. Then, once their land-title was firmly established, they would dismiss the workers and continue to farm the land themselves. Black Nova Scotians who were not dismissed after clearing farm lands often still found themselves moving further into debt as crop failures in the poor soils meant they had to borrow seed during less plentiful years (N.S. Archive 2017).

Sharecropping and tenancy farming are more than mere economic arrangements. They are an explicit expression of racist values. Sharecropping agreements reflect a comfort with the attitude that black farmers deserved less than their white counterparts and enforce the idea that black labour is worth less. These agreements were particularly insidious for the way they propelled and ensured race-based class divides amongst Nova Scotia farmers. Indeed, they are one part of many racist social mechanisms and institutions that have provided the basis for social control of people of colour from elite whites. These types of social and agricultural segregation became institutionalized through the "black codes" and "Jim Crow" laws in the United States and were transferred to the Canadian Eastern Seaboard in waves of immigration. For African Nova

Scotians these systems translated to constraints on their economic mobility. For the white Nova Scotian elite, they represented a means of the perpetuation of their white privilege.

Conclusion

The prejudices of the past still concretely affect African Nova Scotians today. The segregation, racial discrimination and oppression experienced by Nova Scotia's first communities of colour created a cyclic process of exclusion. Inhabitants who were denied access to resources experienced a continued lack of capacity to obtain further resources. This cycle played out in succession until vast social inequalities were entrenched in Nova Scotia. Continued racism and class discrimination exacerbates this inequality thus widening the gaps between rich and poor in the present. The poverty inherent in this inequality over time sediments into people's perception of racialized communities and what they are capable of. In this way, inequality is cyclically perpetuated in marginalized communities as true participation is withheld – thus upholding and solidifying perceptions of low capacity.

In terms of farming specifically, farmers of colour in Nova Scotia continue to face specific and disproportionate challenges relative to their white, large-scale neighbours and many blocked opportunities. They have responded to this by constructing alternative organizations to gain leverage and support, as well as by pressuring legislative bodies for change. However, the government and NGO sector has failed to significantly acknowledge the racist underpinnings of the current agricultural system as well as the diversity of farmers present in Nova Scotia. This lack of awareness and acknowledgement has meant limited support for challenges faced by farmers of colour.

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the way that Canadians have shaped a national mythology around the "strong, rugged, self-reliant" white settler. This narrative remains persistent and continues to shape our shared memory and thus our understanding of Canadian identity. As I've shown in my historical review, this memory is not a reality. And these counterproductive discourses, which are bolstered by the white elite, continue to erase the history of oppression and thus skew the perspective of the way this oppression continues to affect marginalized communities. These discourses are pieces of the social fabric that become memory over time and continue to both confer and reinforce the continued privilege of white settlers. By erasing history, and by utilizing colour blind and class blind discourses many modern day food security initiatives in Halifax fail to recognize the privilege held by supporters of this movement. Unfortunately this perspective has become the status quo of alternative food spaces which remain not only predominantly white and affluent, but exclusionary of people of colour.

I argue that in order to dismantle the racist underpinnings of our social memory and work toward a non-exclusionary food sovereignty movement, it is necessary for citizens of Canada and more specifically, of Halifax, to examine our current social memory and "unmap" a national mythology that we have learned to accept as truth (Razack 2002: 5). This unmapping occurs through the denaturalization of whitened histories and geographies that make up our national mythology. Moreover, unmapping the claims of a white settler society involves revealing the racialized social structures that plague contemporary Canada (Razack 2002). These racialized social structures (and the national mythologies that they are founded upon) are both reinforced by everyday practices and discourses, which normalize and center whiteness and racial exclusion.

Chapter 5: Positionality and Research Questions

Feminist geographers emphasize a process of reflecting on oneself and one's experiences throughout the research in order to promote transparency and accountability (Moss 2002). This is achieved by "giving as full and honest an account of the research process as possible, in particular explicating the position of the researcher in relation to the researched" (Reah 1996: 443). The aim of this positioning is to look at difference critically and work to understand it rather than obscure it (Moss 2002). However, it is important to simultaneously acknowledge the limitations of reflexivity in our scholarship. The ability that a researcher has to name and situate herself (and the power inherent in this process) distances the writer from "the very people whose conditions she might hope to change" (Kobayashi 1994: 348). Indeed, engaging in reflexivity in writing can aid in a construction of the other as well as deny interviewees their own reflexivity. With these limitations in mind, I have engaged in positioning myself within my research in a manner that I hope prioritizes reflexive discussion that is not strictly linked to what can be 'known' by any one researcher (Kobayashi 1994).

Positioning Myself

I grew up in the North End of Halifax. I was raised by my grandmother and grandfather who come from a Scottish-Nova Scotian, working class background. My family has always struggled financially and at different points have experienced a minimal degree of food insecurity. As a white woman, I became politicized through a process of connecting ideas of struggle that I was exposed to in high school and university to my daily lived experiences and the lived experiences of those closest to me. Before this period I had little to no access to or knowledge of the liberatory movements around me in the North End. Throughout my undergraduate degree I

became more and more familiar with the movement culture and the landscape of organizing in Halifax including the work of FAC. Concurrently with developing my own political analysis I met a lot of new people and realized there was a community of folks in Halifax that I had shared politics with, which felt really great. This is the community I have in a sense grown up with in Halifax and thus this is the community I feel best positioned to address with this research. Because I am a part of this community, I am implicated in its work and bear a part of the responsibility for its discourses and practices. In this way, this research is auto-ethnographic and self-reflexive in nature.

The house in which I grew up in is situated on land that once was a part of the Black community of Africville. My grandparents bought the house 35 years ago for much less than its market value before our neighbourhood was urbanized. They were a working class couple with eight kids and so had few options of where to move. I remember my father taking me when I was younger to visit the former Africville resident Eddie Carvery in what is now called Seaview Park. Eddie has lived on the Africville site since 1970 in protest of the displacement. The three of us would have short conversations. I didn't understand the content of those conversations at the time but the gravity of the situation did resonate. I knew that people who had traditionally lived on the land had been removed by the city and that Eddie was protesting this. Since this time I have learned more of the history of Africville and its specific features. For instance, some of the families in Africville grew food on their land for themselves as well as their neighbours. I also learned that the lands these families were displaced to - Linconville and urban subsidized housing projects like Mulgrave Park and Uniack Square – had either very little green space or infertile, rocky soils.

I want to be clear that what follows is a loving critique of the alternative food movement in Halifax. There are a ton of really brilliant and overworked people doing amazing things and building up initiatives that in some cases act as alternatives to and in some cases actively resist the corporate, classist, heteronormative, and ableist systems we currently have in place. I think that this work is all at once completely necessary, underfunded, under-supported, and oft invisablized. There are movements towards the genuine sharing of resources, cooperative land trusts, collective living, and building strong support networks that make food and childcare (among other things) more accessible for people with less access to resources. People are working to create anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, self-determined, non-hierarchical, loving, and supportive spaces that align with their political views. Nevertheless, many movements, while well intentioned, inadvertently reproduce relations of power that mirror those of the broader society they exist within. It is from within this community that I hope to acknowledge, complicate, and gently push back against some of its racist and classist patterns.

One of these patterns is the relative racial and social homogeneity of the alternative food movement in Halifax. Thinking about this movement in the context of works such as those by Julie Guthman and Rachel Slocum, illuminates the effects of displacement that are maintained in present day Halifax. Communities of colour have become increasingly alienated from the land through widespread structural racism. Conversely, people in community food groups have ample access to fertile lands through land trusts, co-operatives, familial plots, social networks, and a whole host of other means. Many of these community food movement members, from their position as having access to land, call for communities of colour to get back in touch with land.

However, these invitations are steeped in white discourses that hail white subjects to these community groups and exclude people of colour.

Some of the most prominent groups working on food in Halifax are the Loaded Ladle, The Grainery Food Cooperative, and the Food Action Committee (FAC). The membership of the Loaded Ladle is made up of almost exclusively white students obtaining post-secondary education. Further, many of these students come from middle-class backgrounds. The memberships of the Grainery Food Cooperative and Food Action Committee differ slightly in the demographics of their memberships as they are based in the community as opposed to on the campus of Dalhousie University. However, their memberships are still disproportionately white, middle class, and educated. This is especially true given that both of these organizations are situated in the north end of Halifax – a neighbourhood characterized by its communities of lower socio-economic status and its prominent communities of colour. It should be noted, that this includes people or descendants of people who were displaced from Africville or Birchtown and are now working to build new communities in Halifax's North End.

I have organized with all of the above mentioned groups at different periods between 2006-2011. Throughout this time I have been troubled by the lack of diversity and representation in the groups I have worked with and have tried (along with many others) to increase accessibility. We have done this through initiatives such as: providing child care during meetings to allow single parents to attend; providing bus tickets or transportation reimbursement to attempt to remove any prohibitive costs associated with attending events; and, to provide food at events so people facing food insecurity could have the opportunity to attend community events without having to

use up time that could be spent obtaining food. These provisions have been accessed infrequently and have not had the desired effect of diversifying our movements. In a sense, I have been the subject that Guthman writes about in “Bringing Good Food to Others” – I have attempted to diversify spaces in the alternative food movement simply by incorporating bodies of colour into inherently exclusionary white spaces. For these reasons the critiques present in authors such as Guthman and Rachel Slocum's work are not only deeply personal to me, but are highly relevant to many of the groups currently working in the alternative food movement in Halifax.

Research Questions

My experiences in the alternative food movement in Halifax and my recent personal work of repositioning myself within these struggles has created many unanswered questions. In looking for ways to ask these questions I have found it helpful to look back on my own and Halifax's history. I wondered: how do communities of colour understand their relationship to the land? How does this differ from how white communities perceive these connections? And ultimately, can we create a true democracy in our food systems if the process fails to include voices from all communities or only includes them if they adhere to the discourses laid out in exclusionary spaces? In order to set boundaries for my research process it has been necessary to focus my attention. The primary question my thesis will address is: “how do the discourses and practices in the alternative food movement maintain spaces as white and exclude communities of colour?”

Chapter 6: Methodology and Methods

Feminist Methodologies and Methods

This section will proceed as follows: first, I will summarize the methodology utilized; and second, I will outline the methods of the research project itself. Feminist methodologies arose as a response to positivist social science research based in the scientific method. Feminist methodologies respond in particular to the reliance within conventional research on the following two central tenets. The first relates to how knowledge can be produced: positivist research holds that the mind can be the only true source of knowledge and that knowledge can only be produced with the mind and through reason. Feminist theory rejects the positivist reliance on the mind/body dichotomy and the prioritization of reason, Instead, feminist theorists argue that experiences and emotion can also be a source of knowledge. Indeed, a reflexivity surrounding emotions and feelings can garner specific insight about how social processes are constructed through power. Methodologies that rely solely on reason to produce knowledge can make these processes invisible (Krook 2007).

The second tenet relates to the objectivity of the researcher and maintains that researchers must remain distant from their research subjects and not be influenced by their environments (Krook 2007). Many feminist theorists instead call for a research process that illustrates how knowledge making is an embodied practice (Haraway 1988; Reinharz 1992). They state the importance of maintaining accountability to the research subjects through allowing space for the voices of the participants to be meaningfully included and represented. Essentially, feminist methodology aims to support new knowledge and social change through cultivating an understanding of research

which legitimizes the experiences, bodies and emotions of marginalized people. Furthermore, it aims to empower marginalized groups through supporting a research process which promotes participation, collectivity and political goals (Krook 2007). However, it is important to note that these methodologies are not universally agreed upon by scholars. Feminist theorists utilize them in ways informed by their various contexts and produce through them a variety of feminist research (Krook 2007).

Researchers have tended to privilege a masculine subject position and in turn have reinforced male/female, culture/nature, object/subject and mind/body binaries. The depiction of spectrums as discreet, mutually-exclusive, opposing entities serves to reinforce sexist and other oppressive logics (Moss 2002). Feminists have responded to this by prioritizing an embodied account of geographic research. They maintain that the process of knowledge making is an embodied one in which emotions, bodies, and experiences are integral and can stand as the basis of knowledge. They call for an examination of our underlying assumptions regarding who can be knowers, what can be known, and what we in turn value as knowable (Moss 2002). And further, they hold that concepts such as power and knowledge should be deconstructed in efforts to illuminate the power behind contemporary knowledge claims (Krook 2007).

Discourse Analysis

Feminist theorist Gillian Rose states that the process of doing discourse analysis involves examining an authoritative account of a social condition (and how this account is contested) and unwinding the discursive process that built that account and reinforces the power inherent to it (2007). Further, discourse analysis involves contextualizing social narratives in the surroundings they are embedded within and produce (Rose 2007). In order to break these ideas down, it can be

useful to look at the concepts separately. Statements of discourse have meanings that are connected to one another and make up what Rose refers to as a discursive formation. Because discourses are made up of constellations of connected meanings relayed across a wide-ranging variety of forms, relying on one or just a few sources to become familiar with them is an inadequate approach. Researchers in discourse analysis instead advocate an approach called intertextuality that can begin to engender an understanding of a particular discourse. Intertextuality according to Rose refers to "the way that the meanings of any one discursive image or text depend not only on that one text or image, but also on the meanings carried by other images and texts" (2007: 142).

There are different approaches to conducting a discourse analysis. In *Visual Methodologies*, Rose works with and differentiates between two prominent types which she calls discourse analysis I and II. The first looks more closely at discourse as articulated through visual images and verbal texts and the second pays attention to discourses as articulated in the practices of institutions (2007). This second form of analysis is more wrapped up in truth claims and power, and looks at these topics at the institutional level and as well as the technological level that supports the institution (Rose 2007). However, there is much that ties the two types of analysis together. For instance, they both look at unpacking the way in which discourse is organized in order to make itself persuasive, as well as examining the strategies used to meet this end. My research draws on both of these approaches to discourse analysis.

The methods of discourse analysis differ somewhat from those of closely related projects such as content analysis. Rose emphasizes the importance of choosing one's sources carefully given the

vast array of sources possible to be included within discourse analysis. Researchers can become overwhelmed for possibilities. However, concurrently, the intertextuality of discourse necessitates a breadth in resources and sources drawn from in order to illustrate something approaching a comprehensive picture. Therefore, there tends to be a long process of immersing oneself in the material. In order to do this effectively, theorists stress the importance of letting go of your perceptions and ideas you may already have developed regarding your research project, and really looking at the material with fresh eyes (Rose 2007). During this process the researcher is looking for recurring themes and visual patterns. They are attempting to get a sense of the underlying logic of the discourse and the truth that it is trying to persuade us to. Researchers are meant to keep an eye toward how a given discourse is structured to produce its truth claims.

This is important because as Rose argues, discourses are so powerful that they "produce those things they purport to be describing" (2007: 156). Moreover, as Foucault (1972) argues, categories and constructions we hold "must be held in suspense. They must not be rejected definitively, of course, but the tranquility with which they are accepted must be disturbed; we must show that they do not come about by themselves, but are always the result of a construction the rules of which must be known and the justifications of which must be scrutinized" (25). Once well into this process, the researcher may be able to identify key themes in the various sources and eventually, code them. Then one can start to look at connections between words, images and everything that has been coded. The researcher can let the material guide them through their analysis at this point as well as paying particular attention to the social sites and authority from which all of the statements being examined are made. Indeed, the social location of a discourse is important in terms of defining its relative social authority and considering this in relation to its

effects. Finally, the importance of transparency in articulating the analyst's own discourse of the work and the lack of objectivity that it has. Indeed, it should be made clear that the work is an interpretation rather than objective truth (Rose 2007).

The discourse analysis I will employ to examine the Food Action Committee is centrally concerned with the manners in which people use language to socially construct the spaces around them. Further, this type of discourse analysis tasks itself with demystifying ideologies and illuminating social hierarchies and processes. It is often used to explore how particular social ideas come to be constructed through persistent discourses within the written, spoken, or visual (Rose 2007). Lastly, it is concerned with the "production by, and reiteration of particular institutions and their practices" (Rose 2007). This methodological program has been specifically useful to moving towards understanding the questions of this research project.

Methods

The research method for this thesis is a case study of the Food Action Committee, which will employ one-on-one semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and discourse analysis in order to better understand the logics and practices of the organization and its members.

The Food Action Committee (FAC) is a subgroup of the Ecology Action Centre (EAC) based in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The Ecology Action Centre is a non-governmental group that advocates for policy change and organizes local programming. The group aims to increase individual and collective food access and resilience in Nova Scotia. It focuses its energy on promoting eating locally as well as research and education into the true costs of food (EAC 2011). It was formed in 1971 by a group of Dalhousie students taking an environmental studies course at the University.

The focus of the EAC initially was to promote recycling and to be a source of information on environmental issues within the community (EAC 2013). Currently, they work primarily through their seven sub-committees: built environment, coastal and water, energy, food action, marine, transportation and wilderness.

The Food Action Committee was established as a subcommittee in 2004. Initially FAC focused most of its energy on the Heliotrust project while also coordinating the Local Exchange Trading System (LETS) and the Urban Garden Mentor Project. Heliotrust was the brainchild of one of the founding members of FAC, Jen Scott. It operated through funding from the October Hill Foundation and the People in Action grant (FAC Annual Report 2006). Heliotrust's mission is to "explore, develop, conserve and share ecological farm systems and knowledge - to conserve farmland and resources" (FAC Annual Report 2006: 8). In its early period, Heliotrust worked to establish conservation easements on two farms on the eastern shore of Nova Scotia. People working on the project designed sustainable housing for one of the easements, which included a windmill they had acquired. Heliotrust also worked to create written, video and audio archives of local farming knowledge.

Currently FAC is working on the 'Our Food Project', which aims to reconnect the North End community to nutritious local food. The project is working to build 'positive food environments' which are described as "the physical and social spaces that help to normalize healthy eating by making it easier to grow, sell, and eat good food" (EAC 2017). The organization meets monthly in the North End of Halifax and has rotating chair and minute takers.

Research Process

During the research process, I conducted semi-structured, in depth interviews with six participants of the Food Action Committee (staff and volunteers). I interviewed one former staff member, two current staff members, and three volunteers to get their perspectives and a sense of some of the history of FAC. I conducted six interviews in total between September and November of 2012. I spoke with Danica Holme who is one of the founding members of FAC and is still engaged with the group. I spoke with Jessica Marchesi who is a member of FAC and runs the Halifax Honey Bee Society, an associated organization. I also spoke with Camilla Rose who is a current staff member in the Our Food Project. I sat down with Meaghan Pettigrew who has been a member of the Ecology Action Center for many years and has been intricately involved in the Food Action Committee. I was also able to speak with Alida Quinn who is a long-time member of the committee and runs the farmer poetry project. Finally, I spoke to Jordan Wordsworth a long-time FAC member who was involved heavily in mobile gardening projects[6].

I conducted interviews in locations chosen by participants and at times of day they identified as convenient. Many of the locations were the homes of the interviewees with a few being conducted at the Ecology Action Center. Interviews tended to be about an hour to an hour and a half in duration with a relatively relaxed tone throughout. The conversation would often shift between answers to the questions I had prepared and the interviewee's general thoughts on the organization or their role within it. The interviews were recorded using an audio recorder at the express and written consent of interviewees and these recordings were transcribed later on in the research process. This meant that my attention could remain on the participants throughout the

[6] * All names changed for reasons of confidentiality.

interview. During these interviews, some of the key questions asked were: “what are FAC's goals and priorities?”; “what decision-making models does FAC employ?”; “how effective do you find these models to be?”; and “does FAC make decisions regarding programs with diverse communities in mind?” The questions used were designed to elicit reflections on actions and practices, on the language and discourses participants use to describe these practises (and how these changed over time), and on the shifting social or organization dynamics which supported or limited their work. These questions were derived from reflection on my own experiences in the alternative food movement in Halifax and with food-based organizations in Halifax that are closely linked to FAC. It was this long time association as well as a deep engagement with the people and communities we were both working with that influenced the design of the interviews.

In conjunction with the interview portion of the research for this project, I also collected a large number of reports and other texts from the Food Action Committee. I collected over 120 print and electronic reports and sources as well as more than 130 sets of meeting minutes. These records have supported me in the interview process by helping me to understand the organization and its stated objectives. On one of my earlier visits to the Food Action Committee office I was given permission to compile an archive of documents from the FAC computer as the organization values transparency in its proceedings. The archive I compiled consists of: food miles reports, minutes from projects and subcommittees, urban garden project minutes, FAC Annual reports, articles by FAC, blog entries, food connections monthly newsletters, letters of support for various initiatives, primary FAC meeting minutes and agendas, committee position papers, press releases, recipes, miscellaneous reports and publications, visioning retreat notes, the FAC website, and volunteer and other administrative forms. I have reviewed these

publications in depth and they have informed this research thoroughly. Although I have had sufficient and more dynamic material from the interviews to draw on and have not needed to quote from this archive extensively, it has provided information for a history of the formation of the Food Action Committee, which is included as Appendix 2 of this thesis.

Some of the challenges I encountered involved the timing of interviews and coordination of interviewee schedules. Most of the participants I spoke with are volunteers and so had to find time between work, school and other family commitments. Some of the FAC members I had initially wanted to speak with were unavailable during the interview process due to maternity leave and other undefined commitments. My sensation throughout this process was that – understandably – the interviews were not a high priority for many of the participants compared to many other aspects of their lives. This proved challenging for having members commit to meeting with me and our sessions tended to be cancelled and rescheduled more than once.

Another aspect of this process I found challenging was having members speak to me about issues of diversity in the organization. I received coaching from my supervisor on how best to approach this topic with participants as we had anticipated it would be a somewhat sensitive subject. We agreed that I should start interviews by asking more general questions about the organization in order help respondents feel more at ease. Following this, we decided it would be most productive to frame questions in a way that allowed interviewees to respond more positively with ways in which FAC was attempting to be inclusive rather than having a series of questions which would focus on potentially negative aspects of the organization. This coaching was helpful but even still I found this to be a sensitive subject throughout the interview process with many interviewees seeming unwilling or hesitant to speak about diversity in the organization.

When asked questions that touched on this subject some interviewees would shift the conversation to another subject and it was necessary for me to re-ask questions in a different way on more than one occasion. All in all I found it was challenging to have interviewees speak in a candid manner about the subjects of diversity and inclusion at FAC. This dynamic has had extensive effects on the research, as there is much more I would have liked to have gestured towards or included in my findings that I was not able to because participants in the interviews avoided making many references to race, class and diversity. This result is interesting in and of itself, and speaks to the difficulties in trying to understand issues of race, class and power in many contemporary contexts where discomforts felt in relation to these ideas are heightened.

I am grateful for the time and energy spent participating in my project by members of the Food Action Committee as well as other community members who have supported this research. In order to move towards reciprocity, I plan to make this work available to people in the communities that helped me to produce it (Tuhiwai 1999: 15). I plan to speak at the EAC's Lunch and Learn program in order to share the information I have gathered with the organization. Further, I have been in contact with a local journalist to gain feedback on what translating this research into articles might look like so I can begin to think about breaking down the whole into smaller more accessible articles. These articles could then be printed and distributed at local community centres and other community hubs. Further, I plan to send them to online news sources as a series of articles so that they can be disseminated further.

Chapter 7: Exclusionary Discourses in the Food Action Committee

In this chapter I argue that while the Food Action Committee has acknowledged a need to be a more inclusive organization to people of colour and those facing economic insecurity, the ways it understands "community" impose limitations on its ability to conceptualize inclusivity. Specifically, FAC's perception that members of marginalized communities have limited agency and capacity for involvement engenders a specific construction of social inclusion that allows only for nominal engagement between FAC and marginalized communities. Further, FAC's place-based understanding of community limits its conception of inclusivity because it removes the lingual and perceptive tools the organization needs to break down ideas of community and examine who is and is not currently included. FAC's inability to cultivate genuine social inclusion in the organization limits the extent to which it can do socially transformative work. In making this critique, I also implicate myself since my own work as a white woman in the alternative food politics community in Halifax has been informed by many of the same ideas and practices that animate FAC's programs.

This chapter will begin by describing the current demographics of FAC as well as the organization's past attempts to become more inclusive to racialized and low-income members of the North End community. It will then move to look at research that illustrates an adherence to the concept of colour blindness in the organizing of the committee. Following this, it will examine ways this discourse manifests in exclusionary understandings of community. Finally, it will outline FAC's moves toward inclusivity specifically focusing on the organization's two primary goals of sharing the benefits of projects more widely and diversifying membership. It

will then briefly discuss a movement towards social inclusivity and conclude with an overall analysis of the meanings of my results.

Promotion of Diversity and Inclusion at FAC

In order to understand FAC's relationship to inclusivity and diversity, it will be helpful first to look at the organization's present demographics. The committee is largely composed of white, relatively economically stable, urban women. As Meaghan Pettigrew*[7] states:

> *In terms of gender diversity there are a lot of women. That is true of the whole food movement. A lot of folks that I have found interested in the food movement and who are in leadership roles are women.*

It is more diverse than many of the other committees at the EAC in terms of age range as it has traditionally attracted people of various ages.

She goes on to talk about diversity of membership in the committee and states that the committee is less diverse in terms of race.

> *In terms of racial diversity the committee is on par with the rest of the organization. The environmental movement generally has some work to do in this regard. There has been a move in the organization to think about that and do what they can but it's really slow. We know that the north end is diverse but we don't really see that here. Part of it is thinking of ways that we can engage better with the neighbours.*

Alida mirrors this point when she says:

> *Ecology action [center] in itself is a pretty white organization, and are people thinking, 'oh, it's white and professional', maybe that makes them not comfortable to join. I don't know if that's a factor.*

Camilla also commented that the:

> *Majority of folks [involved are] middle class white folks who are totally food secure and it's a passion or hobby for them.*

[7] * All names changed for reasons of confidentiality.

Jessica, when asked about her perspective on whether the committee had a diverse membership, had this to say:

> *I don't know that either – I can't really speak to it. In terms of racial diversity – we're still pretty homogenous, reflecting the population in Halifax and the population in Nova Scotia in general. It's not a hugely multicultural place.*

The social makeup of FAC includes a high proportion of students and many people from more affluent or privileged backgrounds. Further, its membership tends to lean towards inclusion of urban citizens from the middle-class working in social or environmentally focused jobs. In terms of the student element, as Marie-Ellen states:

> *I think in terms of age it's heavily weighed to people who have a connection through university. There are a lot of students - we get a university-focused population.*

Further, students tend to be specifically included in staffing during summer months. Jessica notes,

> *Seasonally, FAC applies for grants from the government in order to hire summer students. In terms of age diversity we're quite diverse – university students to elderly members.*

Alida stated that it would be beneficial for FAC to have more programming in order to help people get involved that might currently feel intimidated.

> *I think a lot of people don't have time, would be intimidated, wouldn't know what they were getting into. I think it would be easier if there were more projects that people could take part in. The north end library is an accessible way of getting information to people. And they're usually looking for events.*

These quotations demonstrate the ways FAC members imagine the make-up and diversity of their organization. Members tend to emphasize the ways in which the committee is diverse. Further, they imagine that the demographics of the committee have to do with who is attracted to it – women and university students – rather than who is implicitly discouraged from attending through the codification of whiteness into organizational space.

To expand on my own experience and observations at FAC meetings, I have examined the FAC meeting minutes dating back to September 20th 2004. While the numbers of attendees at FAC meetings vary substantially, the average range that I found was between 10-25 participants present per meeting throughout the approximately 130 meetings that occurred during this time. Of the participants listed in the meeting minutes there were usually only a couple of male-sounding names and one or two more androgynous sounding names. Most names listed as in attendance in minutes for FAC meetings were feminine. Further, in most of the attendee sections of the minutes there were very few non-english names, for the most part these minutes contained names such as Emma, Meghan, and Alison. Obviously there is a lot of uncertainty in the process of ascribing gender and race based on observations of names without other information; however, I think trends in naming are reliable enough to paint a broad overall picture of the organization. My findings in this examination and through my own participant observation at meetings run parallel to the ways members describe the organization in the interviews I conducted as well. This research depicts FAC as made up predominantly of affluent, educated, urban white women of various ages.

FAC's Past Approaches to Inclusivity

My research shows that FAC has the well-intentioned goals of making its alternative food projects more socially inclusive and of making local food more accessible to the Halifax community. For instance, Meaghan Pettigrew (paid EAC staff and long-time FAC member) states some of the priorities of the organization when she says:

> FAC wants to be a reliable resource for people… to be a welcoming space where people's voices are heard is important.

Here Meaghan expresses the import of FAC being a reliable resource. She also, like the other participants, states the importance of FAC being "welcoming", and creating space for people's voices to be heard. Jessica Marchesi noted a lack of engagement when she spoke about the need for the committee to do more to make connections within the broader community:

> *For instance, there are times when FAC has been organizing an event and folks felt that it was really important to reach out to the community. But it has been challenging because we didn't really have those connections in place. So it's definitely an area in which FAC can improve, but how to do that? Culturally is certainly an area in which we can do better and start making those connections.*

FAC's inability to genuinely connect is a consequence of understandings of community present in its organizational consciousness which will be examined more fully further along in the chapter.

While some of FAC's work does align with its stated goals of making alternative food projects more inclusive, much of it falls short in that it fails to genuinely engage with local communities of colour, or people coming from a variety of class backgrounds. There is a level of consciousness within the committee that this is the case. Members express the feeling that there is more the organization could do in regards to inclusivity. In my interview with Camilla Rose she describes a period in which inclusivity was brought up at FAC:

> *Inclusion has been brought up and I think there was staff inclusion training and there was a short presentation. [They] went to broader inclusion training, then came back and said what could be done better. They were going to come back and give tips for what FAC could do. Everyone knew it was an important conversation because the food action committee doesn't do very well at it*

She goes on to describe how this undertaking played out over time in the committee:

> *I wouldn't say that it's ongoing – I would say that it happened, people thought about it for maybe two meetings after that and I haven't seen it mentioned since then. So that's about a year of nothing in terms of inclusion.*

In another portion of the interview, Camilla touches on the same point again when she describes how initiatives happen in FAC:

> *There are problems and strengths, nothing holds FAC together. Initiatives don't stick – like inclusivity was brought up and then nothing really came of it. It's a bad excuse for not being inclusive as a committee.*

In the period Camilla describes, FAC initiated but failed to follow through with work on inclusivity in the organization. During the interview Camilla talked about this issue in a way that signified she was frustrated or had regrets about how the process happened. When she says: "it's a bad excuse for not being inclusive as a committee", it can be understood that she thinks there is more the organization could do in this regard.

Challenges

Participants commented on some of the ways they find developing inclusivity in the organization to be challenging. After her last comments, Alida went on to speak about the logistics and energy involved in bringing new people into the group in a sustained manner:

> *Having someone to be a point person for volunteers could be good. Someone is supposed to be responsible for this. We often talk about being more welcoming to new people. I think there are ways to engage people better, which I'm not going to take responsibility for.*

What is notable in these statements is that Alida admits to being apprehensive about taking responsibility for engaging people better. This apprehension and uncertainty surrounding race and the politics of engagement act as powerful inhibitors to collective action in the organization. Camilla outlines another challenge by commenting on the energy involved in undertaking this kind of work in an organization:

> *In terms of how to reach out to different populations of people… there was lots of passion around inviting folks that dissipated because FAC is a place where folks barely make it every month because they're so busy. [It is] pretty hard when there is no one whose time is dedicated to holding things together.*

Here, Camilla is expressing a difficulty in sustaining energy towards working on actively inviting new people into the organization. FAC has identified the need for the organization to be more inclusive and has started and stopped work moving towards this goal. These members of the committee speak to challenges they've faced in being able to follow through with this work.

FAC & Accessibility

Living in an urban center is an aspect of privilege that is important to note in this context, as the committee is made up almost exclusively of urban participants. While many urban areas are associated with poverty, especially racialized poverty, Halifax's peninsular geography places a premium on real estate near the downtown, and its outlying rural communities are less desired by middle class suburban commuters. Many of the people involved in the committee have access to resources, amenities, transportation, and earning potential - among other things - that their rural counterparts do not. As mentioned by Alida,

> *The work is supposed to be provincially based but it's difficult for people outside of Halifax to make it to meetings. Outreach from HRM is a big problem. There is a big rural/urban divide.*

Jessica commented further on these dynamics of geographic or class-based access, when she said:

> *The EAC is located on the peninsula and meetings happen there, and so if you live off of the peninsula and don't have access to a vehicle it could be quite challenging to make meetings. To participate you need access to a vehicle or transit. You also need Internet or a computer to participate in the online list-serv. Really you need a certain level of financial resources. I like to think of us as a welcoming group though.*

While members are able to name aspects of the committee that contribute to its homogenous membership, there is less of a consensus about manners of solving these problems. This situation

stems from a described lack of collective work within FAC around imagining ways to make the committee more accessible or diverse.

A Critical Analysis of the Discourses of the Food Action Committee

Colour blindness can be understood as "the absence of racial identifiers in language" and is notable as a social discourse because of its tendency to privilege the ostensible objective, neutral position of the white observer (Guthman 2008a: 390). However, colour blindness perpetuates its own epistemic violence through the erasure of both white privilege and the violence of whitened racist histories (Guthman 2008a). The Food Action Committee's adherence to the discourse of colour blindness in its organizing reinforces whitened historical narratives and a racially neutral version of both the past and present in Halifax. I have found two major trends in how colour blindness manifests through my research of FAC. The first is a pattern wherein members of FAC conceptualize the committee as ultimately 'welcoming' when asked questions that speak to racial or class based differences. The second is a pattern of thinking that is present in the interviews and archives that because FAC deals with access to food in a human rights framework, it is inherently working for and accessible to everyone.

The Door is Always Open

The idea that the Food Action Committee is 'welcoming' comes up again and again in interviews when respondents were asked questions such as "where does the Food Action Committee stand right now in terms of diversity of membership?" and, "do you find the Food Action Committee's programs to be equally accessible to marginalized communities in Halifax?" For instance, Jessica Marchesi (FAC member and honey-bee project coordinator) responded:

> *I like to think of us as a welcoming group. I feel like we have historically done a good job at welcoming new folks.*

By this, Jessica is saying that FAC is good at welcoming new people to the committee. When using the term “welcome”, Jessica is describing a friendly manner that FAC participants show towards people that arrive at events or meetings. Members of FAC value politeness and amicability in interaction. Danica Holme (a founding member of FAC) touches on this point further during her interview when she says:

> *We've always just felt that the door is always open; we've always left it to people to dig us out.*

In this depiction, Holme points towards FAC’s welcoming nature by bringing an image of an open door to mind. At another point in the interview she elaborates on this point by saying:

> *It's just been left open – people are welcomed when they show up. Some people are constant and a few others and then others kind of come and go. A lot of people from school of resources and environmental studies – great people in that school.*

This construction is interesting for a number of reasons. The first is that in the case of an open door there are no barriers imagined on the part of the organization whose door it is: community members are presented as having the ability to walk through completely of their own accord. This positions FAC passively as a body that is welcoming and quite ready to accept members who are ready to attend. Second, in this and other interview responses, interviewees express that FAC’s condition of being a welcoming committee has always been the case. This further exonerates FAC from any critiques stemming from a lack of diversity. Given that the committee has been welcoming since its inception, it follows that it should not be criticized on this account. The tone and sentence structures of these responses offer the interviewees a measure of defense.

Notably, this construction arises mostly in instances when members are tasked with describing how the organization works towards racial or class-based inclusivity. In response to this question

Alida Quinn (long-time FAC member and poetry coordinator) restates the discourse that FAC is a welcoming committee:

> *As far as I know they don't do anything [to work towards inclusivity], they would welcome people very much, but they don't, as far as I've seen, they don't go out to bring people in.*

As illustrated in this quote, FAC most often takes a passive approach to inclusivity in the committee. Notably, the functionality of this passivity is based on a lack of acknowledgement of difference in the North End community. When asked why there are not more people from different backgrounds present at FAC, members respond that "everyone is welcome". These colour-blind discourses function to obscure and erase racial exclusions.

Food for Everyone

Secondarily, there is a sentiment expressed in interviews that because food is a basic human right, and FAC is working to strengthen local food pathways and make food more accessible for everyone, FAC is inherently working for marginalized communities because a benefit to everyone is built into its programs. For instance, Jessica, when asked: "Does the Food Action Committee keep the various backgrounds of folks in mind when designing its programs?", responded that:

> *It's built into the programs because a big part of what we're addressing is access to good healthy food because we're coming from the background that this is a human right and what goes along with that is knowing how to cook it and use it once you have it. I would say that access is thoughtfully built into the FAC programming and that we keep this in mind.*

Here Jessica refers to access to food as a "human" right. In so doing she removes racial identifiers from the language used to talk about programming. In fact, there are not any words that explicitly refer to the racial or class based identities of community members in any way. The response has been constructed in such as way that people are not precisely identified. Instead,

they are alluded to through the introduction of the human rights framework. This is especially telling given that this construction is a direct response to a question that referenced different backgrounds of community members. Focusing on access to "good healthy food" rather than on the underlying injustices that create this differential access alienates members of the community who may want to be involved in a food politics organization. This is further illustrative of a colour-blind discourse present in how FAC conceptualizes its programming.

A Colour-blind Context

Mythologies allow citizens to imagine themselves as belonging to a community – they typically delineate who should be included and excluded from a given community. White communities – often unconsciously – are both emotionally and economically attached to national mythologies that posit a whitened historical account of the past and reinforce their inclusion (Razack 2002). Within these mythologies, white communities are those most entitled to the resources of a given geographic region, as well as to the benefits of citizenship. In order to justify these entitlements, white settler societies rely on the continuation of racial hierarchy as a means of organizing themselves; as well as on the denial of histories of oppression, slavery, and the exploitation of the labour of people of colour (Razack 2002). An adherence to colour blindness upholds this idea of a racially neutral version of past events as well as contemporary divisions and hierarchies (Razack 2002). A number of other exclusionary discourses can be proliferated in contexts in which a colour blindness narrative is prominent. Indeed, the invisiblizing productivity of colour blindness can beget further exclusionary discourse as well as reinforce white privilege, all while simultaneously imparting an air of innocence. It is this exact lack of explicitness that lends it its social power. At this point, I will outline some of these discourses and describe how they manifest in the Halifax, Nova Scotia context.

Understandings of Community That Promote Exclusion

In my research of FAC I have found two narrowly defined understandings of community to be most prominent: first, the idea that racialized members of society cannot participate in the committee because of their limited capacity; and second, that the organization should prioritize location rather than identity when interacting with the North End community. Both of these narratives limit how members can conceive of the organization, which in turn limits the possibilities of their programming and precludes explicitly addressing racial bias. FAC's ability to genuinely connect with and thus effectively serve marginalized communities in Halifax's North End is ultimately constrained.

A Racialized Understanding of Capacity Within Community

The continued inequality and poverty faced by communities of colour in Nova Scotia have sedimented into unhelpful perceptions of what radicalized communities are capable of. These perceptions influence the ways in which privileged community members believe it is possible to interact with people from marginalized communities. Namely, people from marginalized communities are seen as having such low capacity that they are able to interact with community organizations only from a position of limited agency. In the Food Action Committee, this pattern appears in the discourse that meeting spaces are for specific segments of the population. For instance, one narrative found in relation to accessibility of the committee meetings can be illustrated by Alida Quinn's comments thusly:

> *There wouldn't be anything for them in the meetings. If you had someone connected to Hope Cottage*[8] *– then they could bring in fresh produce for them that they could use. Being more connected to an existing program. The drop in centers offer meals – the north end clinic has a group where there are people in the community that make a lunch together.*

[8] Hope Cottage is a charitable organization located on Brunswick Street in Halifax, providing free meals five days of the week.

Notably, when asked what FAC programming had to offer marginalized communities, Alida Quinn spoke specifically about meeting spaces not being spaces for these communities. She notes that "there wouldn't be anything for them" at FAC and goes on to talk about how programming offering food could be helpful instead. The mental image of those facing marginalization used to draw these conclusions is one in which the communities in question are food-insecure to the point that they can only access programming that aims to solve this food insecurity. Camilla's comments display a similar sentiment:

> *The projects of FAC are for food secure people. It's well off, well educated white folks involved in food movement… so there are layers to that involvement for people that are more food insecure. Their relationship to food is more day to day – how to get enough. It's more like: one, can I get enough calories; two, can I get enough nutritious calories; then, broader political economic social concepts of food and the food system.*

She talks about the challenges of people facing food insecurity in becoming involved in the food movement. While Camilla does not explicitly refer to people of colour in this analysis, her centering of white, affluent community members implies that the "other" she is referring to is low-income people of colour. Again, people experiencing poverty and racialization are imagined in such a way that excludes them from having agency in the organization. The above quotations are indicative of an overall sentiment held within the FAC: that its membership is distinct and separate from the people its programs are meant to serve. The meeting space as one of planning of initiatives and building organizational culture, does not to this participant seem accessible to the person they imagine when they think of the marginalized North End communities. The idea that members of marginalized communities cannot participate effectively in FAC's meeting spaces creates the conditions for FAC's approach to programming and ultimately informs who is centered in the organization.

This line of thinking is a predecessor of the discourse outlined by Guthman in her work in Southern California that people working in food-based initiatives imagine their work as "bringing good food to others" (2008: 443). There is a tendency in the alternative food movement to position those facing marginalization as objects of enrolment efforts rather than members of the movement in their own right (Guthman 2008). If members of marginalized communities are perceived as not able to genuinely participate in decision making spaces, then what follows - and indeed, what is left – is for them to be recipients of programming from their more privileged and often white neighbours.

For instance, Camilla Rose (FAC member and Our Food Project Coordinator) commented on a dynamic present in FAC where projects are conceived of and executed by one group with the aim of benefitting others in a way that positions the primarily white middle class FAC members as saviours instead of people on the same level as those they are hoping to connect with.

> *These programs would draw folks from a white middle-class background… with the exception of maybe some of the garden work which works with youth groups and immigrant groups. Even then we are still coming from white, middle class space saying 'we have a community garden – come and I'll teach you how to grow food.'*

Again, it is worth noting that this line of reasoning is only possible if communities have avoided the work of acknowledging past histories of racial inequality. Once communities undertake this reconciliatory work - and look towards the racist and classist undercurrents that are foundational to the current cultural and physical landscape surrounding them - there is potential for an interruption in the form of inclusion, leading to restructuring and de-centering. New conceptions of community could be proliferated within such a space by taking cues and listening to marginalized communities. However, currently, the intractability of dominant whitened histories

and the unwillingness of those who benefit from them to challenge them are maintaining a status quo that leaves little room for the voices of the most vulnerable to be heard.

A Place-Based Understanding of Community

My research suggests that the Food Action Committee privileges a place-based understanding of community. A community of place takes a geographic location as its reference point and can be understood as a community of people bound together because of where they are (Hinrichs & Kremer, 2002). In comparison, communities of interest, position, or identity have geographies defined by a multitude of fluid reference points (Hinrichs & Kremer, 2002). In practice, all of these formulations of community overlap; however, there are differences in what may be seen when looking at a group of people through each of these lenses. It is a tendency in the food movement to emphasize the role of place-based communities in creating local change and supporting economic and social progress. For instance, in my interview with Danica Holme, she spoke in a manner that privileged place:

> I wanted to reach out to the local community here. Jen Greenberg wanted to reach out to her local community there around Red Fox.

She identifies place through words like "local" and "community". These words are used to establish a geographic region as the focus of programming within the organization. This framing prioritizes a regional approach to organizing without breaking down the concept of community further to reveal a myriad of various communities of interest within the whole.

This quotation from Danica, as well as the one from Alida that follows, reveal an essentialized understanding of the idea of "the local". Respondents use this language to refer to the geographic space of the North End but also to gesture towards the racialized communities that live there. This framing thus further supports a place-based understanding of community as well as

obscures social relations in the region it describes. Here Danica uses a subtext often associated with the term “the local” when she implies that reaching out to the “local” community (as well as initiatives that use the local scale in general) is inherently good or equivalent to alternative or progressive. These conceptualizations allow FAC to understand organizing on a local scale to be inherently in resistance to the logic of global capitalism. However, this homogenizes both scales and erases the inequality present at the local level.

In instances where FAC members do refer to more specific geographic locations within the larger local area, they do so without reference to the identities of the communities those places are meant to conjure. These shorthands are used as a way to speak about differences in race and class background without explicitly doing so. Again, this manner of structuring language stems from an adherence to colour blindness in organizational culture. For example, Alida makes reference to “the local area” but also further to “Gottingen [street]”, when she says:

> *I often think that there should be representation from the local area, like Gottingen. It would be nice to have someone really interested in food issues from the community. It shouldn't be that hard to do. I don't know how people decide to join FAC which would be interesting to look at.*

One of the challenges I found in doing this research is that respondents would often talk about race and class in an implicit manner. Referring to “the North End”, or “Gottingen” are all ways to refer to low-income, racialized populations without explicitly naming them as such. Using terms like “local area” or “Gottingen” essentializes a geographic space and inhibits FAC’s ability to openly acknowledge and discuss the social relations and structures that maintain socio-economic inequalities within these places. The use of terms that are more economically, politically, and racially accurate to talk about the FAC’s areas of focus would contribute to a stronger basis for their programs.

The North End of Halifax (inclusive of Gottingen street) has historically faced racialization and segregation. Uniacke Square is a public housing site that surrounds Gottingen on both sides. “The Square” was built in the mid-1960s as a housing project for former residents of Africville. These residents were forcibly relocated when their community was condemned and demolished by the city. Africville’s population was made up primarily of descendants of residents of Birch-town (and other African Nova Scotian communities) who had experienced the tenancy farming and sharecropping systems first hand (see chapters 3 and 5 for more detail). “The North End” or “Gottingen” in the Halifax context are major regions one thinks of when thinking of urban areas experiencing poverty. Over the past fifty years, the area has experienced varying levels and models of commercial and residential density; however, more recently, it has experienced a very intense and fast-paced form of gentrification. Condos geared towards young professionals share the same block with methadone clinics and the Salvation Army.

The North End is an increasingly economically stratified and socially heterogeneous region encompassing a range of capacities and abilities to participate. Place-based characterizations of this community are inadequate representations of its complexity. Organizations that fail to recognize these differences, or do not allow themselves the language to properly discuss them, risk maintaining social exclusion along class, race, or other lines. The act of naming these places as racialized and classed would allow FAC to more accurately conceive of the different needs of these communities and would therefore allow it to adjust its programming accordingly. Indeed, the committee’s understandings of the North End community – namely that racialized populations therein lack the capacity to have agency in the organization, and that geographic

place should be prioritized over social identity in organizing – ultimately limit how the organization can conceptualize and promote inclusion.

Problematic Practices of Inclusion

FAC prioritizes a kind of participation that, rather than centering people from marginalized communities in decision-making and direction, aims to further the reach and benefits of its projects into these communities There are examples throughout my interview research of participants voicing the need for FAC to broaden the reach of its programming, specifically in Halifax's North End community. In my interview with Danica, she described reaching out to the community (with projects such as cooking classes and gardening workshops) as a priority of FAC's.

Danica says,

> There were cooking classes and gardening happening. There are teaching vegetable patches all around the EAC - it doesn't take that much space. The work was broadly for the communities there and anyone that it could reach.

Jessica also commented on the relative accessibility of the cooking classes, which are one of the major community programs FAC runs. She was positive about the potential of the sliding scale the organization put in place for the cooking class fees.

> *There is a sliding scale in effect with the cooking classes. Although any kind of fee will exclude some people, this is helpful for folks from a lower-socio economic class. FAC tries to do it so that at the minimum that costs are covered and at the maximum there is a small honorarium for the presenter.*

Marie-Ellen spoke specifically about the cooking classes and the ways in which they may not be accessible to all members of the community:

> *I think it would be intimidating to some people. The class I went to was really talking to the converted in a way.*

The implications of this line of thought are that if FAC could get the word out more effectively and deal with the costs associated with some of their projects that people from different backgrounds would be able to access their programming.

Similarly, Camilla spoke of thinking personally about how to get information out to more marginal communities:

> *Marginal communities don't have equal access to programming, information doesn't get to them and the invitation doesn't go out. They [programs] cost money, which is another barrier. Essentially, folks don't know and couldn't afford it - access is a big part of it.*

Marie-Ellen echoed the sentiments of Camilla and Danica that there was a disconnect in terms of how people in the community were able to access programming. She went on to talk about people from marginal communities in specific and described feeling that the committee should tailor its programming to be more accessible to these communities.

> *The people at the cooking classes want to learn how to make a fancy dish, but it should be more like, how can we support single mothers? To provide meals, or low-income families, working two jobs, taking care of their kids, [they] don't have time to make a good meal.*

She further reiterated that it should be a focus of FAC's to try to work in the surrounding community.

> *We should work in the area around the EAC, that's important.*

All of the participants interviewed expressed the need for FAC to reach more people with its programming. However, FAC's programming is primarily accessible to those either possessing socio-economic privilege, or those without access to these specific privileges, but who have other advantages which offer them relative ease in moving through the world. Income is not a sufficient enough indicator of class to be considered apart from other factors such as education or occupation. In failing to make these considerations, FAC's programming can only be accessible

to the portions of the lower-class known as “the advantaged-poor” (Hinrichs & Kremer 2002). People in these positions tend to have access to more resources and also a capacity to navigate social or logistic situations in ways that allow them to be more successful in acquiring social benefits or allocations. These members of society are often more plugged in to local social services and know key players or service providers. They are therefore able to take advantage of opportunities at a greater rate than those who do not possess this experiential knowledge (Hinrichs & Kremer 2002). FAC’s programming is most accessible to the “advantaged poor” because the organization struggles with fostering the kind of genuine social inclusion, which would allow less advantaged portions of those experiencing poverty to access the organization.

The predisposal to design programs in a way that is primarily inclusive to the advantaged poor is a pattern that exists in both public and private social programming. Similarly, Canadian governmental programs created for those most in need are often most accessed by those with higher levels of education or social support. This does not diminish the real benefit social programs have for those able to access them. However, it should be noted that more needs to be done to ensure social safety nets are benefiting the most vulnerable portions of society. This is especially something to consider for new and developing organizations as these problems of structure and discourse are much more simply handled initially rather than retroactively. Indeed, in order for local organizations to have the institutional capacity for genuine social inclusion, they must develop solid intersectional policies and discourses patiently and intentionally.

Of secondary importance to FAC – because of how they conceptualize the surrounding community - is the diversification of the membership of the organization. Jordan Wordsworth touches on this sentiment when she says

> *FAC is not equally accessed by marginalized communities. There's a growing awareness of this and consideration taken in organizing to make it more accessible… but there is still a lot that can be done to increase access.*

Here Jordan talks about members being aware that the organization is lacking in terms of accessibility. She also talks about how members have considered this and are attempting to make it more accessible to marginalized communities. Alida comments on diversification more explicitly when she says:

> *If a volunteer person is able to attract - it's a bit dicey to say - how to attract black people, I don't know how to handle that... I don't know.*

This is the only instance in which participants spoke explicitly about race and about trying to attract people from different racial backgrounds to the committee. In this statement Alida acknowledges a lack of people of colour in the committee and then goes on to talk about diversifying membership. When she says "how to attract black people" she is expressing that she thinks the committee should work towards having more people of colour involved. Later, when she says: "I don't know how to handle that… I don't know", she admits to being unsure of how to move forward.

Conclusion

Members of FAC express frustration with the current manner the committee attempts to be more inclusive to people from marginalized communities. At present, attempts made by FAC to become more broadly inclusive have yet to prove effective in any lasting way.

The reasons for this failure to are manifold. Despite several discussions aimed at increasing inclusivity, FAC still lacks formal structures for addressing inclusivity issues, and lacks the methods and collective energy required to keep inclusivity-based initiatives going. As a result, the committee has not yet been able to create the organizational reflection necessary to interrupt systemic exclusion. This systemic exclusion is wrought by universalizing and colour blind discourses that are built upon entrenched whitened histories and maintain present day organizational and community spaces as white. Furthermore, members of FAC have been shown to hold understandings of community that reinforce social exclusion such as a racialized understanding of capacity and a place-based conceptualization of community. Finally, FAC engages in problematic practices of inclusivity that prioritize the universalization of whitened norms and practices rather than genuine social inclusion or the fostering of agency of people of colour and low-income communities. Significant issues remain in the organization. These issues must be faced in order to truly cultivate inclusivity in the committee.

The inability of FAC thus far to disrupt these exclusionary discourses and practices has created a pathway whereby resources are channelled from the Provincial and Federal governments to relatively affluent, educated, urban, white women. The benefits we receive based on a robust local food movement are built on the foundation of the subjugation of agriculture and histories of people of colour, as well as the continuation of racial hierarchies and discrimination. Acknowledging this pathway in a meaningful way and working to give up our disproportionate share of resources are difficult and necessary steps.

In order to do the work of building a more transformative food movement, white communities will have to commit to undertaking an increased degree of emotional labour and organizational reflexivity. We will need to grapple with the fear that we have of letting go of power and acknowledging and unraveling intricate histories and systems of privilege. Further, we will need to work collaboratively and supportively with anti-poverty, living wage, and housing first organizations that prioritize capacity building within marginalized communities. This is work we will have to engage in – even when it is hard - if we are to have legitimacy in our social projects and hope of them producing movement towards social equality.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This thesis has explored the politics of food, race and class through a case study of the Food Action Committee (FAC) of the Ecology Action Center in Halifax, Nova Scotia. My study utilized semi-structured in person interviews with staff and volunteers at the committee as well as participant observation through my regular attendance at monthly meetings as well as at FAC events and programming. I also used discourse analysis to examine the everyday practices and discourses in the Food Action Committee. This study was undertaken in order to answer the question "how do the discourses and practices in the alternative food movement maintain spaces as white and exclude communities of colour?"

I found in answer to my research question that the Food Action Committee utilizes a collection of discourses and practices that normalize whitened histories and maintain and perpetuate racialized exclusions.

I arrived at this conclusion through an analysis of my empirical data, which described a progression of social processes occurring at the Food Action Committee, which ultimately limited the committee's ability to be genuinely socially inclusive. The Food Action Committee adheres to the notion of colour blindness in their organizing and, as a result, has a tendency towards attempting to maintain a sense of racial neutrality while in reality reinforcing whitened historical narratives. This colour blind context makes invisible the exact kinds of racial and class based differences that need to be acknowledged in order for The Food Action Committee to effectively challenge white privilege and avoid the proliferation of further exclusionary discourses based on whitened historical and geographical foundations.

The discourses I found present in my study of the Food Action Committee centered predominantly on understandings of community that impeded the organization"s ability to conceive of inclusivity. Firstly, the committee was found to hold the perception that those facing marginalization were unable to participate in the committee or have agency in decision-making. This idea precludes members of the committee from interacting with the broader community in a way that allows for real engagement across difference. Secondly, I found that when the committee referred to 'community' it was most often referring to a geographic region rather than to a shared social or other identity. This place-based understanding of community is limiting because looking at a group of people through this lens makes the delineation of varying needs, accessibilities, and social positionings difficult, if not impossible.

Further, I found that in addition to the limiting discourses and understandings of community that FAC holds and espouses, the manner in which the committee executes its practices is exclusionary or at least fails to be inclusionary. Specifically, FAC approaches participation in one of two ways: sharing the benefits of its projects more widely with the broader community; or, diversifying its membership. The former assumes the parameters of the organization will continue to be set by its current members and that what this group deems as beneficial is universally applicable to other communities. The latter is an aim that at its worst, is a bid to increase the legitimacy of an organization to funding bodies, and – without the type of in-depth anti-racial and classism work described above – is at best a nominal invitation.

Contribution to Critical Geography Literature

In my literature review, I examine the language and internal critiques of the alternative food movement with a special attention paid to class, racialization, and whiteness. This has been done to open up a space to look at the aforementioned ways that the community food movement might be advanced to better meet the needs of marginalized communities. My work contributes to this literature on food, race, and class by providing an in-depth case study within the Canadian specific context of the Food Action Committee in Halifax, Nova Scotia. My work further contributes to the literature by providing an empirical analysis that focuses on the perspectives of community organizers within the alternative food movement. This work in specific adds to what we know about exclusionary discourses and practices from literature by authors such as Julie Guthman and Rachel Slocum. My findings also support the work on social inclusion in the Midwest by Clare Hinrichs and Kathy Kremer by providing an example of an organization struggling with genuine social inclusion that utilizes many of the problematic understandings of community they outline in their work.

Finally, my work is a small part of a much larger process of challenging the whitened historical accounts of agriculture in Nova Scotia. Its focus on the history of African Nova Scotians who were enslaved, exploited and displaced in the making of our current agricultural industry, is a contribution to a process of unmapping a white settler society in the eastern Canadian region in the vein of work by Sherene Razack.

Implications of the Research

The major implication of this work is a call to organizations to be more reflective and make the space and time to think deeply about their work in relation to the communities that they are

meant to serve. I have found that there are many challenges in acknowledging privilege and learning to be an ally across difference including a lack of dedicated reflective space within an organization, and a lack of personal or collective energy to commit to the demanding socio-political work of unlearning and learning. In this vein, the interviewees described challenges they had experienced in attempting to be a more inclusive organization in the past. Interviewees talked about a period in which the Food Action Committee had attempted to undergo a longer process of facilitating inclusivity within the organization but that energies and attention had waned and that the initiative eventually fell apart. Further, respondents repeatedly commented that a major challenge they ran into was finding the time and energy to do this work or have reflective processes sustained without having resources in the organization put towards staff hours to underline these processes. Essentially, this lack of space within the organization for reflection on racist and classist cultural norms and histories has been a major cause of limited development on this front within the Food Action Committee.

Further, it is a call to organizations to do what they can to learn about the histories of the regions they work in so that they may understand how these histories continue to affect communities in ongoing ways. Lastly, there is a need to work toward supporting and developing the resources of disadvantaged groups so that they may participate more fully. It is crucial that people from marginalized communities have more capacity and resources if they are to enter the debate equally and self-determine their situations on their own terms. Alternative food projects should refrain entirely from trying to “bring people in” or “to the table” after parameters that benefit a community’s most privileged members have already been set. Once marginalized communities have the capacity to participate fully it is important that collective work has been done so that

they are not deterred from doing so based on embedded systems of exclusion within the movement? Indeed, these processes will have to occur simultaneously in order for the food movement to truly be accessible to all.

Limitations of the Research

It is important to define some of the limitations of this research. While it did meet some of the goals I defined at the outset of this project, there were ways in which it fell short of what I had envisioned. This research does look at the everyday, taken for granted discourses and practices within the Food Action Committee in Halifax. It situates these discourses and practices in a larger theoretical and historical context as well as talks about the social implications of organizations continuing these practices (in terms of limits to their ability to meet their stated organizational goals).

However, there were some connections I was not able to examine in as in depth of a manner as I would have liked. One question I was very interested in looking at but wasn't able to approach with my empirical research was "how has the subjugation of black agriculture and agricultural histories opened up spaces for the contemporary food movement in Halifax?" While much of my theoretical framework looks at this question using secondary sources, I would have liked to do more archival research and interviews with people of colour in Nova Scotia to examine this connection more directly.

In the early stages of the research process in Halifax I had intended to center this question and begin with archival research but found that it was difficult to access information at the Black Cultural Center in Nova Scotia and that many of my calls and emails were left

unanswered/returned. I did not have previous connections to the communities I was hoping to engage with and (as it quickly became apparent) would not be able to develop these connections within the span of the primary research stage of the project. Due to this and with the guidance of my supervisor, I decided that it might be more within the scope of the project to focus on the Ecology Action Centre as I had existing relationships there and many of the staff and volunteers were open to being interviewed. With more time and resources I would have liked to pursue this primary research examining the subjugation of black agriculture further as I feel it is an important connection that I am only able to begin to make within the bounds this project. I feel it would be productive for this work to be undertaken by someone who has stronger connections with the Black Cultural Center and those involved in it, just as it has been productive for me to work on a critical history of FAC because of my history with the organization and in the alternative food movement in Halifax.

Future Research Directions

In terms of future research, it is my hope that this work can function as a means of opening up a research agenda that may address some of these limitations in the future. I do think that, as a result of my study, clear connections have been drawn between the necessity of de-centering whitened historical narratives and acknowledging past oppressions in order to avoid the maintenance and perpetuation of racial exclusions into the present (even in spaces which explicitly aim to avoid this). Therefore, I think that further research may be conducted on the subjugation of black agriculture in Nova Scotia in order to further advance equality in contemporary society. In terms of building blocks for future research projects, I also think that this work of delving into and de-naturalizing discourses and practices within organizations and institutions is valuable and can be advanced to all of our benefit.

In order to avoid the perpetuation of racial exclusion into the present, historical accounts that center the experiences of original indigenous and African Nova-Scotians will need to be reasserted. This approach can bring the injustices of the past to light so that they may be acknowledged and so that social reconciliation can occur. Furthermore, in order to move towards substantive social inclusion, alternative food initiatives will need to avoid designing projects and then attempting to fold members from marginalized communities into this work after the fact. Initiatives to diversify membership place a large burden on members from marginalized communities to undo the exclusionary policies that are embedded in the movement by those who initially build its structure. Those who are able to undertake this work are not always successful in reorienting the organization towards work that benefits those most marginalized. In order to avoid this, true participation has to be there from the beginning. Otherwise, initiatives will run into the same problem of accessing the energies of marginalized communities to propel movements that are vehicles for white, affluent progress. Indeed, members of marginalized communities already face the most barriers to becoming involved in community organization and therefore, should have their concerns sought out and centered from the beginning. Centering the needs of the most marginalized members of society can move all progressive movements forward.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions

On the Food Action Committee:

- How did FAC start?
- What are FAC's goals and priorities? How does it conceptualize its work?
- What does FAC do? (In terms of programs, campaigns, publications, etc.)

On Membership:

- What is the process for becoming a member and what does membership usually include?
- How does FAC relate to money? (Its own funds, its fund-raising, spending money, etc.)

On Decision-Making & Conflict Resolution:

- What decision-making models does FAC use?
    - How effective do you find these models to be?
- How does FAC deal with conflict? How effective do you find this model to be?

On Inclusivity:

- Where does FAC stand right now in terms of diversity of membership?
- Does this differ than at periods in the past? How so?
- Do you find FAC's programs to be equally accessible to marginalized communities?
- Does FAC make decisions regarding programs with diverse communities in mind?
- Does FAC have space to reflect on its programming and publications?
    - What does this look like?
- What changes has FAC made based on this reflection and visioning in the past?

Appendix 2: The Formation of the Food Action Committee

This section provides a history of the Food Action Committee up to the period in which I conducted interviews to provide a context for my primary research intervention.

2004-2006

The Food Action Committee was founded as a subcommittee of the Ecology Action Center in 2004 (Annual Report 2005). Initially FAC focused most of its energy on the heliotrust project while also coordinating the Local Exchange Trading System (LETS) and the Urban Garden Mentor Project. Heliotrust was the brainchild of one of the founding members of FAC, Jen Scott. It operated through funding from the October Hill Foundation and the People in Action grant (Annual Report 2006). Heliotrust's mission is to "explore, develop, conserve and share ecological farm systems and knowledge - to conserve farmland and resources" (Annual Report 2006: 8). In its early period heliotrust worked to establish conservation easements on two farms on the eastern shore of Nova Scotia. People working on the project designed sustainable housing for one of the easements, which included a windmill they had acquired. Heliotrust also worked to create written, video and audio archives of local farming knowledge. On September 12, 2004, they organized the first Harvest Festival, which took place in Victoria Park, Halifax and was organized by Julia Kemp (Annual Report 2006).

FAC also focused energy on its urban garden mentors project. It was an intergenerational program that worked to coordinate mentorships between skilled seniors in the community and youth interested in learning about urban gardening. Most of the participants were based at the Northwood continuing care centre in the North End of Halifax (Annual Report 2005). This

project received funding from New Horizons Canada and hired a coordinator to work on creating a network on contacts, interested people, volunteers, and gardening spaces (Annual Report 2006: 8). A local economic trading system also sprung up in Halifax around this time and found a home with the Food Action Committee. This local LETS was predominantly funded through membership fees, grants, and in-kind donations. Its mandate was to make participation in an economy possible for everyone in the community regardless of whether or not they participated in the formal economy. Their system was a form of enhanced barter that they mediated with a credit system maintained by the organizers (Annual Report 2006).

During this period FAC also published and distributed its first leaflet titled "Eating for a Better World" which was funded through heliotrust and the Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group (Annual Report 2006). They made connections to local organizations such as the Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network, Halifax Seedy Saturday, and Breakfast Television. FAC maintained booths with the first two groups at their regional conferences and events and appeared on television programs of the latter to speak to the benefits of local, organic food (Annual Report 2006:15). Finally, they ran the first and second annual Halifax Harvest Festival, which would continue to be a major event for them in later years (Annual Report 2006).

2006-2008

In their third year FAC worked on gaining a larger profile in the community and on recruiting volunteers to the committee. They also continued their focus on urban gardening, working with over 100 youth aged 5-13 at three different gardening sites in the city including the Halifax Independent School and the Halifax Military Family Resource Centre (Annual Report 2007). A

lot of produce was harvested over the course of the year through the urban gardening program and a portion of this produce was donated to the food bank Feed Nova Scotia. The UGP also ran a seven-week program on organic vegetable gardening, herbal medicine, local food and worm composting that occurred at the two previously mentioned sites (Annual Report 2008).

Also during this period, the Ecology Action Centre was approved as a body to hold the conservation easements under the Conservation Easement Act. Completing this final step propelled the heliotrust project into organizing a great and full season of workshops and events at Red Fox Farm. They also initiated Open Farm Fridays, which run each season from May-October on the farm. Heliotrust also published and distributed the book *Twilight Meetings: Celebrating the Wisdom of our Farmer-Mentors* (Annual Report 2008). Red Fife wheat achieved commercial status and was featured at the Slow Food International Conference in Turin, Italy in the Hall of Taste. With help from the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture FAC launched the Food Miles project in 2008. The project was slated to run for three years and be a policy and education initiative looking at the environmental and economic impacts of a primarily imported as opposed to local diet.

Aside from these major projects FAC had a lot of other initiatives on the go. In terms of publications FAC produced the *Eating by the Seasons* cookbook, which sold 1250 copies and was reprinted twice in this two-year period (Annual Report 2008). Their literature review on local food procurement policies was also well received. The committee collaborated with the EAC Marine Issues committee to organize an event called Loaves and Fishes that worked to connect local fishers, farmers, and other producers. It was also this period when FAC began organizing the Musicians for Farmer's Events and when the Harvest Festivals really thrived

sometimes with hundreds of people attending and up to 50 producers participating (Annual Report 2007).

2008-2010

In 2008, FAC worked to solidify its mandate of “encouraging Nova Scotians to produce and eat local, environmentally friendly foods…[and] promoting good food policy and the conservation of farm land and farming knowledge” (Annual Report 2008: 1). The Food Miles project became a major focus of the committee and the project worked to re-localize the food system in Nova Scotia. They worked on connecting allies and supporters to increase the purchasing of locally produced food. They also conducted 62 educational presentations to nutrition students, farm organizations and health care supporters (Annual Report 2009).

The UGP grew to include the You Grow Girl project that involved 20 youth participants learning urban gardening skills for 6 weeks. It continued the Growing Our Gardens program of weekly drop in garden programs and workshops at the Halifax Independent School. The UGP also launched the Halifax Garden Network website and the Halifax Land-share project which worked connect local aspiring gardeners without access to land to land owners who are no longer able to garden. FAC started the Emerald Web project during this period (Annual Report 2009). The Emerald Web project aims to display and link up the ecological initiatives taking place in Nova Scotia. The goal of this initiative was to show that ecological initiatives could bring Nova Scotians economic prosperity. The project began with a pilot project in Hants County that mapped the ecological initiatives in the community and resulted in the Emerald Web Snapshot (Annual Report 2009).

Heliotrust established a new working land trust in Kings County to raise money for conservation easements for farms. This project sprung out of a conference on farmland protection where Jen Scott gave a presentation about the work of Heliotrust in Hants County. FAC sees farmland protection as a part of their efforts to re-localize the food system. Also through Heliotrust, Musicians for Farmers ran two evenings of local food and music that were attended by a couple of hundred people (Annual Report 2010). The Canadian Biotechnology Action Network organized a speaking tour titled, “Crops, Cars, and Climate Crisis” which was hosted by FAC for its Halifax Stop. The tour included speakers from Canada, Columbia, Argentina and the UK and drew about 175 people. The lecture focused primarily on the impacts of agri-fuel productions on local food, farming, and human rights (Annual Report 2010). Finally, FAC piloted a series of local food cooking class that taught about 15 students about preparing winter meals made up of local produce (Annual Report 2008).

2010-2012

The Our Food project became a major focus during this period of FAC’s history. The committee describes the Our Food project thusly: “the project’s overarching goal is to achieve healthier weights by changing communities’ relationships to food. In doing so we are hoping to foster and build positive food environments” (Our Food Report 2012: 2). The project includes seasonal cooking workshops that invite farmers from Nova Scotia to speak about their farms and work. There are root cellar tours in an effort to make root cellars more prominent in the province. The committee has constructed one at the EAC office to act as a teaching root cellar and has given grants to the community in order for individuals to construct their own (Our Food Report 2012).

The project also supports Community Supported Agriculture and gives workshops on how to host a CSA drop-off location. The project included workshops on preserving with a focus on jams, pickles and tomatoes. These workshops occurred in the summer and fall of 2011 and 2012 (Our Food Report 2012).

Also during this time the Food Action Committee focused its energies on the design and construction of a passive solar community greenhouse at the Bloomfield Center in the North End. The Greenhouse runs entirely on power supplied by the solar panels integrated into its construction (Our Food Report 2012). Workshops run out of the greenhouse on small fresh leafy greens and sustainable greenhouse practices. The greenhouse committee successfully grew one vertical pumpkin supported in a sling in this manner using solar energy.

The committee also considerably expanded content on its blog “Adventures in Local Food!” during this period. The blog was launched in October of 2010 and quickly became a focal point for communicating the committee’s current programs to the community (Our Food Report 2012). Volunteers and other staff contributors produce roughly 3 blog entries per week. These entries include summaries from workshops, recipes, tips, photos and other food related information. By 2012 the blog had over 50,000 views in over 87 countries with the most popular post being one entitled “Guerrilla Gardening on Bilby Street” (Our Food Report 2012). The committee identified a major upcoming goal as being to increase its connections to community partners such as the Alderney Landing farmer’s market and Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network (Our Food Report 2012).