

Snacks: Portraits of a Global Pandemic

Daniela Silva Trujillo

A Research Creation Thesis  
in The Department of Communication Studies

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Media Studies) at

Concordia University

Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal, Quebec, Canada

June 2021

© Daniela Silva Trujillo, 2021

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY  
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Daniela Silva Trujillo

Entitled: Snacks: Portraits of a Global Pandemic

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Media Studies)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair  
Dr. Matt Soar

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Elizabeth Miller

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Dr. Owen Chapman

\_\_\_\_\_ Thesis Supervisor(s)  
Dr. Matt Soar

\_\_\_\_\_ Thesis Supervisor(s)  
Elizabeth Miller

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Monika Gagnon

Chair of Department, Communication Studies

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pascale Sicotte      Dean Faculty of Arts and Science      2021

## Abstract

### Snacks: Portraits of a Global Pandemic

Daniela Silva Trujillo

Sharing food has always been a way to connect with other individuals, to represent oneself to others, to express your community to other communities, and in most cases, to pass down knowledge from generation to generation. You only need to have Wi-Fi on your phone to be connected to your home country with technology. This research-creation project addresses the interconnected areas of food studies, networked publics on Instagram and living through the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through Smallest Narrative Units (Heinz Emingholz) the non-linear animated series entitled *Snacks* explores how individual Instagram users, that work within the food industry, discuss their love of food and their lived experience of a global pandemic. Both topics: food and the pandemic provide simultaneous paths to discussions of identity, representation, migration, community, care and security. Using research-creation, Loveless's concept polydisciplinamory, online surveys, interviews and animation, I was able to address intersecting themes mentioned regarding food during a time of global crisis. The central claim of this work is that food stirs up personal and communal reflections, fosters a sense of community and provides a unifying common ground. This project resulted in an Instagram series of twelve animated episodes surrounding topics about food. *Snacks: Portraits of a Global Pandemic* makes a significant contribution by enriching the discussion of portraying food in a global pandemic, both in the series and in its development. This project also contributes to platform studies and animation studies by creating a non-linear non-fiction series for Instagram.

**Keywords:** *research-creation, polydisciplinamory, food studies, platform studies, networked publics, Instagram, animation studies, smallest narrative unit, COVID-19 pandemic, intersectional feminism, articulation theory, granularity.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout this research -creation project, I have received a great deal of support and assistance. I would like to thank my committee, Matt Soar, Liz Miller and Owen Chapman for agreeing to engage with my work and for creating the space for conversation and critique. I am forever indebted to my supervisor, Matt Soar, whose support was invaluable in the whole process of producing a research-creation project. Without your tablet this project would not exist. Your constant and generous support, and insightful feedback have always pushed me to sharpen my thinking, bringing my work to a higher level. I sincerely appreciate all the challenging questions, recommended resources, through my academic wandering. Liz thank you for all the intuitive feedback and resources you sent my way in class and during this whole process.

From the first day of the Media Studies program, I have been inspired and awed by the creativity, generosity, and critical thinking capacities of our cohort. I have learned so much from everyone in this group. Anne-Marie Trépanier, Gabrielle Tétrault, Jacqueline Matskiv, Melisa Muñoz and Prakash Krishnan thank you for being there with me every step of the way, for creating such a loving space, providing constant encouragement and laughs always. I will be there to support you always.

I want to thank all my professors for their valuable guidance throughout my studies. You provided me with the tools that I needed to choose the right direction for me and successfully complete my MA. The creation of the series *Snacks* was made possible because of the Feminist Media Studio. I am grateful for the generous support they have provided for this project and my time in the program over the past two years. Thank you especially to Simone Lucas, for all of your guidance and technical help.

This project has been a collaborative endeavour and I am grateful for the opportunity I have been given. A special thank you goes to Felipe Duque, Michel Lim and Violeta Mejia for your participation and generosity, I learned so much from all of you. I hope we can share meals together soon.

The new path would not have been possible without the support of my family. I want to thank my parents Liliana and Miguel, and my brothers Miguel and Sebastian for their constant support and reassurance that I am on the right path and that things are unfolding just as they should. And also, for being wonderful cooking partners. A huge thank you to Mariana Acosta, Juan David Figueroa, Natalia Tellez, Laura Aparicio, Daniela Cárdenas, and Alejandra Molano. This project would not be what it is if it weren't for your support. Thank you for answering all my random questions. And thank you Pedro, patiently listening, giving the best feedback and always there.

## Table of Contents

<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<i>How is this project research-creation?</i> .....	5
<i>Feminism as practice, love as a verb</i> .....	7
<b>Theoretical Framework</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<i>Intersectional Feminism</i> .....	11
<i>Transnational Media Theory</i> .....	13
<i>Articulation Theory, Granularity, and SNUs</i> .....	14
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<i>Food Studies</i> .....	18
<i>Platform Studies</i> .....	21
<i>Animation Studies</i> .....	25
<b>Chapter 1</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<i>Production</i> .....	29
<i>Interviews, Instagram Surveys, and Collective Intelligence</i> .....	33
<i>Auto-Ethnographic Process</i> .....	36
<b>Chapter 2</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<i>Findings</i> .....	41
<i>Life Online</i> .....	50
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>54</b>
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>58</b>

### List of Figures

Figure 1 Screenshot of a WhatsApp group text, 2020 .....	9
Figure 2 “Elaine Is Almost” by Em Yue, from Otherly series on Instagram, 2021 .....	27
Figure 3 "Ok Google" by Brett Gaylor and Darren Pasemko, screenshot taken in 2021 .....	29
Figure 4 Instagram Interview, 2021 .....	33
Figure 5 Mosaic of episodes on Instagram profile, 2021 .....	50

## Introduction

Food has always played an essential role in my life, located in-between places of inspiration and communal interaction while staying distanced from my professional life. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed me into a slower routine while finishing the first year of my M.A., generating creative frustrations and leading me towards long-winded explorations of food content on Instagram and YouTube. These rabbit holes were among the few things that allowed me to disconnect from these feelings of frustration while allowing me to feel connected to other people.

Throughout the summer of 2020, I turned a critical eye towards the action of scrolling that had kept me going during the first phase of quarantine. Not only did I have a large amount of information to study from (i.e., Instagram accounts, posts, and stories) at my disposal, but I had consistently been following shifts and fractures within the food industry created by the pandemic. My analytical turn towards a part of my personal life led me down a path of creativity that was new for my artistic practice. Since I began my project, multiple media have emerged representing the narratives, shifts, and fractures I have followed. Therefore, depictions of the “new normal” are prevalent within my scrolling done through Instagram. Museums produced series and digital versions of their space.<sup>1</sup> All cultural spaces that were used to hosting events and conferences, now hosted them virtually on Zoom. Television shows and movies set in the present

---

<sup>1</sup> The Metropolitan Museum in New York has two series entitled Met Stories and Silent Tours. You can find them here: <https://www.instagram.com/metmuseum/channel/?hl=en>

mention the pandemic. I am not alone in wanting to portray the difficulties and nuances of a global pandemic.

This project is part of an M.A. in research-creation. As a result, it not only involves producing and creating but also research and writing. This document is a written companion to the video series. In the rest of this introduction, I discuss how I define research-creation, Dr. Natalie Loveless's term polydisciplinamory as a base for this whole project. In the first chapter, I discuss my methods and reflect on the process of producing my project. In the second chapter, I discuss the findings after interviewing and the experience of sharing the final series to my Instagram account.

Sharing food has always been a way to connect with other individuals, to represent oneself to others, to express your community to other communities, and in most cases, to pass down knowledge from generation to generation. I only need to have Wi-Fi on my phone to be connected to my home country with technology. I began collecting food related posts I saw on Instagram that reflected this particular moment in time.

After looking through what I had collected, I separated the accounts into distinct categories. These categories are people who work in agriculture or community-centered efforts, people who work in the food industry (restaurant and bars mainly), people who began food businesses to make a living during the pandemic, and people who share food information and content on a personal level. All the people in these categories use the platform that they have, large or small following, to discuss issues other than standard food content, such as recipes and food. Some of the topics addressed are racism, migration, identity, fostering community, and



handing over their platform to give other people the chance to share content, i.e., make space for others. The people who run these accounts live in three cities: Bogotá, Montreal, and New York.

For each category I developed a questionnaire for the semi-structured interviews and an open-ended research question in order to address the multiple narratives I wished to explore with each participant:

“How are we surviving a global pandemic?

And what do we learn about \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., love, nostalgia, systemic racism, community, identity) in the food landscape, past and present, once we examine it through the vantage point of \_\_\_\_\_? (e.g., COVID-19, transnationality, intersectional feminism)”

I conducted two surveys on Instagram and four semi-structured interviews in total. Following Henry Jenkins’ term *collective intelligence*, the first survey was an open question prompt on Instagram with the question: What do we talk about when we talk about food? The answers I received led me to script the first episode of the series. The second survey was a poll asking whether people watched videos longer than 5 minutes, helping me decide on the format of the final episodes.

I contacted fifteen people in total, but only three confirmed their interest in participating. The first two interviews were with chef and photographer Felipe Duque (who runs the individual food account @pipekitchen), chef Michel Lim of La Belle Tonki (@labelletonki). Then, due to a lack of participants, the third interview was auto ethnographic, and I turned the microphone on myself. The fourth and final interview was with lawyer and business owner Violeta Mejia

(whose account is @\_byvioleta). After conducting each interview, I edited the audio down to the *smallest narrative units* or SNUs (Heinz Emigholz's term) and animated them by looping drawings and rotoscoping. This constitutes the first chapter and production period of the project.

The second chapter is devoted to discussing the findings after the interviews and the experience of sharing the series online. Four different versions of the open-ended research question, with the different intersecting themes, allowed me to explore the findings of the interviews. The intersections between each participant and their individual practice relate back to and revolve around the main question of surviving a global pandemic, the love of food, using Instagram as a means to share knowledge, migration, and community building. *Snacks* ended up being twelve episodes (SNUs) long and was shared on my personal Instagram account, @danielasilvatrujillo<sup>2</sup>. I discuss the public's response and conversations sparked by sharing the episodes.

A year later after creating *Snacks*, I can only say that this is the beginning. The year 2020 was marked by a global pandemic and the relationship we all have with social media has shifted. Food, as well as media, have many iterations. I hope to continue to create work on food and explore how it is a platform for discussing an infinite array of concepts.

---

<sup>2</sup>You can find the whole series in my profile, in the highlights. The link is <https://www.instagram.com/danielasilvatrujillo>.

### How is this project research-creation?

In “Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and ‘Family Resemblances’,” Chapman and Sawchuk describe and deconstruct different methodologies of research-creation. They argue that research-creation actively challenges the notion of good scholarship within the university. Moreover, research-creation allows the researcher to introduce various forms of knowledge into their project. Chapman and Sawchuk discuss how “trying things out” and ‘un-scientific’ intuitive ways of knowing as research are unacknowledged within traditional research models:

“...the role of intuition and “feeling” presents itself as one of the strongest reasons why those who pursue research-creation are committed to the methods they promote, as it is only through working theoretically and artistically, or creatively, with the research topics that they become invested and engaged in a process that is right for them.”<sup>3</sup>

How did certain intuitions open possibilities for my research-creation project? How do un-scientific modes of knowledge inhabit the subject of food as well as the methods I applied to produce this thesis? I could have gone down a more traditional route, collecting data related to food and analyzed it, but instead, I decided to make my media based on interviews. I explored formats of video that produced during the moment I wish to reflect on. By making media, I worked with and through the limitations that came (and still come) while living (and surviving) a global pandemic.

---

<sup>3</sup> Chapman and Sawchuk, “Research-Creation,” 12.

It is essential to define the differences between “research” and “creation,” and someone can use them conjunctly. I understand “research” as the more academic component, i.e., one that involves reading critical theory, taking notes, learning about concepts that pique my interest, and writing about these. Instead, “creation” relates to my artistic practice, thinking through material techniques such as sculpture, drawing, and in this project, video. I also learn about concepts that pique my interest but approach these through a more intuitive route, searching for references, exploring, and sketching, “trying things out,” as Chapman and Sawchuk say.<sup>4</sup>

This project began with turning on a critical research lens towards an activity in my daily life. It also included reading about food studies and learning about the food landscape. In an audio-visual manner, I began to collect examples referencing how I would approach my research-creation project. I defended my proposal and had hopes that I would be able to start shooting soon after. I quickly realized that my modes of research-creation fit in between and around Chapman and Sawchuk’s categories, just like they imply in their text. Some of us, meander creatively, and one category may not be enough for describing our creative process.

This leads me to polydisciplinamory as a mode of research creation. In her book “How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Research-Creation Manifesto,” Dr. Natalie Loveless describes polydisciplinamory as an act of love, following the desire to experiment in unpredictable directions and a fruitful way to reframe the now normative interdisciplinarity debates within the academy.<sup>5</sup> To attempt to analyze everything before trying things out made no

---

<sup>4</sup> Chapman and Sawchuk.

<sup>5</sup> Loveless, *How to Make Art at the End of the World*, 71.

sense to me. I have never worked that way because I know that once the making begins, everything changes.

I am grateful for the time I had because it allowed me to digest a lot of production planning. But that extra time also created a frenzied planning approach that involved me thinking of plans A, B, and C of outcomes. Without creation, I cannot apply the language or concepts I have learned through reading critical theory. As Dr. Loveless discusses love as a primary force that guides initial sparks of curiosity, I identify with her when I say that love is one of the driving forces for this project.

#### Feminism as practice, love as a verb

To truly love, we must learn to mix various ingredients – care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment, and trust, as well as honest and open communication.

- bell hooks<sup>6</sup>

I have to thank Loveless and my cohort colleagues because in the many conversations we have had about our M.A. experience, we concluded that the path towards learning theory involves reading for pleasure. Via this path, I figured out that this project would implement feminist practices. Dr. Loveless also discusses the “who” we will fall for (disciplinarily speaking) and the “how” and the “when” of it all.<sup>7</sup> I fell for food. When? During the pandemic. How? While scrolling through Instagram during March and April 2020. My project intends to

---

<sup>6</sup> hooks, *All about Love*.

<sup>7</sup> Loveless, 70-71.

stimulate discussions and reflections on how we currently survive and work through such a bizarre moment in history. It also wants to discuss the love of food and love as a common concept thrown around when people discuss food. In my research, I was able to work through what that, a labor of love, meant for me. As bell hooks said, “to begin by always thinking of love as an action rather than a feeling is one way in which anyone using the word in this manner automatically assumes accountability and responsibility.”<sup>8</sup> By thinking of love as a verb, I was able to work through a connecting thread between my creative process and my piqued interest in food, of how I would approach my whole project through a lens of love. Part of me tends to hesitate when putting this in words, with fear of sounding unacademic. I put it in words because I am committed to questioning what conducting academic research during a global pandemic means. Themes learned through my reading on food and feminism popped up everywhere when I embarked on turning a critical eye to a topic I loved. bell hooks in “*Theory as Liberatory Practice*” discusses how theory is formulated from experience and comes from a common ground.<sup>9</sup> Food and the Covid-19 pandemic in this project are the general common grounds I intended on exploring. Both paths lead to discussions of identity, representation, migration, community, and security, among others. Food and cooking as something lived in the privacy of your home or as something as public as community-led efforts to fill up community fridges to

---

<sup>8</sup> hooks, *All about Love*, 13.

<sup>9</sup> hooks, “Theory as Liberatory Practice, 11.”

feed the people who lost jobs during challenging times or towards fighting for migrant workers harvesting the food on your plate.



*Figure 1 Screenshot of a WhatsApp group text, 2020*

A friend who recently moved to Holland sent a photo of a Colombian Dole banana. The accompanying text says, “To feel closer to home” (Para sentirme más cerca a casa). There is so much one could say about this image and of her reasoning behind sharing it. Most of the group chat people responded by agreeing that it was terrific to see Colombian fruit somewhere so far away. As someone who had begun to critically question the relationship she had to food and social media platforms, it worked as a detonator. For me, a casual conversation about nostalgia or distance traveled could quickly turn into a discussion about the politics of banana production, or the violence banana companies represent to Colombian history, or even of the virtual tour of

the plantain farm you could take with the link on the banana's sticker. Theory as lived experience also amplified possibilities when having to do the opposite: define my research question. I was able to produce an umbrella question; how do we survive a global pandemic? But felt that by itself encompassed too much. While reading Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch*, I stumbled upon a question the author asks herself: what do we learn about capitalist development, past and present, once we examine it through the vantage-point of a feminist perspective?"<sup>10</sup> I am indebted to Federici's question because it drove me to develop my own. The motifs I am researching are not new, yet they have a detonator within their timelines, a global pandemic. I developed the following open-ended research question:

**How are we surviving a global pandemic?**

**And what do we learn about \_\_\_\_\_** (e.g., love, nostalgia, systemic racism, community, identity) **in the food landscape, past and present, once we examine it through the vantage point of \_\_\_\_\_?** (e.g., COVID-19, transnationality, intersectional feminism)

It made more sense to have a structure that could adjust to the multiple narratives I wanted to explore than to have one question zero in on all participants' lived experiences. With a question structure like that, I could approach the different participants and talk to them about our common ground, food, COVID, and learn about their lived experience.

---

<sup>10</sup>Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 12.



## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical perspectives that enrich and guide this research project are informed by intersectional feminism, transnational media theory, and articulation theory.

### Intersectional Feminism

I am choosing to discuss the individuals I interview and my own experiences through the lens of intersectionality. While there is an extensive amount of literature on this topic, my thesis will be focusing primarily on key figures foundational to understanding how lived experience affects the way we navigate food and migration. Kimberle Crenshaw (Crenshaw 1991a<sup>11</sup> and 1991b<sup>12</sup>) critiques single-axis frameworks and identity politics as failing to ignore intragroup differences. This framework privileges the most privileged members of an oppressed group, thus creating a world of difference in experiences and discrimination. In “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” Crenshaw details how women of color are doubly marginalized, putting them at odds with both men of color and white women. Presently, the term intersectionality is used in different areas. It is used to view individuals, groups, theories through an intersectional framework, to include different power dynamics at play. The term’s genealogy is hard to trace because before Crenshaw coined the

---

<sup>11</sup>Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics.”

<sup>12</sup>Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color.”

name, the 1980's feminist scholars bell hooks and Angela Davis had discussed interlocking systems of discrimination.

To speak of the interviewees and myself, the writings by women of color in “This Bridge called My Back”<sup>13</sup> will be relied on to exemplify the lived experience of intersectionality. This compilation also shows how women of color grapple with their identity and find solidarity through a shared marginality. It will also be an example of an assemblage of writings, written cross-country, published then canceled, but then compiled into a pdf version by users on Tumblr.

As mentioned above, the work of bell hooks is crucial to this whole project. In “All About Love: New Visions,” hooks works with the concept of love as a verb and examines society's failure to provide a model for learning to love. She offers a rethinking about self-love that will bring peace and compassion to our personal and professional lives. Her chapter “*Community: Loving Communion*” allows me to detail the ideas of community building during an ongoing pandemic.<sup>14</sup> Her article, “Theory as Liberatory Practice,” will be relied on for this project's methodology. hooks stresses the importance of theory stemming from the personal, from the lived experience, and that idea is crucial for a project produced during uncertain times.<sup>15</sup>

All four of these scholars not only look at the intersections of their lives, but they also construct, write and speak about theory through their lived experience, from within their communities. In my opinion, a project done within circumstances such as a global pandemic needs a framework that allows for nuance but still holds you accountable for your actions.

---

<sup>13</sup>Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back*.

<sup>14</sup>hooks, *All about Love*.

<sup>15</sup>hooks, “Theory as Liberatory Practice.”

## Transnational Media Theory

Many forms of communication mediate a transnational life. Diasporas rely on these technologies to maintain contact with their community through participation. Transnational Media studies interest me as an entry point into discussing mediating one's identity or sense of cultural identity via these platforms.

Sociologists Avtar Brah and Myria Georgiou inform my interest in the negotiations of transnationality. Avtar Brah has addressed identity, culture, and politics with the intersections of feminism and post-structuralism. Brah examines the complex web of intersections that constitutes the process of migration. Diaspora for Brah is not only a concept used simply to differentiate diasporic communities from non-diasporic or to contextualize diasporic communities. Instead, she centers on "the configurations of power which differentiate diasporas internally as well as situate them in relation to one another."<sup>16</sup> Her interest lies in the ever-changing, multiple narratives within diasporas and diasporic space.

Similarly, Myria Georgiou approaches diasporic transnationalism as less about the place and more about space, considering the possible emergence of contradictory yet viable forms of transnational imagined communities. She also explores the angle of mobility as part of migration, like Brah. However, she centers on how the idea of human assemblages and meetings. Humans in the same place that tend to come together, and at other times disperse, adds to the

---

<sup>16</sup>Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics." 180.

fluctuating narratives of “migrant identity.”<sup>17</sup> Place and space continuously reconfigure themselves, as are the nation-state and the transnational state in the present day. Mediated and interconnected space is a contested space for Georgiou and Brah. The concept of transnational identity is far from fixed; it holds multiple modalities. These modalities allow me to think about the ever-changing transnational mediascapes while conducting my research.<sup>18</sup>

### Articulation Theory, Granularity, and SNUs

Articulation theory (Slack 1996; Slack and Wise 2005) ties together this project's academic and creative components. Dr. Jennifer Slack defines articulation as not just a thing (not just a connection) but a process of creating connections, much in the same way that hegemony is not domination but the process of creating and maintaining consensus or of coordinating interests.<sup>19</sup>

Avtar Brah defines “diasporas as composite formations made up of many disparate journeys and narratives”<sup>20</sup> while Slack and Wise argue that “articulations are neither necessary nor permanent. Identities are thus contingent.”<sup>21</sup> Articulation theory works for questioning the criticality of the nuances and tensions of identity, diaspora, and food. As a method and means of production, it

---

<sup>17</sup>Georgiou, “Identity, Space and the Media,” 17-35.

<sup>18</sup>Due to the limitations posed by pandemic, a low number of participants, and personal time constraints, I was unable to dive into the themes of transnationality and diaspora. Although migration, and being an immigrant was discussed by three of the four participants, the concepts of diaspora and transnationality was not. My intention was to gather up multiple participants of a shared nationality and speak to them about diaspora-related practices in their online lives. It was useful for my auto-ethnographic experience, and thinking through my personal experience as an immigrant in Canada.

<sup>19</sup>Chen et al., *Stuart Hall Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, 115.

<sup>20</sup>Brah, “Diaspora, Border and Transnational Identities,” 180.

<sup>21</sup>Slack and Wise, *Culture and Technology*, 152.

allows assembling material. Moreover, Slack and Wise recall Deleuze and Guattari's term constellation to illustrate the concept of assemblage; it selects, draws together, stakes out, and envelops a territory.<sup>22</sup>

On a similar note, Adrian Miles's term *granularity* and Heinz Emigholz's term *Smallest Narrative Unit* or *SNU* help to envision the building blocks of the media I created. The granularity of media is sensitive to its different contexts. Miles refers to the granularity of video, which is a shot. In "Programmatic Statements for a Facetted Videography," Miles addressed how the most significant feature of a shot is that it is always whole:

"You can't have 'half' a shot... in video, the granularity of the system is such that it can be subdivided and still immanently meaningful – it is still a shot of a gun or a vase of flowers, or someone walking."<sup>23</sup>

You can also cut up interviews into small parts to play with their components. In the Korsakow System chapter, Dr. Matt Soar discusses the *smallest narrative unit* or *SNU*<sup>24</sup> as the building block for non-linear narratives for web documentaries. Both terms helped me conceive the material I created. Both terms helped me conceive the material I created. They provide a practical framework for introducing the nuances and tensions I wish to show, and the multiple modalities of the actors within specific structures. I will discuss the insights on SNUs in further

---

<sup>22</sup>Slack and Wise, 157.

<sup>23</sup>Miles, "Programmatic Statements For a Facetted Videography," 223.

<sup>24</sup>Emigholz, H., "Das schwarze Schamquadrat: Erzählungen und Essays, Zeichnungen und Fotos." Berlin: Martin Smitz Verlag, 2002, cited in Soar, "Making (with) the Korsakow System: Database Documentaries as Articulation and Assemblage," 162–63.

detail in Chapter 1, since the granularity of the media I created is highly sensitive to the moment in which we are living through.

### Literature Review

Dr. Natalie Loveless's concept of polydisciplinamory relates to my practice because of its unpredictability. I follow my desires based on my interests and explore different mediums along the way. Some are tangents, short, and run parallel to the main body of work. Others allow me to sketch out ideas for the main body of work. Loveless states:

“If rampant disciplinary promiscuity demands no commitment (welcoming one-night stands), polydisciplinamory, while in some senses promiscuous, does something different: it asks that multiple and simultaneous committed loves, at multiple levels — manifest and latent, conscious, and unconscious — be taken seriously.”<sup>25</sup>

This promiscuity is the connecting thread between the sites of study and the theoretical framework of this research-creation project.

Sharing food has always been a way to connect with other individuals, to represent oneself to others, to express your community to other communities, and in most cases, to pass down knowledge from generation to generation. You only need to have Wi-Fi on your phone to

---

<sup>25</sup>Loveless, *How to Make Art at the End of the World*, 71.

be connected to your home country with technology. There is a network of individuals who are available at the reach of your fingertips.

As a transnational migrant, living in a combined locality is a reality. They physically experience a new place while staying connected to the home by using social media platforms. Transnational migrants are not only living across multiple spaces, but they do it simultaneously. We are always connected and always online.<sup>26</sup> The intersection of food and digital technology is not new and replacing real-life experiences across physical boundaries through social media, has prevailed.

Historian Warren Belasco has asked: If “we are what we eat,” who are “we” anyway? How many people does it take to comprise a “we”? And in what context?”<sup>27</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has made life take a turn towards the digital and has highlighted systemic issues and imperative changes to society's structure. These fights are not new; fighting systemic racism, lack of representation, and pay inequality issues are not new. During this past year, large food media channels began to pick apart their existing structures, and employees began questioning these power dynamics.<sup>28</sup> Add that during this past year, restaurants have closed, people have lost their jobs, all while having no stable support systems in place. The efforts to consistently question these power dynamics and structures have been consistent through small, individual channels. Increasingly they have been flowing into mainstream media, resulting in individuals,

---

<sup>26</sup>Marino, “Digital Food and Foodways,” 265.

<sup>27</sup>Belasco, *Food*, 32.

<sup>28</sup>The examples are many, one of the most recent examples is this. “Adam Rapoport: Bon Appetit Editor Resigns over ‘Racist Culture.’” *BBC*, June 9, 2020 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52977039>.

channels, and institutions speaking out and holding conversations about issues across the food landscape. These talks highlight the importance of food security, migrant worker rights, diversity and representation, and the prevalent whiteness within the food landscape. There are video series, podcasts, and YouTube series focused on having these conversations, within the context of being in a global pandemic. If we come back to Belasco's question, the "we" in the food industry does not encompass a single entity. In the following chapter, I discuss how I found and categorized multiple groups from the people I follow on Instagram. While I defined the categories because of my creative process, scrolling through the network of people I follow on Instagram, they all talk about similar things through a situated site of knowledge: food.

When breaking down the research questions mentioned above, three sites of study emerge and intersect food studies, platform studies, and animation studies.

### Food Studies

Food, a necessity for all of us, has been studied endlessly and through numerous lenses within the fields of anthropology, sociology, history, cultural studies, medicine, and business.<sup>29</sup> Not only does the study of food encompass cooking and eating habits, but it also touches on issues as diverse as health, sustainability, food safety, and animal rights.

---

<sup>29</sup>Watson and Caldwell, "Introduction," 1.



Historian Warren Belasco's structure of food choices has served my research inquiry as a base. Belasco argues that food choices result from a negotiation between three competing categories: the consumer's identity, tied to the psychological, cultural, and demographic determinants of what and how we eat, convenience, provided by the global food industry, and a sense of responsibility and awareness of the consequences of what we eat.<sup>30</sup> I use all three of these categories to think about food, the participants I interview, and social media consumption. All three categories can be used to describe the consistent use of social media platforms during a global pandemic.

Media scholar Purnima Mankekar's study "India Shopping"<sup>31</sup> on Indian shops in California discusses various sides of identity and representation I wish to discuss in my project. While it is an ethnographic study of supermarkets that only cater to the Indian diaspora, Mankekar is interested in how Indian grocery stores are particular social spaces that enable us to study the reconfiguration of gender, class, and race in an interconnected world.<sup>32</sup> Mankekar also discusses how these supermarkets mimic Indian markets using decorations and music to make the customers' experience more complete and feel more at home. While some customers are not shopping there because they are from the Indian diaspora, this emulation uses visual codes to experience a different space—a clear example of cultural items used as a means of representation. Many diasporic customers who buy ingredients and items from these supermarkets do so for individual expression, represent themselves to their community, and use

---

<sup>30</sup>Belasco, *Food*, 7.

<sup>31</sup>Mankekar, "India Shopping: Indian Grocery Stores and Transnational Configurations of Belonging," 197-214.

<sup>32</sup>Mankekar, 198.

these objects to describe and share their ethnic group to the dominant group (in this case, white North Americans).

Caldwell discusses the study of the gentrification and domestication of food (Caldwell, 2004).<sup>33</sup> While transnational citizens assimilate to their new surroundings, so do different foods and brands. Transnational citizens make traditional plates more malleable while mixing old and new ingredients while minority groups and their foods have become gentrified. The globalization of food, food production, and the political economy of food (Belasco, 2005<sup>34</sup>; Bestor, 2000<sup>35</sup>; Miller, 1998<sup>36</sup>) have now gained more importance as different countries became more easily connected and markets opened. So has the vital concern of gender politics in food production (Enloe, 2014<sup>37</sup>). Food studies, as mentioned above, becomes increasingly interdisciplinary.

Since the 1980s, the entanglement of food and media has been on the rise. Chefs are now celebrities, and food has become an influence in pop culture and its economic influence. Food and its chefs have attracted media attention, from traditional forms of media to emerging media (Lebesco and Naccarato, 2018<sup>38</sup>) to the use of various digital media platforms to shape the messages about food, food production, and consumption (de Solier, 2018<sup>39</sup>). This aspect of food

---

<sup>33</sup> Caldwell, "Domesticating the French Fry: McDonald's and Consumerism in Moscow," 180-196.

<sup>34</sup> Belasco, "Food and the Counterculture: A Story of Bread and Politics," 217-234.

<sup>35</sup> Bestor, "How Sushi Went Global," 13-20.

<sup>36</sup> Miller, "Coca-Cola: A Black Sweet Drink from Trinidad," 54-69.

<sup>37</sup> Enloe, "Going Bananas! Where Are Women in the International Politics of Bananas?," 211-249.

<sup>38</sup> Kathleen LeBesco and Peter Naccarato, eds., *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Food and Popular Culture* (London, UK ; New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

<sup>39</sup> de Solier, "Tasting the Digital: New Food in Media," in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Food and Popular Culture* (London, UK; New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 54-65.

studies interests me less. While my scrolling process began with chefs and media platforms on Instagram, the people I interviewed are not celebrities. Instead, they have smaller followings.

This last entanglement has become ever more present in social media to share, exchange, belong, and even show off with your networks. Singe Rousseau’s book “Food and Social Media: You Are What You Tweet”<sup>40</sup> discusses both the positive and negative aspects of online platforms' use to exchange food information. Both Tania Lewis’s studies on food and cooking in a digital world (Lewis and Phillipov, 2015<sup>41</sup>; Lewis, 2018<sup>42</sup>) and Sara Marino’s studies<sup>43</sup> on video-based platforms (Skype) to share culinary practices among transnational families while negotiating their lives in a new country inform my research.

### Platform Studies

Today, platforms are intrinsically intertwined within our daily lives. Web 2.0 gradually changed from being an infrastructure for anonymous, networked communication to collaborate and build communities to offering a wide range of services.<sup>44</sup> Now, to be social online has numerous different meanings, and it means occupying other spaces. Social media, or Social Networking Sites (S.N.S.), were constructed based on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, allowing the creation of content and its exchange while forming a new

---

<sup>40</sup>Rousseau, *Food and Social Media*.

<sup>41</sup>Lewis and Phillipov, “Food/Media,” 207-211.

<sup>42</sup>Lewis, “Digital Food,” 212-228.

<sup>43</sup>Marino, “Digital Food and Foodways,” 263 - 279.

<sup>44</sup>van Dijck, “Engineering Sociality in a Culture of Connectivity,” 3.

layer through which people live and organize their lives.<sup>45</sup> These sites are not bound to one physical location and are therefore available globally. Users, while on their phones, can interact with others with their online social network profiles. The widespread concept of sharing content online, be it for social, cultural, and professional activities, has inundated our daily routines.

Studies of social media explore numerous subjects from various angles. Currently, 3.6 billion internet users use social media, and 2.6 billion of those users today use Facebook, making it the most popular social media platform worldwide.<sup>46</sup> It would make sense then that most social media studies are on Facebook. More recently, studies have expanded further out to other popular social media platforms, including Instagram and Twitter. Instagram's user base is still half of Facebook's, but it recently surpassed 1 billion users, due largely to the pandemic.<sup>47</sup> In a study done by the Pew Center in April 2021, they reported that 73% of Instagram users say they use the app multiple times per day.<sup>48</sup> Based on U.S. users, the Pew Research Center states that Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok are highly popular among young adults, with 71% of 18 to 29 year-olds saying they use Instagram.<sup>49</sup> In a marketing blog post done by Hootsuite (a social media management platform), as of October 2020, 25–34-year-olds represent the largest advertising audience on Instagram.<sup>50</sup> No matter the demographics, users use social media networks to dive into their interests. Research commissioned by Facebook (who owns Instagram)

---

<sup>45</sup> van Dijck, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Clement, "Most Used Social Media Platform," *Statista*, August 21, 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>.

<sup>47</sup> Enberg, "Global Instagram Users 2020 - Insider Intelligence Trends, Forecasts & Statistics."

<sup>48</sup> Pew Research Center, "Social Media Use in 2021."

<sup>49</sup> Pew Research Center.

<sup>50</sup> Sehl, "Instagram Demographics in 2021."

found that 91% of users use Instagram to follow an interest. The top interests being travel (45%), music (44%) and food and drink (43%), but many more down the line.<sup>51</sup> Instagram users will follow accounts based on their content alone if it resonates with them. They want to dive deeper into their interests and discover, learn, connect with a community, hear from the people and business that inspire them.<sup>52</sup> I chose Instagram as the platform to conduct my research and share my project because I use to connect with the people I know, the places I have lived in and meet new people. Through this network, I have met people and started conversations that have concluded in creative projects. Media scholars such as danah boyd, José van Dijck, and Tarleton Gillespie have studied and discussed the uses and affordances of platforms while mentioning their interest in the concept of “networked publics.” boyd defines this concept as follows:

Networked publics are publics that are restructured by networked technologies. As such they are simultaneously (1) the space constructed through networked technologies and (2) the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice.<sup>53</sup>

This definition encompasses the interest the media scholars mentioned above have in explaining the influence platforms have over their users. When bringing forth the notion of networked publics, boyd acknowledges that she embraces how networked technologies extend and complicate the public. Similarly, Tarleton Gillespie has stated that defining the complex dynamics of platforms is “deceptively easy” because the answer tends to fall into the binary of

---

<sup>51</sup>Facebook, “How to Take Your Instagram Content to the Next Level.”

<sup>52</sup>Facebook.

<sup>53</sup>boyd, “Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications,” 39.

either inherently good and useful or inherently evil, too influential. I agree with both boyd and Gillespie that “to advance the conversation, there needs to be more nuanced ways to examine platforms beyond simply acknowledging that they shape user participation.”<sup>54</sup> Especially after the shifts in usage and meeting user needs that occurred during a global pandemic.

Similarly, José van Dijck has asked critical questions about online shaped identity and the consequences of imposed connectivity on people’s online identities.<sup>55</sup> In a study on Facebook and LinkedIn, Van Dijck analyzes the differences in online identities when catering to a personal network or a professional one, how people self-present for future positions, and how they standardize the online promotion of self. In a different study, Van Dijk discussed how “users “negotiate” whether and how to appropriate [the social media platforms] in their quotidian habits.”<sup>56</sup> Media theorist Dr. Axel Bruns defines this new class of “produser” as creators who are also users and distributors.<sup>57</sup> Undoubtedly, we know that platforms do not just deliver content; they retain the content and make it continually available. Yet, there are still many questions regarding ownership and agency of this, most generally, amateur content, and why users migrate between social media platforms.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to the mentioned scholars, Henry Jenkins is another scholar that informs my research on platforms. Jenkins studies the intersections of how media enables cooperative modes

---

<sup>54</sup>Clark et al., “Participations| Part 5: PLATFORMS,” 1447.

<sup>55</sup>van Dijck, ““You Have One Identity,””199-215.

<sup>56</sup>van Dijck, “Engineering Sociality in a Culture of Connectivity,” 4.

<sup>57</sup>Bruns, “Produsage: A Working Definition | Produsage.Org,” *last modified* December 31, 2007, <https://produsage.org/produsage>.

<sup>58</sup>Clark et al., “Participations| Part 5: PLATFORMS,” 1446 – 1473.

of reception, online user groups, and collective intelligence. These groups, he states, have “history, traditions, ethical norms, shared values and identities, and collective goals and projects.” in his book *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, Jenkins makes a case for individuals sharing expertise towards shared goals and objectives by referencing Pierre Lévy’s concept of collective intelligence, “No one knows everything, but everyone knows something, all knowledge resides in humanity.”<sup>59</sup> Individuals, Jenkins states, do not create a collective intelligence with media appliances but “through the bits and fragments that they have extracted from the ongoing flow of media.”<sup>60</sup> The works of the mentioned scholars impart knowledge to my current inquiries on producing, participating, and exchanging information within social media applications, Instagram, and Facebook.

### Animation Studies

In *Animated Documentary*, Dr. Anabelle Honess Roe explores the long history of hybridization of animation and documentary. Given that animation tends to be humorous, tied to fantasies, while documentary as serious, rhetoric and imparting evidence. Roe defines this hybrid as “a marriage of opposites.”<sup>61</sup> Documentary and non-fiction films have structures used to explain the main narrative and use evidence and testimonies shared with the viewer, backing up the story with facts. Talking head interviews are used in documentary films for honesty and

---

<sup>59</sup>Jenkins, “Spoiling Survivor,” 25-58.

<sup>60</sup>Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*.

<sup>61</sup>Honess Roe, *Animated Documentary*, 1.

authenticity.<sup>62</sup> “The body is central to how we gain knowledge from those interviews,” so what does it imply when the human body is replaced by animation when there is no tangible presence of a body in animated interviews?<sup>63</sup> Roe’s question is important because it considers the possibility of animation as a form of erasing already marginalized voices. Roe reminds us, citing Steven Connor, that bodies produce voices, but voices can also produce bodies.<sup>64</sup> Through Connor’s *vocalic body*, a secondary body formed and sustained by the fantasy and autonomous operations of voice, Roe proves that animation becomes the solution for a demanded absence.<sup>65</sup>

In some cases, animation is employed as a creative solution to illustrate absence. In other cases, because of external limitations: anonymity, inaccessibility, and distance, animation is the solution. In this project, the partial absence of bodies stems from two sides. On one side, the pandemic, while being the subject matter, is also a limitation. Online interviews’ conditions depend on a solid Wi-Fi connection from both parts.

What the animation adds lies in its power to suggest and imply ideas and themes through its expressive capabilities. Where the body might be able to non-verbally communicate ‘pain, pride, doubt’ (Nichols, 1993: 187), animation can also convey emotional states and attitudes.<sup>66</sup>

On the other side, animation was a personal creative direction, continuing prior work I have done. My drawing's vocalic body creates a conversation between the audio and my

---

<sup>62</sup>Honess Roe, 76.

<sup>63</sup>Honess Roe, 76.

<sup>64</sup>Honess Roe, 78.

<sup>65</sup>Honess Roe, 78–95.

<sup>66</sup>Honess Roe, 96.



interpretation and translation of these conversations. It is important to note that I use drawing with the utmost caution, showing how I understood what was said and the things I found along the way. I am aware that these are my ways of imagining how to visualize the flickering moments of more extended conversations. If the clips' duration were to be longer, my style and interpretation would shift as well. I also included the interviewees in the exchange and creation of drawings, asking them how they imagined certain scenes or sharing insight into how things looked like for them.



*Figure 2 “Elaine Is Almost” by Em Yue, from Otherly series on Instagram, 2021*

The National Film Board of Canada has an Interactive section in which they have explicitly designed social media short film projects. Most of these films range between three to five minutes in length. There are two examples that I found the most helpful when designing my project. The first is “OK Google<sup>67</sup>,” a film by Brett Gaylor and Darren Pasemko, shared on the NFB’s Facebook page under Social Media Shorts. “When a father finds a year’s worth of his

---

67 [https://www.nfb.ca/interactive/ok\\_google\\_en/](https://www.nfb.ca/interactive/ok_google_en/)

five-year-old son’s Google voice searches, he inadvertently realizes there might just be a new member of his family.”<sup>68</sup> The use of quick animations to portray the mistranslations between a five-year-old’s questions and the Google Search results is outstanding. The second is “Otherly<sup>69</sup>,” a series of seven short documentaries premiering on Instagram Stories. It is the first collaboration between the National Film Board of Canada and POV Spark.<sup>70</sup> “Using universal themes like love, inclusion, and loss as entry points, seven female, non-binary, and genderqueer creators have crafted films that are at once timeless and yet by definition of their form, ephemeral.”<sup>71</sup> This series explores viewing through stories, exploring a different format than most social media projects. The documentaries are vertical and broken up into small segments, which I found innovative yet risky. Risky because many users, including myself, do not watch stories; we click through them. Although I did not like the viewing format, I found this project to resonate with what I intend on working with: the limitations of a social media platform. Instagram users view stories more than they interact with posts. Otherly’s posts are related to the stories but do not repeat content. They use all the different components of Instagram to their advantage.

One of the shorts, “Elaine is Almost,” a documentary by filmmaker Em Yue “was shot and animated over a year. It explores the unconditional love between siblings and uses live-action mixed with animated sequences.”<sup>72</sup> It has served as a reference for animation and drawing to convey emotion rather than literal translations of spoken word to images.

---

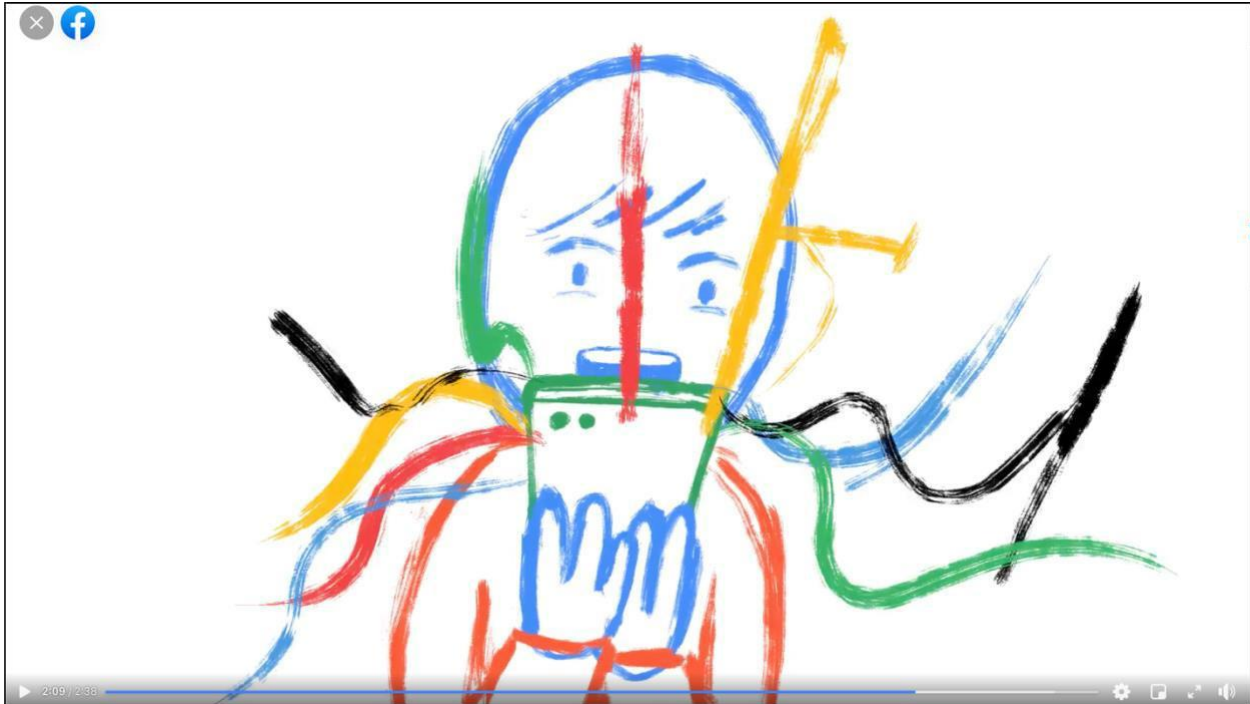
<sup>68</sup>National Film Board of Canada, “OK Google.”

<sup>69</sup><https://www.instagram.com/otherlyseries/?hl=en>

<sup>70</sup>National Film Board of Canada, “About | Otherly.”

<sup>71</sup>National Film Board of Canada.

<sup>72</sup>Otherly Series and Em Yue, “Elaine Is Almost | Otherly.”



*Figure 3 "Ok Google" by Brett Gaylor and Darren Pasemko, screenshot taken in 2021*

## **Chapter 1**

### **Production**

The first entanglement is through scrolling and collecting content about food on Instagram. I began to collect content while being stuck at home during the first phase of quarantine in Montreal during March, April, and May 2020. I started compiling media related to food, from Bon Appetit, a food magazine from the Condé Nast world with a vast media presence on YouTube. As the pandemic began, the leading chefs on the channel started speaking out about

pay inequality between the staff, specifically between BIPOC staff and their male counterparts, and about the racist tweets of ex-Editor in Chief Adam Rapoport. This instance of speaking out is one of the many ripples in the already complex food landscape. As the pandemic settled in, cracks started to show themselves in the food industry. By March 2020, restaurants closed, and those who remained open had to implement takeout and third-party delivery services to stay in business. Restaurant staff exposed the lack of any financial support system, and “consumers were shocked to learn of the high cuts the third-party services like Grub Hub, Door Dash, and Uber Eats gobbled up.”<sup>73</sup>

Baking, banana bread, and sourdough bread also took over. Stores and supermarkets ran out of flour and yeast. The homemade foods began trending and popping up over social media. In uncertain times, the comfort, and the chance to unplug prevailed. While sourdough is a challenge, banana bread is easy to make and is comfort food. People turned to these recipes to fight boredom and uncertainty.<sup>74</sup> This clash between privileged comfort and systemic inequality is not new to me. Coming from a country that has been at war for more than 50 years, I am aware of the privilege I have to say that I baked bread and looked at Instagram during the first phases of quarantine. During my scrolling, I lived through Colombia’s first phase of quarantine, a six-month-long lockdown, vicariously through the people I follow. People responded to these viral trends. We turn to our comfort foods in uncertain times, and this is not the same dish for everyone. In uncertain times, sad times, we turn to what allows us to feel control over our lives,

---

<sup>73</sup>Lin, “A Chronological List Of 2020’s Most Unforgettable Food Trends | HuffPost Canada Food & Drink.”

<sup>74</sup>Scinto, “The Real Reason Why Banana Bread Exploded During Quarantine.”

as a means for communication and expression, as a coping mechanism; cooking and food.<sup>75</sup> I began collecting posts and stories that reflected this moment in time. After looking through who I followed and asking why I was interested in these accounts more than others, I separated the accounts into distinct categories. These are people who work in agriculture or community-centered efforts, people who work in the food industry (restaurant and bars mainly), people who began food businesses to make a living during the pandemic, and people who share food information and content on a personal level. All the people in these categories use the platform that they have, large or small following, to discuss issues other than standard food content, such as recipes and food. Some of the topics addressed are racism, migration, identity, fostering community, and handing over their platform to give other people the chance to share content, i.e., make space for others. The people who run these accounts live in some of the cities I have lived in: Bogotá, Montreal, and New York. I ended up sorting through fifteen accounts in total; some of them included people I knew. Because of the differences in these categories, I created four different questionnaires that served as a base for the interviews I wished to conduct. There was a set of questions that were intended for any category and then there was a specific set of questions for each category. These questions revolved around the practices of the account owner, the purpose of their project, the interactions with their public and their personal experience during the pandemic.

---

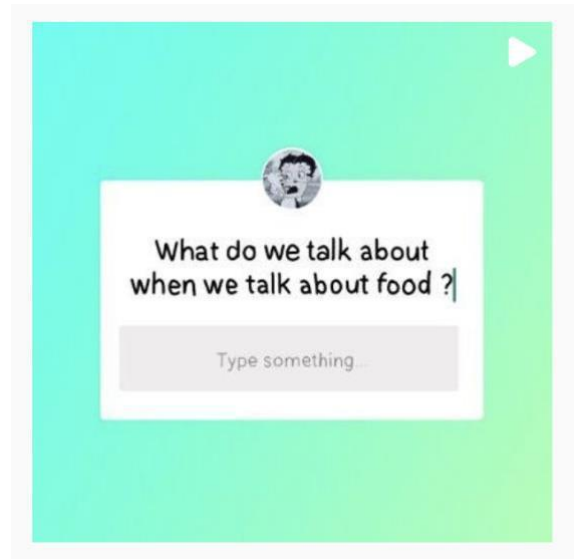
<sup>75</sup>Smith, “Banana Bread Is Having a Moment.”

The reason I categorized these accounts was a way to steer away from the style of a grand narrative of history and instead look at the smallest narrative units. Traditional structures of media that try to document historic moments direct their argumentative systems to big issues, big characters, and big spaces.<sup>76</sup> Focusing on small places uncovers multiple layers of historical and political complexities.<sup>77</sup> Technology enables our social worlds. In this project the smallest narrative units are where these multiple narratives of the pandemic are, and they converge on a social media platform where the participants converge. The smallest narrative units could reconfigure if someone else were to replicate this project, or even if I were to adjust who I follow on Instagram. Therefore, I tell the story through my network and show what we can learn of the food landscape through the vantage point of the COVID-19 pandemic.

---

<sup>76</sup>Zimmerman and De Michiel, *Open Space New Media Documentary*, 17.

<sup>77</sup>In their book “*Open Space New Media Documentary: A Toolkit for Theory and Practice*,” Patricia Zimmerman and Helen De Michiel discuss the importance of small places as a site of study for new media documentary practices.



*Figure 4 Instagram Interview, 2021*

### Interviews, Instagram Surveys, and Collective Intelligence

I continued to save things, so collecting content never ceased. After categorizing the accounts, I was interested in and had ethics approved, I contacted different account owners and only got confirmation from two. I contacted the following accounts: @pipekitchen (individual account of Felipe Duque); @kilimbo\_chocolate (a chocolate business in Bogotá); @byvioleta\_ (a cinnamon roll business started during the beginning of the pandemic in Bogotá); @labelletonki (a Montreal restaurant); @doofmagazine (a Montreal based food magazine); @bakersagainstracism (a baker collective based in Washington D.C./ New York), and @harvestingfreedom (a migrants-rights collective from Toronto). Only three confirmed their interest in participating. Some never responded, and others responded with interest but have been busy, and scheduling proved difficult. The participants ended up being Felipe Duque, Michel

Lim from La Belle Tonki, and Violeta Mejia of By Violeta. Each interview I conducted lasted around an hour. I completed the first two interviews during January and February 2021, the third at the beginning of March, where I interviewed myself, and the final one at the end of March.

In tandem with the first two interviews, I began to design the project I intended to share via my personal Instagram account. Following Henry Jenkins' term collective intelligence, I decided to conduct two different surveys on Instagram. Although research-creation possibilities are endless, there are limitations when you produce content for a specific platform. It made sense to ask the public what it likes while keeping my creative process. Collective intelligence in specific networked publics has shared values and collective goals. "No one knows everything, but everyone knows something."<sup>78</sup> In this case, they have collective attention spans and view information differently than any other public on a different social media platform.

I have 984 people who follow me on Instagram<sup>79</sup>; 58.8% of people are from Colombia, 19% are in the United States, 7.2% are in Canada, and the rest are from Germany or Brazil. 53 % of my followers are women, and 47 % are men, giving me a balanced audience to ask questions. I conducted a survey on Instagram asking the question: what do we talk about when we talk about food? I asked the question in both Spanish and English, which resulted in more people participating. I received around 50 responses. I reposted the answers accompanied by photographs that I had on my phone and my drive this past year. I searched for pictures that I

---

<sup>78</sup>Jenkins, *Spoiling Survivor*, 2006, 25–58.

<sup>79</sup>At the beginning of the year 2021, I opened a second account @danielasilvatrujillo, with the intention of posting only my drawings and illustrations. I used my main account @waavycrybaby to conduct a survey and a poll but shared my final videos to @danielasilvatrujillo.



thought related to the responses I received. With the answers to this survey, I decided to write the script for the first post of my series, entitled “What do we talk about when we talk about food?” It made sense to have a post explaining where I was coming from to contextualize the series. I imagined my project to be a series of short videos that reflected parts of the different conversations I would have with the participants.

After the first interview and the survey, I decided to shift from film to drawing and animating portions of the interviews. Asking my participants to do work from afar, which had been the original plan for maintaining the social distancing measures, convinced me less and less the more I thought about it. People are never as excited or committed to a project that is not their own. I had enough material to use as references for my drawings, either from the interviews' recordings or the content they had posted. Also, sticking with known (and loved!) mediums allowed me to think less about learning new creative processes and the learning curve that comes with that and more on how to finish a project. In October 2020, Montreal became a red zone and went back to being in lockdown, and then the government implemented a curfew in January 2021. Not much filming could be done with these measures, making drawing an exciting alternative. It would allow me to have a conversation with the things mentioned in the interviews. It would allow me to take the SNU's out from the interviews and piece them together, straying away from a linear, grand narrative.

The second poll I conducted was again, done through Instagram, where I asked my followers whether they watched videos on Instagram that last longer than 5 minutes. When thinking of creating content for a platform, there are limitations and dimensions to keep in mind,

not only in aspect ratios and size but in duration. Instagram lets you post videos, but one longer than a minute immediately makes it an IGTV video, meaning the viewer must click on a Keep Watching button, which means that you depend on people who want to watch longer content. To the question: Do you watch videos on IG longer than 5 minutes? 26% answered Yes, and 74% of people answered No. 300 people saw the story I posted, only 60 people responded, meaning that engagement with anything longer than a minute is shallow. I also asked this same question in a couple of group chats<sup>80</sup>. Every person said that unless they are extremely interested, they do not watch long videos. I asked them what being interested meant. Some said that the video looked interesting or that they liked that account's content. Others answered that even if they viewed that account's content, it was unlikely that they would watch it. Comparing the answers to the survey and the content I saved, I realized that most of the videos were shorter than 5 minutes. The longest videos are well-produced short videos by big companies such as Nike or The New York Times. My hunch about producing shorter videos coincided with these answers. It made sense to use this information to my advantage and create small snippets of content, joining the audio from the interviews and animations.

### Auto-Ethnographic Process

I contacted people who live in different cities and that have various social distancing measures. Colombia is open, and people are just getting back to their lives and jobs. I believe this

---

<sup>80</sup>WhatsApp Group Chat Conversation with author, January – February 2021.

to be why so many people never answered or showed interest in being interviewed. In an auto-ethnographic turn of events, I decided to turn the mic on myself. I used the questions I had written out for the four categories of participants, going through them all while I had the mic on.

At first, speaking out loud felt a bit ridiculous, but I had the questions as guides. There are a lot of questions that do not necessarily pertain to my practice, because I do not run a food account on Instagram. I enjoyed answering the questions pertaining to transnationality, diasporic subjectivity and the use of Instagram.

I answered the questions regarding to the use of Instagram and the interaction with the public to certain posts I had shared, and my experience with Instagram. I shared how to make pineapple water, which is a something that most people do in Colombia after cutting up a pineapple. You put the skins in water, boil them and that makes pineapple water. I like to do it because it uses up all of the fruit and wanted to share. I had a lot of different reactions to the post and I recorded myself talking about the experience of having short conversations surrounding the same topic. There were multiple entry points to this same post, and it depended on who was viewing. Colombian followers answered with more additions to the recipe, foreigners reacted with curiosity and interest.

For the questions about transnationality and diaspora, I recorded myself while remembering things about my past, about moving to unfamiliar places and discovering new foods. I narrated a story about trying peanut butter for the first time, and this isn't the first time I recall that story, but there were new stories which had come out with Duque and Lim in their interviews. With Duque we had talked about discovering New York through food, and when I

asked myself about getting to know my current city, Montreal, through food, I was reminded of an encounter with known brands in an Asian supermarket near my house. While exploring my neighborhood, I found Latino brands in the middle of Asian brands. I discussed diaspora-related practices when talking about looking for Colombian foods in faraway places, and how the use of visual codes (mentioned by Purnima Mankekar) does enact this feeling of home for locals and enact a different country for foreigners. Colombian's love of Jackson Heights is not gratuitous, there are visual, spatial codes that are replicated in these restaurants in order to transport you to a specific place. I would have used this interview as a base to discuss Colombian diasporic practices, if I had gathered more Colombians living internationally.

In the end, my interview lasted around an hour. Most of the audio is hard to edit because of the time I took to answer each question, the fumbling and repeating myself. There are moments of self-awareness where I repeat myself. This process gave me a new perspective on being interviewed, and if my questions were clear for the person on the other side. Through this process, my own lived experience of the pandemic was included in this project, highlighting my personal interest in intimacy and the infinite iterations food has.

### Granularity and SNUs

I designed the title scene: an animation of two hands opening a box of donuts, and the title of the series, Snacks, appearing in blue. I thought about how looking at food content makes you hungry and how sound effects are vital in enticing a viewer. I added a crunchy eating sound at the end and completed an introduction scene for the first posts.

After conducting the interviews, I edited the audio and chose the parts that I liked the most. I ended up choosing around 20 minutes of each interview. I then edited down these 20 minutes into smaller segments. There are so many moments from the three interviews that it was hard to choose which ones to animate. Adrian Miles' term, granularity, appropriated from hypertext, addresses the smallest meaningful unit within a video, the shot. The granularity of media is sensitive to its different contexts.

Choosing the length of the audio was the biggest challenge. Animations could be shorter or even looped, hinting at what the phrase talks about, playing alongside it instead of illustrating exactly. This fluidity of the medium is what made the work easy to plan out. The smallest narrative units are, in fact, snacks, bite-sized stories and moments that revolve around food. These units, though, must be coherent. How small can these smallest narrative units be? Most range between thirty and sixty seconds to stick with the platform's limitations but still use coherent audio segments. The SNUs can be *too* short. I initially had the idea that with our ever-shortening attention spans, the SNUs could be as short as eight seconds, but the context of the moment or phrase is lost when these are cut down so short. The first set of edited SNUs ranged between five to fifteen seconds long, but they lost their strength and context. I had to go back and lengthen them to what I ended up using. Since the audio SNUs had to be longer than expected, I could play around with the animation length, by looping and repeating motions as it accompanied the audio.

Dr. Natalie Loveless's concept of polydisciplinamory as promiscuity, falls into place here, at this moment of production. Jumping between, drawing, writing down notes and feelings, is polydisciplinamory in practice. I kept notes and drew to take note of what was said. For the

animations to be coherent and understood by the public, I asked several people how they visualized phrases and concepts. For example, I was having a tough time visualizing how to animate the concept of "opportunities in life," a phrase in one of the videos where Mejia discusses why she donates a portion of her earnings to specific causes. I asked three people whose suggestions brought me closer to the idea of drawing multiple doors opening.

Honess Roe's concept *vocalic body* came back with Mejia's SNUs. These were the hardest to illustrate because she speaks about Colombia's current political and social situations. She sells organic products from the Cauca department in Colombia. This specific region has been suffering for many years because of the armed conflict. Mejia buys her products from farmer co-ops that "have found a way of livelihood away from the conflict."<sup>81</sup> When thinking about demanded absence in animation as Honess Roe puts it, I chose to use photographs instead of drawing. I decided to use photographs posted by these co-ops on their official Facebook pages to not erase a living and breathing marginalized community.

Because of time constraints I was not able to animate the moments where Duque and I talk about feeling at home when in Jackson Heights, Queens, and where I discuss finding Latino products in an Asian supermarket in Montreal. These audio SNUs are edited but were not animated because of time constraints. It is in these two instances that the transnational concepts that Purina Mankekar discusses regarding identity and representation, a feeling of being at home at a distance, come out in my project. Unfortunately, I had to choose between these two and

---

<sup>81</sup>Violeta Mejia (owner of By Violeta) in conversation with the author, March 18, 2021.

other audios that would complement the flow of the mini-series. I do, however, believe that this series can be continued and there are always more stories to be told.

## Chapter 2

### Findings

In the four interviews I conducted, the third interviewee being myself, I found that each one has a different approach to food but meets at specific points. With the question structure I designed I could now compare the responses of each participant. **What do we learn about \_\_\_\_\_ in the food landscape, past and present once we examine it through the vantage point of \_\_\_\_\_?** This question structure can be filled in depending on the intersections where the participants coincide.

Felipe Duque is a Colombian artist and chef that lives in New York. He started an account on Instagram, @pipekitchen, in March 2020 that focused on combining his artistic interests (film and photography) with his culinary background. Duque walked me through how he came to New York, his experience studying cooking in Bogotá, memories related to food, why he began his account, his trips to Jackson Heights for Colombian food, among other things.

Michel Lim is the chef and co-owner of Vietnamese restaurants La Belle Tonki and La Belle Tonkinoise. He is also a professional dancer. The Belle Tonki account is full of posts of him and his staff dancing during this past year. It also reflects the results of constant readaptations they had to implement. Lim is of Cambodian descent and was born in Montreal; he says he has been surrounded by food his whole life. We talked about his relationship to food

since an early age, his professional dancing career, how he ended up owning two restaurants only three years ago, cultural appropriation in the food world, the hip hop mentality in cooking, and many more things.

Violeta Mejia is a lawyer from Bogotá, Colombia. She began her business during the first months of the pandemic, around April and May 2020. She has never worked in anything related to food and started her business organically by selling one product: cinnamon rolls, to friends and family through Instagram and WhatsApp. She now sells an ice cream too. She teamed up with an ice cream shop owned by one of her friends and created a cinnamon roll gelato. Mejia donates a percentage of By Violeta's earnings to social causes. She has teamed up with a couple of different ones (Bogota's Food Bank, for example) before settling on Fundación BiblioSeo. This organization focuses on connectivity, campaigning to bring Internet and technology (mainly phones and smart tablets) to rural areas in Colombia, to facilitate educational processes from a distance. Her brother travels around the country, and through his connections to local farmers, she also sells organic honey and coffee from the Cauca region of Colombia.

What do we learn about exploring new cultures in the food landscape, past and present once we examine it through the vantage point of migration?

Duque, Lim, and I talk about food memories, be it of someone or a place. We also talked about exploring our cities through food. Duque spoke about moving to New York and becoming more intrigued when he learned about foods from diverse cultures. His love of food appeared



when he was younger when he watched cooking shows on television with his grandfather. Now, after going to culinary school and working in the industry, he still feels intrigued and wants to explore other people's cuisines through his account.

I share similar memories with Duque, specifically about New York and our relationship to Jackson Heights, a neighborhood sometimes referred to as Little Colombia in Queens, NY. The way he describes his favorite restaurant is the way I describe Jackson Heights. It feels like home. The details, how this particular place is decorated, what it smells like, what you hear, are related to a feeling and an emulation of home and comfort.

When I moved to Montreal, I found comfort and comfort foods in an unexpected place; an Asian supermarket called Marché Orientale. The market sells many different foods from different Asian countries and carries certain products catered to other minority groups. Every time I walk in, I find something that reminds me of home: granadilla (a fruit from the passionflower family), Colombian coffee, soursop juice, or cornmeal. These moments of comfort are necessary when navigating new cultures, new cities. They are grounding. The video where I talk about the first time I ate peanut butter is the only video that alludes to the other side of immigrating, the jarring moments when you realize you are in an unfamiliar place. I was expecting a sweet caramel like spread called *arequipe* and received a salty peanut spread instead.

Lim talked about trying foods from diverse cultures across Montreal when he was younger. When he started dancing at 14, he practiced in community centers around the city, and after practice, he would eat snacks at convenience stores. He learned about Indian *samosas* and

Salvadorian *pupusas* through the different *deppaneurs*<sup>82</sup> around the city. He also grew up learning about other foods through his friends' cooking.

I realized I expected Lim to address cultural appropriation in food negatively. I had seen the rise of racism towards Asians since the pandemic's start through the accounts I followed and I asked Lim about racism during the past year. Lim did not talk about specific instances regarding discrimination. Although he did not refer to racism specifically, he did talk about the decision he and his business partner made of not selling Pad Thai and General Tso at their restaurant. Lim explained that there will always be customers if you serve these two dishes because they are the safe choices when someone does not know much about Vietnamese food. “People will come in and ask for it without looking at the menu.” Lim’s business partner Michel Nguyen said that it would always be a point of comparison between their restaurant and other Asian restaurants. Lim is of Cambodian descent, but Nguyen and his mother, the restaurant's founder, are Vietnamese. He wants to serve innovative food that is not part of a typical Vietnamese restaurant. Ultimately, Lim, Michel Nguyen, and Mikhael Lopez want their restaurant to be something other than a traditional representation of Vietnamese culture. They want people to explore different things when thinking about Vietnamese food, not just the safe choices.

Lim said, “people need to relax,” when referring to ownership of certain dishes. He also said food is just cultural appropriation all the time. He referred to the historical journeys of

---

<sup>82</sup>The word for corner store in Montreal.

ingredients and how they are used differently depending on where you are. From what I understood, food for Lim is not about ownership or general representation; it is more a personal creative expression. He talked about a conversation he had with a Peruvian who came into his restaurant and told him he loved his Lomo Saltado dish. He serves a version of Lomo Saltado, a typical dish from Peru from the Chifa culture. Chifa is a fusion of Peruvian and Chinese ingredients brought to Peru by East Asian immigrants. Lim's mother makes one of his favorite recipes. It shares elements with a Lomo Saltado: fries, rice, tomatoes, gravy, and meat.<sup>83</sup> In Lim's words, "if you cook with a story, if you cook with an emotional connection to the food... people feel it too."<sup>84</sup> Lim said he first hoped the customer would not take offense and explained his story to the customer, to which the customer responded that he could see the resemblance because of Chifa culture.

What do we learn about sharing knowledge in the food landscape once we examine it through the vantage point of social media platforms?

Duque is sharing recipes he makes at home; none are traditional; they are just his recipes.<sup>85</sup> He wants to share knowledge with people who want to learn how to make things at home. He chooses the recipes based on what he has at home. Without wanting to be labeled he shares the posts on Instagram and the full videos on YouTube. Most of the recipes he shares are

---

<sup>83</sup> Michel Lim (chef and owner of La Belle Tonki) in conversation with the author, February 15, 2021.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Felipe Duque (artist and chef) in conversation with the author, February 2, 2021.

things he makes on his own but is interested in joining forces with friends and collaborating with them. He told me about an episode on his channel where he learned how to make mochi with a friend and how he liked exploring what people liked to cook. Similarly, to me, he enjoys learning through conversations and through experiences. In the future he plans to continue to collaborate with friends, to explore what other people are cooking, what they like and share it through his channel.

Mejia, like Duque, does not want to sell traditional foods from Colombia, but instead, she uses her account to highlight other Colombian products and restaurants. On Sundays, she shares something: a product, a dish, a local restaurant. She shares homemade recipes as well.

Like Duque and Lim, Mejia also wants her business to reflect who she is and what she believes in. She enjoys cooking, and with the pandemic, she became a more conscious consumer, trying to buy things produced locally to help the national economy. Mejia sells honey and coffee from Cauca, a long-neglected region that has been weakened economically, socially, and politically by illicit activities like drug trafficking and mining. For farmers there, honey and coffee are legal alternatives to cultivating coca. She donates to an organization that brings internet to rural areas, connecting younger kids to educational platforms from a distance. Mejia's goal for the future is to sell her cinnamon rolls on a national level but in a supermarket, chain called D1, which is accessible to more people.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup>Violeta Mejia (lawyer and owner of By Violeta ) in conversation with the author, March 18, 2021.

Mejia and Duque both said that they like to use Instagram to learn and share knowledge. Like Duque, Mejia wants her account to be more than food pictures and food business. These two people communicate their interests with their followers through the content that they create. She talks about who she is working with, what she supports, what products she likes, and they are all local. She is aware that customers want to know her and her product. Duque shares what he likes to eat, while showing that learning to cook is fun and can be easy.

What do we learn about running a food business once we examine it through the vantage point of  
COVID-19?

Both Lim and Mejia have businesses to run. Lim is one in a team of many people. He talked about constantly adapting to the new measures implemented by the government. He repeatedly said how lucky he was to be able to interact with people and make them happy. During the past year, La Belle Tonki has catered to hospitals, showing solidarity with health industry workers who came to his restaurant. They also recollected funds for an organization that helps homeless individuals during the winter. Lim has built a business that has brought a previous community dear to his heart, the dance community. His staff and customers are his friends, fellow dancers who have helped him, from branding to décor, which has kept him going during the pandemic's difficulties.

Mejia runs her business by herself. She has two people that help her with deliveries and cleaning, but she does the cooking. She started her business without planning on doing it. One

craving for cinnamon rolls turned into her creating a recipe. She had no boxes, no delivery service, no logo, but built all of it quickly. When I asked her why she chose Instagram instead of Facebook or a website, she responded that between Instagram and Facebook, she felt more comfortable with Instagram; she knew how to use it. It has features that allow users to buy through the page.<sup>87</sup> To achieve her goal of selling her cinnamon rolls in a national supermarket chain, she must register as a business and get certified. That means a considerable investment that she cannot currently make. For now, she is taking it day by day.<sup>88</sup>

Duque continued to post until the end of 2020. He does not plan to stop, but work restarted as New York reopened and vaccinations began. Since Duque's account is not his main job, he works on his own. Duque was clear that he did not like labels; he is not trying to become an influencer; he just created an account to share a personal creative expression.

What do we learn about building a community through food once we examine it through the vantage point of COVID-19?

All three participants are thinking about their community and how to continue to contribute. They are not thinking about if the amount they contribute is enough because they all said that there is always some way to help the people around you. It reminds me of a Colombian

---

<sup>87</sup>Violeta Mejia (lawyer and owner of By Violeta) in conversation with author, March 18, 2021.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

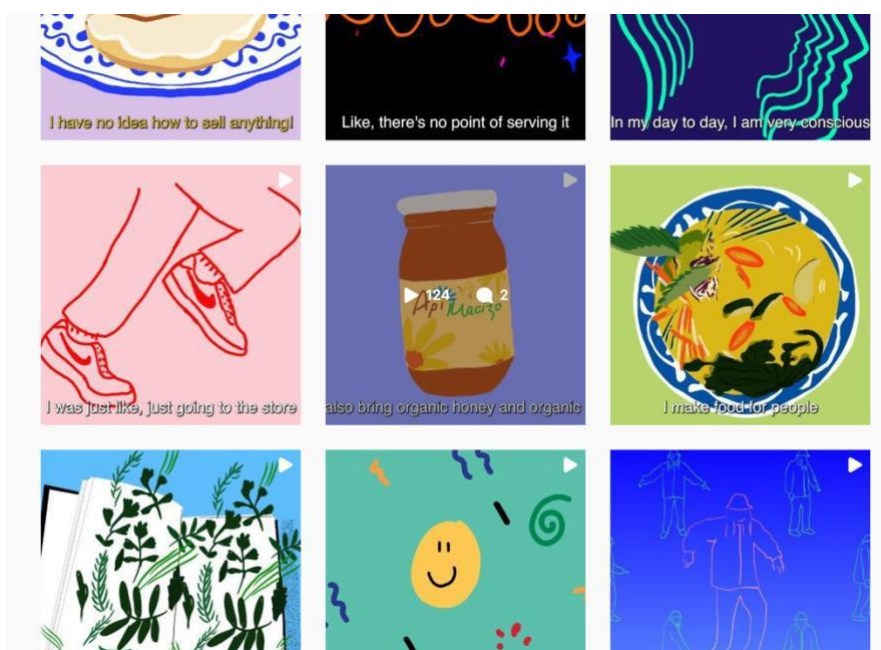
idiom, *dónde comen dos, comen tres*, that could translate to the English idiom *there is always room for one more*.

La Belle Tonki is aware of who their customers are and strive to continue to make the restaurant a place to gather, even if it is currently done virtually. Lim will continue to help his community as much as he can. Mejia has settled on an organization that she plans to help indefinitely. She sells organic products that may be out of reach for the people who live in Bogotá and do not travel to rural regions of the country. Duque would like to continue teaching, collaborate with the people around him and expand his reach to help the LGBTQA+ community, specifically older folks who may need help with cooking.

One thing is to study something and assume what people across the food landscape might say, another is to hear people that their customers or viewers are rooting for them. Duque, Lim, and Mejia noted that the feedback they got from their public is reassuring. Duque mentioned that he was unsure at a point last year about continuing his food account, but that because of the feedback he has received, he kept creating content. Lim feels reassured with every interaction he has with his customers. Mejia began her business on a whim but grew it into something that reflects what she values. All three cultivate their personal communities to build their business while maintaining their values. There is so much work behind the posts shared, the food, and recipes made for others. To know that their content resonates, even if it is with one person, is reassuring. Much like food, this sense of connection through social media, is reassuring.

During this past year, the approaches to food have been infinite. All four of us have multiple simultaneous love interests in life. Duque and I share art, primarily film photography;

Lim is a professional dancer apart from being a chef and business owner. Mejia is a lawyer who used to work for the attorney's office delegated for the Special Jurisdiction of Peace and is now a journalist for W Radio, a national radio station. Those multiple love interests all show through the final products, be it an account, a business, or a series. And food is just one of our creative expressions. The four of us were in quarantine at some point, but as measures began to change in our cities, each of us had to adapt differently. The approaches to food are wide-ranging because of how the pandemic affected our daily lives.



*Figure 5 Mosaic of episodes on Instagram profile, 2021*

## Life Online

I uploaded the twelve episodes to my account @danielasilvatrujillo on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021. I had debated whether to share them over an extended period but decided that I wanted the public



to be able to find the rest of the material on my profile when they crossed paths with one video. Overall, the feedback I received was incredibly positive. People interacted with the posts and saw the episodes in diverse ways. Some people only saw one episode and then realized later, when I shared a story saying that there were more available, went on to watch the rest. Others went straight to the first one I posted and scrolled through all of them. Most people left a comment on their favorite episode, letting me know that they had watched them all but that they had enjoyed that particular video more.

I am grateful for all the feedback I received. There were comments that turned into longer conversations via the private messaging feature. One conversation that stood out was with a friend who lives in Bogotá and who began his food business during the pandemic. I had initially contacted him, but he was too busy at the time. He took the time to share a memory of his, commenting below the Peanut Butter/Arequipe episode, saying that when he was younger, he has eaten purple cubes from the fridge expecting them to be raspberry jelly when they were in fact beets. We talked about animating that story, and he told me that he had really enjoyed the series because food had saved his life during the past year and throughout his life. He said that food has gotten him through heartbreaks and hardships, but that it has also given him the opportunity to share moments with the people he cares about. And that currently, it had given him a purpose in life. After posting the final versions of the videos, I was able to have more convincing arguments to get him to participate in the future. This happened with two other people I would have liked to interview, the owner of Kilimbo Chocolate and a baker friend who lives in Spain.

All the participants really enjoyed the final versions, I had sent them rough drafts and they had sent me notes, which I took into consideration when finishing the animations. The three of them shared the videos on their own accounts and that directed more people to my profile. I saw engagement that came from each of the participant's personal following. Michel Lim's dance crew was very enthusiastic with all his videos, one of his dance mentors commented "Inspiring" under the video where he discusses the moment you get a recipe right. They also shared his videos with a hashtag (#symbioticmonsters) that is the name of their dance crew. Up until this point, I had not realized that this was their name and once I added the hashtag to the video of Lim talking about dancing and cooking, I also saw more views and engagement from people that follow that hashtag. All three of them felt that the videos represent what they stand for, what they said, which is reassuring. Violeta Mejia shared the video where she talks about her brand's values as a story on her business profile, letting her followers know that if they wanted to learn more about who she was they should watch the episodes.

I had great conversations with my colleagues from the program and with friends who studied art with me, all their questions and comments were so inspiring. They reassured me that this project has a life after being a research-creation thesis, and that the challenging work of animating had been worth it. All of this to say that I am very satisfied with being able to produce work that generates new conversations. It is also exciting and reassuring to feel that I can approach new people and have something to show them that gives them an idea of what to expect should they decide to participate.

I have been engaging with the theme of food in tangents, all while doing my thesis. I was nervous to share a project that has only been in my head for such a long time. I was also nervous about sharing my videos with my voice because I tend to prefer being behind the camera. But every time I have shared content related to food, I have received positive feedback from friends and feel less shy to share parts of the research I have done. There have been three things I have shared apart from Snacks, building on this idea of the endless possibilities regarding discussing food.

The first is a photo series titled [\*Future Foods\*](#) and [\*Future Foods Part 2\*](#) and posted on my Instagram. The clips are from movies and tv shows, old and new. I found that most food depicted in the future takes less time to make and consume, eliminating traditions that come with eating together. The second is an [interview](#) by journalist Gwen Roley for her radio show “The Squeaky Curd” on food, specifically for an episode “News Feed” on viral social media trends in food. This interview allowed me to revisit the first findings of my project and discuss one of my approaches to food; social media. The third is an audio piece for a radio show in Amsterdam curated and hosted around the end of March 2021. I took some stories I had saved from my food studies research and scripted them into audio pieces. The final piece I sent is about a smear campaign the beer conglomerate Bavaria in Colombia did against Chicha, a fermented national drink with indigenous roots in Colombia, and its relationship with an uprising interest in the West fermented beverages.

Engaging with the themes regarding food has opened pathways to conversations and opportunities to express myself creatively. The practice of sharing lived experience to construct

community has been continuously motivating. Although these engagements are not necessarily part of the main project, and are tangents, they align with my creative practice and interest in polydisciplinamory a way to research and to create.

### **Conclusion**

Food is a rich theme worth exploring from different perspectives, and through the vantage point of a global pandemic, the possibilities are endless. Food has always played an essential role in my life, located in-between places of inspiration and communal interaction while staying distanced from my professional life.

Dr. Natalie Loveless's concept of polydisciplinamory allowed me to explore food content on Instagram during a global pandemic because of the unpredictability of the situation. I followed my desires based on my interests and network while I explored media production along the way. Some of these desires were tangents, short sparks that came from the vast topic of food. Others were the backbone of the project; the desire to produce media creatively and animate conversations are representations of the promiscuous artistic commitments I have. This promiscuity is also the connecting thread between the sites of study and the theoretical framework of this research-creation project.

This project began with exploring scrolling through Instagram critically. *Snacks: Portraits of a Global Pandemic* intends to stimulate discussions and reflections on how we currently work through such bizarre moments in history. At the same time, it intends to stimulate these discussions while discussing a love of food and food as a unifier, and as a channel to

approach different topics. Through my scrolling at the beginning of the pandemic I mapped out the food accounts I followed and categorized them into four sections. These categories are: people who work in agriculture or community-centered efforts, people who work in the food industry (restaurant and bars mainly), people who began food businesses to make a living during the pandemic, and people who share food information and content on a personal level. All these people use the platform that they have, large or small following, to discuss issues other than standard food content, such as recipes and food. Some of the topics addressed are racism, migration, identity, fostering community, and handing over their platform to give other people the chance to share content, i.e., make space for others. The people who run these accounts live in some of the cities I have lived in, Bogotá, Montreal, and New York.

After producing the series, I went back to the question structure I constructed to frame this research creation project and explore multiple narratives within a historical moment.

**How are we surviving a global pandemic?**

**And what do we learn about \_\_\_\_\_** (e.g., love, nostalgia, systemic racism, community, identity) **in the food landscape, past and present, once we examine it through the vantage point of \_\_\_\_\_?** (e.g., COVID-19, transnationality, intersectional feminism)

This question structure adjusted to the multiple narratives I wanted to explore, rather than boxing in all the participants' lived experiences. With a question structure like the one above, and tailored questionnaires for each category of participant, I was able to approach the different

participants and talk to them about their lives and compare their responses after. I was also able to find the intersections among the participants, and between the participants and myself.

I began to design the project I intended to share via my personal Instagram account. Following Henry Jenkins' term collective intelligence, I decided to conduct two different surveys on Instagram. Although research-creation possibilities are endless, there are limitations when you produce content for a specific platform and asking the public what and how it engages with made sense. I confirmed that the audience that engages with content I share on Instagram has a short attention span and the videos would have to be less than a minute long. If they were to be longer the first thirty seconds of the videos are the most important, this is what will engage the audience in clicking the Keep Watching button for longer IGTV videos on Instagram. The pieces of audio, the smallest narrative units would still have to in sense, be coherent and complete. These SNUs are appropriate to the attention spans of our moment in time.

Through the interviews I conducted and the questions I asked regarding the love of food, the love of creative expression, each participant discussed their approach to food during their life and during this past year. I believe I did my best to create a project that stems from a personal relationship to the platform Instagram and to the infinite love I have for food. It allowed me to have converse with and piece together events, concepts and moments that stood out from the interviews with the participants while straying away from a grand linear narrative of a global pandemic.

Although the complexity of a worldwide pandemic is hard to show by interviewing just four people, I believe *Snacks: Portraits of a Global Pandemic* makes a significant contribution

by enriching the discussion of portraying the global pandemic, both in the series and in its development. It develops a methodology based on the concept of polydisciplinarity and employs the use of SNUs outside of the Korsakow system, finding a methodology attuned to the attention span of the moment. This project also contributes to platform studies and animation studies by creating a non-linear non-fiction series for Instagram. This project is a smaller version of what I had wanted to produce but has the potential of continuity and growth. This was confirmed by comments left under the posts and conversations I had with people who saw the project after I shared it online. With the granularity that comes with animation<sup>89</sup>, I have still a wide range of moments that I can continue to share via Instagram. The future of this project is undecided, but I am immensely proud to have produced it. As for the questions posed, I think the answers will continue to develop as the pandemic progresses. As networked publics work differently in different areas, the shifts in life after a pandemic will affect the way users interact with the platforms they are on. There is so much work being done across the food landscape, striving to build, provide and empower communities. There are infinite potential conversations.

---

<sup>89</sup> Adrian Miles' term granularity has been mentioned before and is referenced in Soar, "Making (with) the Korsakow System: Database Documentaries as Articulation and Assemblage," 9.

## Bibliography

- “Adam Rapoport: Bon Appetit Editor Resigns over ‘Racist Culture.’” *BBC News*, June 9, 2020, sec. US & Canada. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52977039>.
- Belasco, Warren James. “Food and the Counterculture: A Story of Bread and Politics.” In *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader*, 217–34. Blackwell Readers in Anthropology 8. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2005.
- . *Food: The Key Concepts*. The Key Concepts. Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2008.
- Bestor, Theodore C. “How Sushi Went Global.” In *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader*, 13–20. Blackwell Readers in Anthropology 8. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2005.
- boyd, dannah. “Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications.” In *A Networked Self: Identity, Community and Culture on Social Network Sites*, edited by Zizi Papacharissi, 39–58. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Brah, A. “Diaspora, Border and Transnational Identities.” In *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, 2005. <https://0-www-taylorfrancis-com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/books/9780203974919>.
- Bruns, Dr. Axel. “Prodisage: A Working Definition | Prodisage.Org.” Prodisage, December 31, 2007. <https://prodisage.org/prodisage>.
- Caldwell, Melissa L. “Domesticating the French Fry: McDonald’s and Consumerism in Moscow.” In *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader*, 180–96. Blackwell Readers in Anthropology 8. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2004.
- Chapman, Owen B., and Kim Sawchuk. “Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and ‘Family Resemblances.’” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 37, no. 1 (April 13, 2012): 5–26. <https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2012v37n1a2489>.
- Chen, Kuan-Hsing, Stuart Hall, David Morley, and Kuan-Hsing Chen. *Stuart Hall Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London; New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Clark, Jessica, Nick Couldry, Abigail T. De Kosnik, Tarleton Gillespie, Henry Jenkins, Christopher Kelty, Zizi Papacharissi, Alison Powell, and Jose van Dijck. “Participations| Part 5: PLATFORMS.” *International Journal of Communication* 8 (2014): 1444–73.



- Clement, J. "Most Used Social Media Platform." Statista, August 21, 2020.  
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics." In *Feminist Legal Theory: Readings in Law and Gender*, edited by Katharine T. Bartlett and Rosanne Kennedy, 139–67. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991.
- . "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99.
- Dijk, Jose van. "Engineering Sociality in a Culture of Connectivity." In *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*. Oxford University Press, 2013.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199970773.001.0001>.
- Dijk, José van. "'You Have One Identity': Performing the Self on Facebook and LinkedIn." *Media, Culture & Society* 35, no. 2 (March 2013): 199–215.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443712468605>.
- Enberg. "Global Instagram Users 2020 - Insider Intelligence Trends, Forecasts & Statistics," December 8, 2020. <https://www.emarketer.com/content/global-instagram-users-2020>.
- Enloe, Cynthia H. "Going Bananas! Where Are Women in the International Politics of Bananas?" In *Bananas, Beaches & Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, 1st U.S. ed., 211–49. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- Facebook. "How to Take Your Instagram Content to the Next Level." Facebook IQ, February 14, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/business/news/insights/how-to-take-your-instagram-content-to-the-next-level>.
- Federici, Silvia Beatriz. *Caliban and the Witch*. 2., rev. Ed. New York, NY: Autonomedia, 2014.
- Georgiou, Myria. "Identity, Space and the Media: Thinking through Diaspora." *Revue Européenne Des Migrations Internationales* 26, no. 1 (February 1, 2010): 17–35.  
<https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.5028>.
- Honess Roe, Annabelle. *Animated Documentary*, 2013.
- hooks, bell. *All about Love: New Visions*. 1st ed. New York: William Morrow, 2000.
- . "Theory as Liberatory Practice." *Yale J.L. & Feminism* 4 (1991).  
<https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/yjlf/vol4/iss1/2>.

- Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. Updated and with A new afterword. New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 2008.
- . “Spoiling Survivor.” In *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, 25–58. New York: New York University Press, 2006.
- . *Spoiling Survivor*, 2006.
- Lewis, Tania. “Digital Food: From Paddock to Platform.” *Communication Research and Practice* 4, no. 3 (July 3, 2018): 212–28.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2018.1476795>.
- Lewis, Tania, and Michelle Phillipov. “Food/Media: Eating, Cooking, and Provisioning in a Digital World.” *Communication Research and Practice* 4, no. 3 (July 3, 2018): 207–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2018.1482075>.
- Lin, Su-Jit. “A Chronological List Of 2020’s Most Unforgettable Food Trends | HuffPost Canada Food & Drink.” Newspaper. Huff Post Canada, December 29, 2020.  
[https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/2020-food-trends\\_1\\_5fd288a7c5b66a7584134ca0](https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/2020-food-trends_1_5fd288a7c5b66a7584134ca0).
- Loveless, Natalie. *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation*. Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2019.
- Mankekar, Purnima. “India Shopping: Indian Grocery Stores and Transnational Configurations of Belonging.” In *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader*, 197–214. Blackwell Readers in Anthropology 8. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2005.
- Marino, Sara. “Digital Food and Foodways: How Online Food Practices and Narratives Shape the Italian Diaspora in London.” *Journal of Material Culture* 23, no. 3 (September 2018): 263–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183517725091>.
- Miles, Adrian. “Programmatic Statements For a Facetted Videography.” In *Video Vortex Reader: Responses to Youtube*, edited by Geert Lovink and Sabine Niederer, Second Ed., 223–30. INC Reader 4. Amsterdam: Inst. of Network Cultures, 2008.
- Miller, Daniel. “Coca-Cola: A Black Sweet Drink from Trinidad.” In *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader*, edited by Melissa L. Caldwell and James L. Watson, 54–69. Blackwell Readers in Anthropology 8. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2005.
- Moraga, Cherrie, and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Expanded and rev. 3rd ed. Women of Color Series. Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press, 2002.

- National Film Board of Canada. "About | Otherly." National Film Board of Canada. Accessed March 23, 2021. <https://www.nfb.ca/interactive/otherly/>.
- . "OK Google." National Film Board of Canada. Accessed March 23, 2021. [https://www.nfb.ca/interactive/ok\\_google\\_en/](https://www.nfb.ca/interactive/ok_google_en/).
- Otherly Series and Em Yue. "Elaine Is Almost | Otherly." Otherly Series Instagram, March 18, 2021. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CMh9Wt4DvBR/>.
- Pew Research Center. "Social Media Use in 2021," April 2021.
- Rousseau, Signe. *Food and Social Media: You Are What You Tweet*. Lanham: Altamira Press/Rowman & Littlefield, 2012.
- Scinto, Maria. "The Real Reason Why Banana Bread Exploded During Quarantine." Mashed.com, July 9, 2020. <https://www.mashed.com/224776/the-real-reason-why-banana-bread-exploded-during-quarantine/>.
- Sehl, Katie. "Instagram Demographics in 2021: Important User Stats for Marketers." *Social Media Marketing & Management Dashboard* (blog), January 27, 2021. <https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-demographics/>.
- Slack, Jennifer Daryl, and J. Macgregor Wise. *Culture and Technology: A Primer*. Second edition. New York: Peter Lang, 2015.
- Smith, Jen Rose. "Banana Bread Is Having a Moment." CNN, May 2, 2020. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/02/health/banana-bread-pandemic-baking-wellness-trnd/index.html>.
- Soar, Matt. "Making (with) the Korsakow System: Database Documentaries as Articulation and Assemblage." In *New Documentary Ecologies: Emerging Platforms, Practices and Discourses*, edited by C. Summerhayes, C. Hight, and Kate Nash, 154–73. Melbourne: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014.
- Solier, Isabelle de. "Tasting the Digital: New Food in Media." In *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Food and Popular Culture*, 54–65. London, UK ; New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.
- Watson, James L., and Melissa L. Caldwell, eds. "Introduction." In *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader*, 1–10. Blackwell Readers in Anthropology 8. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2005.

Zimmerman, Patricia R, and Helen De Michiel. *Open Space New Media Documentary: A Toolkit for Theory and Practice*, 2018. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9781351762090>.