


MA Major Research Paper

The evolving quality and scope of new social movements: Toronto food security organizations
mobilizing for change

Elisabeth Schieck


Prof. Myles Ruggles, Supervisor

The Major Research Paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts

Joint Graduate Program in Communication & Culture
Ryerson University – York University
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

[June 1 2009]

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
1.0 Introduction.....	3
2.0 Method	7
3.0 What is a social movement?: Definitions	12
4.0 Theoretical approaches: The global, the national, and the local	14
4.1 Global.....	14
4.2 National.....	16
4.3 Local	18
5.0 Food activism in Toronto and abroad	22
6.0 Observations: Interviews	27
6.1 The Stop Community Food Centre	27
6.2 Not Far From The Tree	31
6.3 FoodShare	35
7.0 Urban food activism: A social movement?.....	37
8.0 Food security movement: Theoretical conclusions.....	44
9.0 Conclusion	46
Works Cited	48
Appendices.....	52

1.0 Introduction

In 1993 in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, the new city government began to develop a series of policy plans that would help end hunger and food insecurity in that city, where it had been estimated that 38% of families were living below the poverty line and 20% of children between 0 and 3 years old showed signs of malnourishment (Rocha 37). In the more than fifteen years since then, the federal Brazilian government has followed suit, adopting a series of initiatives that have not only drastically reduced the country's infant death rate and incidence of infant malnutrition, but have also served to improve the quality of life for many Brazilians generally (Lappé). Between 1993 and 2002, Belo Horizonte was the only region in the world that actually *increased* its citizens' consumption of fruits and vegetables (Lappé). The groundbreaking food programs initiated by the city of Belo Horizonte (and funded by such a small amount of money – less than 2% of the city's budget) prove that it is entirely possible for innovative programs instituted at the municipal level to spread and evolve into a federal policy.

In Canada, and in Toronto specifically, a number of non-governmental organizations have sprung up in the last few decades with the aim of tackling their own food security issues; likely encouraged by the success of Belo Horizonte, these organizations strive to accomplish their goals in a wealthy nation where people may not often think that their fellow citizens may be starving.

This research project investigates some contemporary urban aspects of the politics of food. Taking social movement theory as my theoretical framework, this paper examines the ways in which the practices and services of Toronto organizations such as the Stop Community Food Centre, FoodShare, and Not Far From The Tree promote countercultural food ideologies and thus may be viewed as actors attempting to influence political and social change through food.

While individual organizations should not be confused with social movements, it is possible that we may be able to look at this ensemble of organizations as an informal network that exemplifies a new contemporary form of social movement.

The Stop Community Food Centre, FoodShare and Not Far From The Tree all have well-defined mission statements that make clear that they intend to tackle issues of social inequality through food activism; for example, the Stop writes that their mission is to “increase access to healthy food in a manner that maintains dignity, builds community and challenges inequality” (*The Stop Community Food Centre*). These three organizations each are guided by a philosophy that both sees access to healthy food as a basic human right and believes that social and economic inequities often keep people undernourished or malnourished. FoodShare’s website highlights that their organization sees “...hunger as just one symptom of a food system that is geared to treating food primarily as a commodity” (*FoodShare*); my project takes this notion as the crux of the issues involving food security issues in Toronto. When food production, distribution, and consumption occurs in a capitalist economic system, profit is likely to trump quality assurance and equal access for major food producers. While each of these three organizations tackle food security issues from a slightly different angle – some working with various levels of government to institute new food policies, others primarily involved in grassroots organization to redistribute food wealth – collectively they may be seen as a new kind of urban social movement; yet it remains unclear how contemporary social movement theory applies to this potential new movement. Therefore, this project examines both social movement theories and these local urban food activists in-depth, with the aim of discovering which theoretical model – if any – is the best fit to adequately describe and explain the structure and development of food security organizations in Toronto.

This project focuses on analyzing social movement theory, specifically new social movement theories that take a particular geographic focus, as they relate to the food security movement and to the local case studies of the Stop, FoodShare, and Not Far From The Tree. In particular, this research examines a variety of social movement theories that concentrate on the geographic scope of social movements; namely, I want to discern whether it is a global, national, or local approach to social movement theory, if any, that is best suited to analyzing food security activism in Toronto. Food security activism often takes place in a local setting, but in terms of both philosophy and policy food security organizations often tackle issues that extend beyond their local communities; it is thus unclear how best to theorize this potential new social movement that often places geography at the centre of its own missions (such as “eating local” initiatives).

At the global level, I will be reviewing literature on world systems theory, which argues that there is an international economic system that “is comprised of a single economy and a global division of labor that incorporates numerous cultures and nation-states” (Buechler 64). At the national level, theories of colonization dynamics and social movements appear to be most pertinent to food security activism, as they establish “...a distinction between an “old politics” concerned with material security and a “new politics” whose themes include the “quality of life, equal rights, individual self-realization, participation, and human rights”” (Buechler 97). Lastly, at the local level there are three theories that I will examine as a means of understanding urban food activism: social phenomenology, structuration processes, and the microphysics of power. Social phenomenology is essentially a theory about the social construction of reality, with an emphasis on awareness of the ways in which things of our society that seem inherently real and true are actually “relative and arbitrary” (Buechler 146). The concept of structuration also

targets our notions of social reality, but with a focus on our misunderstandings of society's structural aspects; namely this theory suggests that there are not societal "structures" as we understand them, but rather a series of processes that tend to mimic and reproduce aspects of what we commonly understand as structures. The microphysics of power is primarily a Foucauldian analysis of power and is thus a kind of retooling of our concept of power – moving away from the idea of power as a centralized, repressive force, and towards a formulation of power as existing in more varied and complex forms; social movements thus do not exist to challenge one particular powerful entity, but rather are constantly engaged in resistance through everyday activities. All of these theories seem, at the surface level, to apply nicely to urban food activism and to the potential emergence of a new social movement regarding food security; this project thus analyzes these theories in more detail, and along with the case studies, seeks to determine whether one of these theories, if any, is most applicable to explain and theorize this new food activism.

In addition to the social movement theory research outlined above, this research also involves interviews conducted with those working for the organizations outlined for case study; this included senior members of the Stop Community Food Centre and FoodShare, and the founder of Not Far From The Tree. These were semi-structured interviews where subjects were asked to elaborate on the mission and goals of their work, and to discuss what they see the importance of food to be in relation to other social and political goals. The main goal of these interviews was simply to obtain a more lengthy explanation of the aims of these organizations than is available in currently published data, particularly as they relate to social movement theory.

This study has the possible benefit of clarifying how existing social movement theories may be applied to actual activism in communities, thus contributing to a greater understanding both of the social movement theories outlined above as well as food security issues and local Toronto organizations.

2.0 Method

As this research takes up social movement theory and how people involved with food security organizations in Toronto understand the work that they are doing, qualitative methods of data collection were deemed the most appropriate for this study. Although qualitative research methods may require more planning and time for analysis than do quantitative methods, qualitative methods have shown to be preferable for certain kinds of research (Berg 2). In contrast to quantitative research that deals with counts and measures of information, qualitative research methods are particularly useful when the personal experiences and opinions of individuals are critical to an understanding of the research topic (Berg 3). In the case of social movements, an examination of the individual feelings of those involved is crucial to an understanding of why and how people get involved in movements, and why these movements have meaning for the lives of participants. While certainly there is some useful quantifiable data in the study of food security issues (e.g. rates of hunger and food insecurity), this particular research project is more interested in understanding how a potential new social movement is understood by its participants.

The information for this project was obtained through both primary and secondary research. An extensive literature review was conducted prior to completing any of the original research; the literature review consisted of an analysis of existing data on social movements and social movement theory, as well as on food security activism. Research on social movements

was consulted in order to formulate a concrete definition of what can be considered a social movement, with the aim of determining whether the collective work of food security organizations in Toronto could be defined as a social movement per se.

In addition to a review of social movement theory literature, a survey of materials on food security issues and food activism was conducted. When this research project began, there seemed to be little existing data on the recent proliferation of food security activism worldwide, but as research progressed there seemed to be a drastic increase in the number of books available that dealt with food and food security. With particular significance for this study has been the amount of new data on food issues published by Canadian authors and academics – many of the articles and books in question deal explicitly with the organizations that this research project seeks to understand. Therefore, the body of literature on food activism – and on Canadian (and Torontonians) food activism in particular, was consulted in order to facilitate a better understanding of the case study organizations and to allow for data against which the interview data may be compared.

The primary research involved qualitative semi-structured interviews with research subjects who are actively involved with one of the three food security organizations in Toronto under study by this project – namely, The Stop Community Food Centre, FoodShare, and Not Far From The Tree. The directors of the three organizations in question were contacted via email and invited to participate in this research project, or, alternatively, to suggest another more appropriate (or more available) individual who may be interested in participating. In the case of the two larger organizations – the Stop and FoodShare – the directors forwarded the invitation directly to another executive member of the organization, who then both responded positively to the invitation for research participation. This was a purposeful sampling method whereby the

potential interview subjects were contacted specifically because of their involvement with one of the organizations under study.

The original intention was for this project to utilize a snowball sampling method – whereby the first interview subjects would recommend additional individuals to be contacted who may have different perspectives or information than their own. However, the potential subjects that were suggested by the original interview subjects did not conform to the parameters of this study; for example, one interview subject suggested a number of individuals from for-profit companies. While a larger project would likely benefit from comparing the political leanings of for-profit companies with not-for-profit organizations, this particular project is meant to focus on case studies of not-for-profit food security organizations. Therefore, in the interest of staying focused on the research question, no further interview participants were recruited. The information obtained from the original three research participants proved to be sufficient to satisfy the objectives of this study, and with the added influence of time constraints, no further interviews were conducted. It is therefore worth noting that the original research conducted for this research project involves a very limited sample of participants, and it would likely be fruitful for a larger, more comprehensive project to be pursued in another study.

The semi-structured interview was deemed the best method for the original research for this study, given that the goal was to obtain lengthy and descriptive accounts about the work of the three case study organizations. It has been noted frequently by sociologists that respondents are unlikely to give detailed answers to questions that are presented to them in a questionnaire or in a public forum in front of an audience (Stewart and Cash 9). Furthermore, the use of the semi-structured interview here, rather than a more standardized interview format, is meant to allow for

and encourage interview participants to express their viewpoints more freely (Flick 94). More specifically, this research project utilized what has been termed the “expert interview.”

Uwe Flick, in his book *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, outlines a particular form of the semi-structured interview which he calls the expert interview. The expert interview focuses more on the interview subject’s experience as an expert within a certain field; the focus is less on the varied experiences of the individual as a whole, and more on that individual’s participation within that specific field of interest to the researcher. This understanding of the expert interview best describes the types of interviews conducted for this project; interview subjects were chosen because of their involvement with food security organizations in Toronto, and it was their expert knowledge of the workings of these community groups that was sought after in the interviews. Since food generally has personal meaning for nearly everyone, it can be assumed that interview subjects also have important relationships with food in their own lives that could not be entirely separated from the work that they do. However, the goal of the interviews was to learn more about the case study organizations in particular, and to stay away from information that deviated too much from that goal.

The actual interviews were loosely shaped by a series of questions outlined in a list that was provided to interview subjects ahead of time via email (Appendix I). This list of questions was shown to respondents before the scheduled interview times so that they may have the opportunity to give some thought to the types of questions that would be asked in the interview; the hope was also that by providing the question set to respondents ahead of time that they would feel less like they may be caught off guard in the actual interview, and thus more comfortable to speak freely with me about the issues at hand. One of the potential drawbacks of the semi-structured interview is that interviewers may have difficulty mediating between allowing

respondents to speak freely and ensuring that respondents do not diverge too much from the issues relevant to the study. Therefore, another reason for distributing the question set before the interviews was to give the research subjects an idea of the topics meant to be covered in the interview, thus hopefully reducing the risk of them getting off topic during the interviews themselves.

Interviews are useful as research tools in that they allow participants to convey their unique interpretations of certain events and experiences; these narratives exist as “dynamic oral and aural performances with particular aims and backgrounds, which we as researchers frequently turn into visual and static texts” (Wiles et al. 90). Unlike quantitative data, the data obtained through semi-structured interviews is not measurable in the same objective way. The challenge is thus to manage and analyze the data obtained through such personal accounts in a way that pays attention to the nuances of speech and will lead to some fruitful application in the research project. For this project, the method of narrative analysis was used to interpret and understand the data obtained through the interviews conducted. Narrative analysis is “a form of interpreting a conversation or story in which attention is paid to the embedded meanings and evaluations of the speaker and their context” (Wiles et al. 90). Interviews were, with permission of the interview subjects, recorded and these recordings were then transcribed into files kept in an encrypted and password-protected file on my home computer. After the data from each interview was transcribed, it was read closely both to pick out key moments where respondents revealed details pertinent to social movement theory and furthermore to observe whether there were any patterns in the answers between different respondents.

3.0 What is a social movement?: Definitions

There has been a profusion of academic study of social movements in the past few decades, and yet it still remains difficult to adequately define what it is exactly that makes a social movement. In fact, while the mechanics of social movements have been rigorously studied, very few scholars have worked to actually pin down a definition of what makes a movement. Scholars have: "...largely passed over any discussion of the concept of "social movement". While several scholars have provided analytical definitions of it, we still lack, to my knowledge, a systematic comparison of these conceptualizations" (Diani 155). Diani summarizes, and subsequently tries to synthesize, the multitude of ways that social movements have been defined. Diani suggests that there seem to be four aspects that make up a social movement: "... (a) networks of informal interaction; (b) shared beliefs and solidarity; (c) collective action on conflictual issues; (d) action which displays largely outside the institutional sphere and the routine procedures of social life" (Diani 160). Diani's summary of social movement characteristics is useful especially for the purposes of identifying the factors that allow us to recognize particular kinds of social action as definitively a "social movement."

Other theorists have also attempted to define and describe social movement activity, albeit in ways that are not necessarily as clear-cut as the list-like definition Diani provides. Jo Freeman writes that while movements are diverse, they all exhibit a certain tension between spontaneity and structure; this tension also plays among scholars who specialize in collective behaviour theory and resource mobilization theory, respectively (Freeman 1). Neither spontaneity nor structure is enough alone to make a social movement, but often a movement exists when there are both intricate organizational aspects and when it has seemingly erupted in response to some kind of crisis. Buechler argues that social movements historically came to

exist as a reaction to modernization; he further highlights the idea that movements generally take on either a defensive or an offensive form. Defensive movements seek to preserve old customs, whereas offensive movements seek to establish new rights (Buechler 4).

Still other sociologists suggest that it may be possible to recognize that a social movement exists when it becomes apparent that there is also a countermovement. Meyer and Staggenborg note that “Any social movement of potential political significance will generate opposition” (Meyer and Staggenborg 1630). Meyer and Staggenborg further explain that countermovements generally only arise when a social movement has the potential to achieve success, for this is when the goals of a social movement may pose a real threat to the interests of those who value the status quo. Movements that seem to have no hope of gaining momentum, and movements that achieve quick and definite victories at the state or legislative level both rarely lead to countermovement organizing. Surely, however, we should not discount the possibility of a movement existing if a countermovement is not yet apparent – social movements can certainly exist without countermovement opposition – but it is certainly worthwhile to examine the types of antagonism that social action may evoke.

Social movements take a variety of forms, often growing and learning from the tools that have led to successes and failures of movements past; the cataloguing and patterning of these tools by social movement theorists is thus arguably itself a form of social activism, in that it provides new movements with the necessary knowledge to plan their own fights. It is true, however, that many social movement activists do not concern themselves with sociological theories about collective action; Croteau, Hoynes, and Ryan write: “In recent decades, a significant chasm has grown between social movement activists and those who produce formal theories about social movements” (Croteau et al. xii). Croteau et al. call for a renewed

collaboration between activists and academics, and suggest that such cooperation would inevitably be beneficial to all parties involved.

The above discussions of what makes a social movement will be instrumental in identifying whether urban food activism should be categorized as a social movement or whether, instead, it is some other kind of social phenomenon entirely.

4.0 Theoretical Approaches: The global, the national, and the local

4.1 Global

The most appropriate global theoretical model for looking at social movements, and urban food activism in particular, is through world system theory. World system theory suggests that there is a cohesive and coherent international economic system (capitalism) that transcends national boundaries and that has existed for several centuries (Buechler 64). World system theory posits that capitalism organizes global activities through the institution of private property, the process of commodification, and the practice of exploitation (Buechler 64). Knox writes: “In the global economy goods and services are produced and marketed by an oligopolistic web of global corporate networks whose operations span national boundaries but are only loosely regulated by nation-states” (Knox 3). Both Knox and Buechler suggest that part of the problem with a capitalist world-system is that there are very few international laws, if any, that exist to moderate and govern the behaviour of multinational corporations – and it is fair to assume that often, for these businesses, profit will trump ethical considerations.

Wallerstein argues that there are in fact two types of world systems: world-empires and world-economies; world-empires require there to be a single political system governing the world, whereas world-economies require only a single economic system, among a multitude of political systems (Wallerstein 230). While some may expect that world-economies will

eventually evolve into world-empires, Wallerstein argues that it is no coincidence that this is not the case: "...capitalism as an economic mode is based on the fact that the economic factors operate within an arena larger than that which any political entity can totally control" (Wallerstein 230). Wallerstein thus argues that it is precisely because there are a multitude of political systems and governments that are part of the world-economic system that capitalism can be so successful – the fewer checks and balances for business, the more far-reaching capitalism and corporations can be.

Buechler argues that social movement theory, and perhaps social movements themselves, have not been taking an approach to action that is global enough in scope; Melucci also argues that approaches to social movements have been too narrow: "The analysis of contemporary social movements must today take a systemic, global point of view, and it cannot be applied in a mechanistic way to the national or state level" (Melucci 191). While Melucci is discussing the theoretical analysis of social movements, social movements themselves are also increasingly operating on a global scale. Smith and Bandy write:

Perhaps the most significant impact of global political integration on popular political participation is the demand for greater transnational cooperation among activists seeking to affect even very local conditions. (Smith and Bandy 2)

Smith and Bandy suggest that social and political activists are cooperating more and more across national borders, even when fighting for causes that are particularly local in nature; the suggestion is thus that the local concerns of one country or city will be echoed by others around the world. Global social movements are thus challenging global capitalism and the way in which this world-economic system is affecting the lives of citizens globally.

4.2 National

The theoretical model used here to analyze activism that functions as a national movement deals with colonization dynamics, particularly as discussed by Jürgen Habermas. In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas argues for a very specific means of understanding “society”; that is, we must comprehend “society” at two levels, at the level of the “lifeworld” and at the level of the “system” (Goode 63). John Sitton points out that the lifeworld is a key concept of 20th century philosophy that serves to organize “...investigations into how the world immediately presents itself to us, that is, a “phenomenology” of the world”, although Sitton also makes clear that Habermas uses the concept of the lifeworld in ways much different than did previous scholars (Sitton 62). For Habermas, the lifeworld functions in an entirely linguistic way – it is language that structures and reproduces the lifeworld, which in turn structures and reproduces human understanding of society itself (Sitton 62). Luke Goode explains that at the level of lifeworld: “...we aim to make sense of social processes as the outcome of social actors’ intentions and value orientations” whereas “...at the level of the ‘system’ we aim to comprehend the manner in which social actions intermesh above the will and/or consciousness of social actors” (Goode 63). Steven Buechler further illuminates how Habermas’s theory of communicative action applies not only to a general understanding of society but to an understanding of social movements as well.

Buechler, in his book *Social Movements in Advanced Capitalism*, sheds light on the ways in which Habermas’s theory of communicative action applies to social movements. As societies evolve, systems are no longer coordinated by language and communication, but begin to be governed by money and power instead (Buechler 83-84). Buechler writes:

This process represents a kind of colonization of the lifeworld by the logic of the system; it is a form of domination in which money and power displace communicative action...colonization of the lifeworld means that the open debates that might otherwise occur in the public sphere as one expression of communicative rationality are squeezed out by the role of money and power that intrudes on this sphere. (Buechler 84)

In advanced capitalism, the values and norms of societies that were once negotiated through discourse in the public sphere are now usurped by the influence of money and power. Habermas posited that the welfare state is the perfect example of this colonization of the lifeworld, and Buechler reiterates that in the welfare state it is the "...monetarization and bureaucratization of people's legitimate needs and aspirations" that prevails (Buechler 84).

While he paints a somewhat bleak picture of social relations with his theory of the colonization of the lifeworld, Habermas argues that there is still resistance. Habermas focuses, however, not on traditional movements that focus on freedom and equality, but on particular kinds of "new social movements" (Sitton 85). Sitton writes:

These movements distinguish themselves from previous conflicts in that they are not focused on production and distribution issues (not "productivist"), their organizational style emphasizes individual involvement ("politics in the first person"), and they are largely populated by youths, the middle classes, and the educated. Habermas states that, "the bond that unites these heterogeneous groups is the critique of growth." (Sitton 85-86)

This "critique of growth" as mentioned by Habermas is undoubtedly a critique of capitalist growth – thus in many ways making these new movements as discussed by Habermas similar to

the aforementioned defensive social movements that Buechler highlights. Habermas's suggestion that is "youths, the middle classes, and the educated" that become involved in these new social movements is also important. Unlike past movements where individuals were fighting to gain more rights for themselves, these new movements more often involve those who hold some kind of privilege in society fighting for a cause or for people that cannot always fight for themselves. Habermas suggests that, "the economy is still the crucial origin of these conflicts, but the problems are manifested in other areas of social life," thus suggesting that many social problems can be traced back to the system of capitalism itself (Sitton 86).

Habermas's theory of communicative action, and in particular his discussion of colonization dynamics as they relate to new social movements, focus on the national level of movement analysis – in that Habermas focuses his understanding of advanced capitalism on the welfare state – and this theoretical framework will thus serve as a means to analyze food activism in Canada.

4.3 Local

Steven Buechler, in writing about social movements that exist at various geographic levels, distinguishes the local level especially from the levels larger in geographic scope. Buechler explains that global and national structures "...are elongated through social time and space; they involve centuries of history and thousands of miles. As such, they dwarf individual experience...Local structures...involve slices of social reality that are meaningful from the perspective of individual biography" (Buechler 145). Discussing social phenomenology, structuration processes, and the microphysics of power, Buechler draws on social theorists Berger and Luckmann, Giddens, and Foucault respectively to theorize movements at the local

level. These three theories all focus on individual experiences rather than on larger social and political structures.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann published *The Social Construction of Reality* in 1967, and in it they argue that a world that we “...typically experience as immutable and fundamentally “real” is nevertheless a relative and arbitrary construction” (Buechler 146). Through institutionalization, any social action or behaviour or knowledge that is “relative and arbitrary” comes to be understood as objective reality, rather than something that is changeable; Berger and Luckmann write, “Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors” (Berger and Luckmann 42). On the other hand, socialization leads to the internalization of a subjective reality, which requires “...its own reality maintenance, which routinely relies on significant others and everyday conversation” (Buechler 146). Berger and Luckmann thus argue that social reality is constructed and maintained to a certain degree through direct human experience at the individual level.

Anthony Giddens puts forward his formulation of structuration theory in his 1984 book *The Constitution of Society*. Structuration theory builds on social phenomenology by further attempting to “overcome the traditional dualism between macro- and micro-level” (Buechler 147). What Buechler means by this statement is that Giddens works to address both individual experiences and larger societal patterns and structures with his theory. Giddens writes:

The basic domain of study of the social sciences, according to the theory of structuration, is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of society totality, but social practices ordered across space and time.

Human social activities...are not brought into being by social actors but

continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves *as* actors. (Giddens 2)

In Giddens's view, social reality is actually a set of processes used by individuals to make use of what has been frequently known as "structure" to work towards their personal aims and goals, with the unintended consequence of reproducing those same structures (Buechler 147). The theory of structuration is, in fact, quite similar to theories on the social construction of reality, but the difference here is that Giddens places considerable emphasis on the knowledge that individual social actors have about social structures and social construction, and the ways in which this knowledge is a part of the everyday existence of individuals (Buechler 147).

Lastly, the microphysics of power, as explored and theorized by Michel Foucault, is the final branch of this trilogy of theories through which social movements may be analyzed from a local geographic perspective. In his writings in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Foucault reformulated an understanding of power and authority in significant ways. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault uses the Panopticon to demonstrate the ways in which power is exercised in modern societies; he writes: "...the exercise of power is not added on from the outside, like a rigid, heavy constraint, to the functions it invests, but is so subtly present in them as to increase their efficiency by itself increasing its own points of contact" (Foucault 206). Foucault conceptualizes power at a micro-level: rather than certain people or organizations or states having power and exerting that power over everyone else, power exists all the time, within everyone. Foucault's use of the Panopticon to illustrate this is helpful to understanding this notion of the microphysics of power: in the Panopticon, everyone governs himself or herself, because anyone, at any time, could be watching them. Foucault writes, about power:

...a centralization of knowledge; the play of signs defines the anchorages of power; it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies. (Foucault 217)

Foucault posits that we are shaped by power, that we are always exerting power over others and over ourselves; unlike the larger geographic levels of national and global then, power does not operate just through the state or through “capitalism” but through everyone at an individual level.

Buechler points out that all social movements function to some degree at the local level, at the level of the individual – otherwise movements would not be able to engage individual participants in collective action; however, not all movements “...thematize local structures themselves as the source of grievances, the site of resistance, or the goal of change” (Buechler 149). Buechler points out the way in which structuration processes highlight life politics, which draw on that now-famous slogan “the personal is political”, and that “call for a remoralizing of social life” (Buechler 150). Furthermore, Foucault’s notions of power shed light on another way in which social movements occur at the local, individual level; Foucault’s theory of the microphysics of power makes political action inevitable in many ways. Buechler writes “if power is everywhere then so is resistance,” and there is likely no simpler way of putting it. Local social movements thus involve the politics of everyday life – the politics of identity and of individual actions – while these movements are often thus concerned with gender, race, sexuality, and other identity-based concerns, Buechler also points out that they may focus on more global questions like “ecological survival and nuclear devastation,” but where movement participants take action at an individual level (Buechler 150). Ultimately then, local social movements are those that focus on the impact of individual behaviour in everyday life, and the

ways in which people may work to enact social change by pursuing social action at an individual, personal level.

5.0 Food activism in Toronto and abroad

Food activism has an extended history that began long before it arrived in its current form in Toronto. Warren Belasco discusses a number of historical struggles around food as examples of what he calls a “countercuisine”; these food movements were and are inevitably tied up with a larger social or political struggle. Belasco writes: “It does seem that many food studies thus begin not out of intrinsic interest in the food but in what food can tell us about something else – gender, labour relations, class, ethnic identity, imperialism, or, in my case, capitalist cooptation” (Belasco x). Belasco discusses the trajectories of various social and political movements that focused on food, and highlights the ways in which major corporations appropriated certain notions from these movements while stripping them of all their oppositional politics. Similarly, recently much of the lobbying around food has moved into the mainstream and away from the fringes of society. Perhaps most notably, the shift towards organic fruits and vegetables has been embraced by many and has become extremely popular. Stimulated by the many health concerns related to chemical pesticides, organic food is now championed by millions. DeLind and Bingen write: “U.S. organic agriculture has experienced great changes in the last ten to twenty years. No longer seen as belonging to the counterculture, it has become a visible and viable alternative for mainstream farmers and consumers” (DeLind and Bingen 300). Increasingly, large food producers are farming organic produce, and major supermarket chains are carrying large quantities of these crops; furthermore, stores such as Whole Foods, that carry primarily organic, vegetarian, and health-conscious foods, have become a favourite of the affluent.

Increasing concern about climate change and about the negative effect that human behaviour has on the environment have also led to an increase in popularity for a variety of food initiatives in recent years. A growing number of people are trying to focus their appetites on locally grown food, albeit with a varying degree of commitment to the environmental and social causes behind the food miles movement. Fair trade certified foods are also seemingly becoming more popular and more mainstream, although, as with many things, appearances are often deceiving. For example, the decision by Starbucks to start purchasing fair trade coffee was seen as a major victory for the fair trade movement; it seems, however, that this was much more of a publicity stunt than a genuine commitment to fair trade values, since Starbucks rarely brews their fair trade roast:

While Starbucks has slowly bought more certified Fair Trade coffee, it represents only a very small percentage of their total coffee (about 3.7%). Starbucks rarely offers certified Fair Trade coffee as their coffee of the day, nor has it followed its own policy of brewing Fair Trade coffee on demand. (“Starbucks Fair Trade Campaign Home”)

The situation with Starbucks provides an interesting example of the challenges posed to the fair trade movement, and perhaps to food activism more generally; companies like Starbucks can easily persuade customers that their chains are progressive while still benefiting financially from free trade and other exploitative conditions. Perhaps as a reaction to these sorts of challenges, food activism may now often be turning towards what Sally Miller calls “alternative economics.”

Sally Miller, in her book *Edible Action*, argues that many food security organizations, both in Toronto and elsewhere, are challenging conventional economic notions of how the market works, specifically in regards to food. In particular, Miller challenges “willingness to

pay” theory and the suggestion that the tension between supply and demand reaches a magical equilibrium where everyone gets what they want and need. Miller suggests that rather than being a scientific or mathematical truth, much of economic theory serves as a kind of religion that people believe without needing any real proof; economists themselves search for examples of equilibrium as if on a mystical quest (Miller 60). Influential economist Joseph Schumpeter is quoted by Miller as having written that “it is clear from the outset that markets in real life never do attain equilibrium” (Miller 60).

A number of scholars researching and writing about food issues today challenge capitalism and the way it has come to shape our food options; Raj Patel writes:

Our choices are not entirely our own because, even in a supermarket, the menu is crafted not by our choices, nor by the seasons, nor where we find ourselves, nor by the full range of apples available, nor by the full spectrum of available nutrition and tastes, but by the power of food corporations. (Patel 2)

Patel is not the first to suggest that food, like any other commodity, has come to be controlled by corporate interests rather than by consumer needs or demands. While for decades people have been content to understand hunger and famine as a problem associated with the poorest people of the world, more and more attention is now being paid to the concepts of food security and insecurity and the ways that the food system affect *all* citizens, regardless of wealth. Judy Rebick, in her new book *Transforming Power: From the Personal to the Political*, quotes Debbie Field, the founder and executive director of Toronto’s FoodShare:

“There are three problems in the capitalist food system,” Field explains, “and they’re integrated as a whole: We’ve created a monopoly system where people run out of money and therefore are hungry; we’ve created a food system that is

based on promoting the least healthy food; and we've created an agricultural system that's not sustainable. (Rebick 178)

Debbie Field, as quoted by Rebick, reiterates that the problem of food insecurity as experienced to varying degrees by people around the world is really a problem associated with capitalism – therefore, as Sally Miller writes, alternative economies of food are arguably the only viable solution to hunger and malnutrition.

Although Canada is one of the richest countries in the world, 14.7% of Canadians live in food-insecure homes and 7% of citizens are chronically hungry (“Country Comparisons”; Miller 11). As residents of the largest city in Canada, Toronto citizens have surely seen their share of hunger and food insecurity; this particular city, however, seems to be fighting back against this complicated enemy. There are numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Toronto that focus on food: Second Harvest, Afri-Can Food Basket, Betinho Project, Urban Harvest, FoodShare, Not Far From The Tree, and The Stop Community Food Centre. While certainly there are many others, this project focuses on two of the largest (FoodShare, The Stop) and what is quite possibly the smallest (Not Far From The Tree) of these local food security initiatives.

FoodShare began in 1985 and was started as an initiative by then Mayor of Toronto Art Eggleton. Originally, FoodShare was focused on emergency food distribution, and included a phone hotline for Toronto citizens to call and find out where there was a food bank near them, where they could get a hot meal, and so on (*FoodShare*). As time went on, however, workers both at FoodShare and at other emergency food distribution centres in Toronto observed that the problem of hunger in the city of Toronto was not improving, and that many people were too ashamed or embarrassed to use emergency food services because of the stigma attached to

charity (*FoodShare*). FoodShare then began developing a variety of new programs that focused on alleviating what they saw as problems with the entire food system.

FoodShare spearheads a number of food projects in the city of Toronto including, but not limited to, the Field to Table program that makes fresh produce available to schools at affordable prices, the school salad bar program, a community gardening program, cooking training programs, Good Food Markets around the city and the Good Food Box program. In addition, FoodShare is consistently involved in policy initiatives that aim to increase citizen access to fresh food, particularly fruits and vegetables, through various avenues. FoodShare has also forged many international links, not the least important of which is with Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

The Stop Community Food Centre, another large Toronto food security organization, began as one of the first food banks in Canada, and in 1982 was incorporated as a non-profit organization (*The Stop Community Food Centre*). The Stop's programs extend beyond services that are food-dependent, and include community gardens, community cooking initiatives, a food bank, a perinatal program, food education programs for children, community advocacy, and the newest addition – the Stop's Green Barn.

The Green Barn makes its home in some old TTC (Toronto Transit Commission) Barns in Ward 21, the neighbourhood located around the intersection of St. Clair Avenue and Christie Street in Toronto. The Green Barn houses a "...year-round greenhouse, sheltered garden, bake oven, compost demonstration project, community kitchen and classroom" (*The Stop Community Food Centre*). The Green Barn was designed with the aim of securing the first ever Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification given to a heritage project. The Green Barn also shares space with Artscape Toronto, which provides affordable live-in studio space for area artists.

Not Far From The Tree (NFFTT) is both the youngest, and the smallest, of the food security organizations under study here. NFFTT is a residential fruit-picking program that coordinates the harvesting of fruit that would otherwise go to waste from trees around the city. The fruit trees are mostly from private family yards, but NFFTT has also partnered with some larger sites such as the Spadina Museum, which is home to a number of heritage fruit and vegetable plants. While the produce from Spadina Museum is sold at the Green Barn Farmer's market, the rest of the fruit picked from private property is not sold at all; the property owners are allowed to keep up to one third of the fruit picked from their trees, another third is given to the volunteers who picked the fruit, and the remaining third of the fruit is donated to a variety of community organizations within the neighbourhood that lack access to fresh produce.

While last year NFFTT only harvested fruit from properties in Ward 21, the same neighbourhood that is home to the Stop's Green Barn, this year the project will be expanding to a neighbourhood in East York and possibly one other neighbourhood – potentially Parkdale. In addition, NFFTT has also struck up a partnership with Growing for Green, and is proposing a new community orchard project for a city park (Reinsborough, "Not Far From The Tree").

6.0 Observations: Interviews

6.1 The Stop Community Food Centre

The first interview that was conducted was with Kathryn Scharf, an employee of the Stop Community Food Centre. Scharf has also, in the past, worked for FoodShare for many years; her perspective was thus unique in that she was the only interview participant in this project who has been involved with more than one of the case study organizations.

One of the questions asked to all interview respondents was whether there was any particular crisis that spurred the creation of the organization of which they were a part, and/or

whether there was a specific crisis that prompted them to get involved in that organization.

Scharf had an interesting take on this question, because she appeared to conceive of the food security movement as almost accidental. What is meant here is that she saw the birth of the food security movement as “...just this idea of marrying a number of progressive people’s interests” rather than as a calculated project (Scharf). Perhaps better put, Scharf does not think that food is *necessarily* a political thing, but that it does work well as an avenue into social and political issues. She says: “...food is important to activists, and social justice is important to activists, and they don’t *not* go together, and they can, in fact, produce lots of interesting hybrids. I just don’t think that they’re intrinsically linked” (Scharf).

Furthermore, Scharf expressed some hesitation in calling food security activism a social movement, per se, much as she never understood anti-globalization activism to be a social movement exactly. Scharf sees these “movements” as groupings of people who have always been interested in social and political justice and activism, and who may join up with others around particular causes, but who often disagree when it comes to prioritizing issues. For example, Scharf notes that food activists seem to be clustered around two distinct poles: “...around anti-poverty and around, sort of, environmental food issues and agriculture...we come up against those fault lines whenever we try to integrate them all” (Scharf). Scharf does not seem to believe that there is a unifying food movement but she does, however, mention the possibility of understanding some local initiatives as a social movement; she says, “Okay, but then you could say there’s a local food movement – there does seem to be that growing” (Scharf).

Since Sally Miller’s argument in *Edible Action* suggests that the food security movement is challenging convention and proposing an alternative economics of food, interview participants

were asked what they thought about the idea of taking food, or basic foods, out of the marketplace; this has been one solution posed to the problem of food insecurity by some activists. Scharf remained uncertain about whether such a drastic action would be feasible in Canada, or in any other nation, but did agree that what is necessary is more government intervention in food markets. Furthermore, in answering this question, Scharf re-addressed the question of whether food security activism can be conceived of as a social movement; whereas she previously stated that there was no real unification among food security activists, Scharf now named capitalism as their common opponent:

What's wrong with everything in the food system along the chain – from poverty to industrial agriculture – is capitalism. Now it's hard for us to name that.

Because we can't go around saying...I mean, half of our funding comes from people who maybe would consider that a very communist-sounding perspective.

But that's the big elephant in the room – is capitalism. (Scharf)

Although Scharf does not discuss the various ways that food security activists might challenge capitalism, nor does she discuss whether those activists are in agreement about the best ways to fix capitalism's problems, the suggestion that food activists may actually be working against the same adversary is significant.

When asked about the geographic scope of her work with the Stop, be it global, national, or local, Scharf made comparisons with FoodShare, highlighting that while FoodShare has many international connections, and is engaged with more policy-making, the Stop Community Food Centre is working almost exclusively at the local level. Part of the reason for this, according to Scharf, is that there is much work still to be done at the local level, but also that there are more obstacles to expanding beyond the city of Toronto. Scharf indicated that starting at the local

level is important but that: "...if we actually built a local food movement we would start to threaten, we would start to challenge trade agreements. And there would be problems, I think" (Scharf). Scharf suggests that the Stop's food work is focused on local issues at least partially because of the political roadblocks to moving to a larger geographic focus. Scharf says: "...people will let you operate under the radar when you're doing nothing and making no difference forever, if you start making a difference, all of a sudden people start to notice and they start to care" (Scharf). Certainly the Stop is not "doing nothing" and is, in fact, making a difference in a lot of Torontonians' lives, but Scharf seems to be arguing that they may still be perceived as "making no difference" as long as they stay away from larger attacks on capitalism or on free trade. However, Scharf does indicate that she is perfectly content working at the local level; for her it feels more real and less "abstract" than policy work (Scharf).

Finally, Scharf was asked whether she had encountered any backlash to the work that she's done with the Stop and/or with FoodShare; political backlash can often be indicative of the formation of a countermovement, which tend to form only when a social movement is beginning to really threaten the status quo. The only adverse reactions reported by Scharf was that while many people are becoming more interested in food and environmental issues, there are also people who are sick of hearing about such matters, and who see them as "tiresome and yuppie-driven" (Scharf). Meanwhile, the affluent who were once interested in food issues are also growing tired of the movement: "...yuppies just not feeling it's fashionable, because as we all know from...theories of distinction and so on, people need to feel that they're on the cutting edge and on avant-garde" (Scharf). Scharf thus highlights a problem that has indeed plagued food activism for decades: that there are people who are not interested because they see it as

merely a trend, and then people who were part of that trend who move on before anything has truly been accomplished.

6.2 Not Far From The Tree

Reinsborough, founder and project coordinator of Not Far From The Tree (NFFTT), was the next interview participant for this research project.

Reinsborough indicated that a fruit tree project had been in the works for Toronto in various forms, and through various people and organizations, but that the moment that sparked her to create NFFTT was the Green Barns Project run by the Stop Community Food Centre. In fact, throughout the course of this interview it became quite clear that NFFTT has a much closer relationship with the Stop than with FoodShare, and a close working relationship with the Stop's staff who work through the Green Barns in particular. Reinsborough spoke at great lengths about the massive popularity of her organization, and that she did not expect such interest in her first year of running the organization. Incidentally, Reinsborough recognizes the influence that global economics have had on the recent success of NFFTT:

And even though we started before the current "economic crisis" that I can see that feeding into it as well. It wasn't until the fall when we did our first preserving workshop...since the fall, more people have mentioned to me the connection between "I remember when my grandmother was doing that because they had to" – a lot of people really get that direct need connection.

(Reinsborough, Personal Interview)

Although Reinsborough never really indicated that what spurred the creation of NFFTT was a crisis per se, she did testify to the fact that there seemed to be a perfect moment that coincided

with the creation of NFFTT, and along with the current economic crisis, Reinsborough supposed that it makes sense that the organization has taken off the way that it has.

As previously indicated, all interview subjects were asked how they see the political nature of their work and if they understood it as being part of a social movement or as something else entirely; Reinsborough's answer regarding NFFTT was particularly interesting.

Reinsborough says:

I see it as very political work. I think it has a few shape-shifting qualities where it can also be seen as apolitical and inoffensive. Like, I think it can be harmless. It can be "oh what a nice idea!" and not be – I think it can still hold politics without being confrontational. Which is fairly unique, or a rare thing I suppose.

(Reinsborough, Personal Interview)

Reinsborough perceives the work done by NFFTT as being overtly political, but she has a clear understanding of the different ways that it is understood by others. Reinsborough even highlighted that she may need to start presenting it in more political terms, noting that she was recently turned down for a grant because her project was not an environmental initiative (Reinsborough, Personal Interview). The potential of NFFTT to be understood as apolitical came up a number of times in the course of this interview, and Reinsborough also mused that this may also be why she's seen such a high level of volunteer interest. However, Reinsborough also suggested that in another way NFFTT allows volunteers to engage with political issues that are very large and sometimes daunting – such as climate change – in a really hands-on and personal way.

When asked how she viewed the geographic scope of NFFTT, Reinsborough explained that not only does she see it as being very much rooted at the local level, but furthermore that it

was actually very “neighbourhood based” (Reinsborough, Personal Interview). In 2008, Not Far From The Tree’s first year in operation, Reinsborough and her volunteers were only picking fruit from trees in one neighbourhood – Ward 21 in Toronto; this year there are plans to expand, but still NFFTT will only be working with three or four neighbourhoods. Reinsborough also explained that this very localized approach was not just incidental, there are reasons that she wants to work within such boundaries: “...to keep it bike-able and walk-able. To be building community as we go, so to keep a scale that’s appropriate to that. And also to ensure that the way that we’re operating is responding to the community’s needs and desires” (Reinsborough, Personal Interview). However, due to the fact that NFFTT gained popularity so quickly in its first season, there were nearly always volunteers who were commuting from all over the Greater Toronto Area into Ward 21 to pick fruit. Reinsborough does not see this as ideal for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the environmental impact of the greenhouse gases emitted by the vehicles people were using to get to their picks.

While Reinsborough conceives of Not Far From The Tree as a neighbourhood-based local organization, she did attest to some larger global connections as well. The first of which is the aforementioned issue of climate change: volunteers are able to act in their own city and in their own communities to address a problem that is actually worldwide in scale. Reinsborough also discussed some of the other ways in which she sees the work of Not Far From The Tree as extending beyond the local, at least in the philosophy of the organization:

... it’s sort of this magical moment where you are allowed, you’re given permission to enter into a stranger’s backyard, and meet up with a group of strangers, and then have this amazing experience where you’re all picking together. (Reinsborough, Personal Interview)

Here Reinsborough speaks about the human interaction that volunteers experience when they work with NFFTT; the notion of strangers coming together to work towards a goal they all share is, while in this case isolated at the local level, actually an idea that can easily be extended to the global. Reinsborough continued to say:

...I see it as addressing some of the systemic barriers to food access that happen on a global basis. That there is enough food for everybody in the world, but that the barriers are more political – about distribution, about access, and about property lines as well, about borders. (Reinsborough, Personal Interview)

Reinsborough expressed that she found talking about the global aspects of her organization to be “a bit cheesy,” but while there are emotional issues at stake in this kind of theorizing of NFFTT, the barriers that prevent many people from gaining access to safe, healthy, and culturally appropriate food are very real.

Like the other interview participants, Reinsborough was also asked whether she’d encountered any significant obstacles or whether she’d experienced any kind of backlash to her organization. Reinsborough explained that NFFTT has so far only been working with neighbourhoods that have approached them, and are often being approached by community organizations already established within those neighbourhoods; she thus hasn’t experienced any resistance thus far in expanding her program to other neighbourhoods, but is not entirely convinced that there won’t be any obstacles to continued expansion of the program in coming years. Reinsborough also noted that there have been numerous people concerned about the safety and edibility of the fruit being picked through the program – Reinsborough suggested that there is a large misconception about what edible fruit looks like, and that people’s perceptions as such have been warped by industrially produced fruits and vegetables that have been treated with

a variety of chemicals, genetically engineered, and polished to look appealing and shiny when stacked in large piles at the grocery store.

6.3 FoodShare

The last interview conducted for the purposes of this project was with Susan Butler, the volunteer coordinator for FoodShare in Toronto. Butler was the only interview participant who looked at the interview questions that had been sent to her beforehand, so the interview took on more of a conversational tone – instead of her being asked the questions directly, she kept a copy of the interview checklist with her and we worked our way down through the questions in conversation.

Almost immediately Butler addressed the question of whether food security activism could be considered a social movement: her answer was, without question, a yes. Butler was the only interview participants who said outright that the food work being done in Toronto is definitely a social movement: “...I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t feel like I was making a difference. I mean, all these people that are volunteering...they wouldn’t be here unless they thought it really mattered...So it is a movement” (Butler). While Butler does not necessarily focus on the particular qualifications that social movement theorists might look for in determining whether something can be called a social movement, her unique experience as someone who is involved with FoodShare has led her to have no doubts that urban food activism is part of a larger social movement.

Butler further highlights that FoodShare was started in the 1980s by former Mayor Eggleton because the number of people going hungry in Toronto was staggering at the time – Butler notes that she thinks the birth of FoodShare may have coincided with another economic

crisis, but also admits that she was not particularly involved in the movement at that time, so her memory of that time is less than precise.

When asked about the geographic scope of the work done by FoodShare, Butler again had an answer that differed quite drastically from those provided by the other two organizations' representatives: Butler sees the scope of FoodShare's work as being worldwide. She discussed the various conferences that FoodShare representatives attend around the world, and the organization's collaboration with other cities and organizations around the world. The geographic scope question was not a conceptual one for Butler – rather than discussing how she conceived of the scope of FoodShare's work, Butler could answer immediately that it was global, because of the fact that FoodShare has forged so many international connections.

When asked what kinds of challenges and obstacles FoodShare faces, Butler's answer once again made obvious some of the major differences between FoodShare and the other two case study organizations of the Stop and NFFTT. For FoodShare, according to Butler, the biggest obstacles faced are more often that they are spread too thin – the number of programs that FoodShare spearheads is baffling, and the senior staff members are thus forever working tirelessly, for very little pay and without enough rest. Butler said: "Biggest challenges? Would be the need of the people and the demand – the need of the people for the food, that group, and...the demand of other organizations for us to help them...it's a demand for us, and yet it's something that we can't turn down" (Butler). Butler further noted that a major challenge for FoodShare is always money: "Another challenge is always money. Because we need more money to do more things. We have a large donor base here, and I have no qualms in inviting people and my friends to donate here. Because I know that every dollar is well spent" (Butler). The obstacles for FoodShare, as reported by Butler, seem much more to be the problems of a

larger organization that is working very hard and spread very thinly; Butler did not mention any particular backlash or other opposition.

7.0 Urban food activism: A social movement?

The primary question that this project seeks to answer is whether the various food security organizations in Toronto are acting collectively as a social movement; it would not be particularly useful to analyze the geographic scope of the food security movement if it is not, in fact, a social movement at all. Food security work in Toronto was analyzed primarily using Diani's aforementioned synthesized definition of social movements; in this regard the conclusion is that urban food activism in Toronto is indeed a social movement by definition. The following will explain and justify why this is indeed the case.

Firstly, Diani highlights that social movements must be made up of "networks of informal interaction" (Diani 160). Even before conducting interviews with representatives from the three case study organizations of the Stop, FoodShare, and Not Far From The Tree it was apparent that these Toronto organizations, in addition to many other food organizations, cooperate and work together quite a bit in order to achieve various goals. Interview participants were also asked about the degree of collaboration with other organizations that they were involved in, and all interview participants acknowledged that Toronto food security organizations work together quite a bit. Scharf, from the Stop, said:

...we collaborate throughout all the time, I mean, we know each other really well... We'll write letters of support for each other. Through the animators project we have like actual staff – a staff person on the animators team which is centred at FoodShare....So we collaborate a lot. (Scharf)

While Scharf acknowledged that occasionally there is overlap in the work done by various organizations that needs to be negotiated – such as an occasion where more than one Toronto organization may be applying for the same grant – in general they have a very friendly relationship and work together a lot in order to achieve goals that are important to all food security organizations. Susan Butler expanded on this as well:

We collaborate with other food security organizations, the main one being the Stop. And there are other – I wouldn't call them food security organizations – but there are other organizations that are part of “the movement.” So, for example, Real Food for Real Kids, which is a commercial venture, also has a not-for-profit arm, and it's an educational arm. (Butler)

Susan Butler highlights the fact that in addition to working with other non-governmental, non-profit food security organizations, that FoodShare also collaborates with a number of other groups who have similar values and objectives; she furthermore explicitly includes the work of these groups as being part of “the movement”. Lastly, Not Far From The Tree has a very close relationship with the Stop, more so than with FoodShare, and works a lot alongside the Stop's Green Barn project. There is no question that the collaborative efforts of food security organizations here in Toronto can be referred to by Diani's characterization of “networks of informal interaction”.

Diani's second point in defining social movements is that those involved in a movement will have “shared beliefs and solidarity” (Diani 160); in that these organizations are all committed to working towards better food security for people in Toronto and elsewhere, they certainly do have shared beliefs and solidarity in this respect. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations defines food security as such: “Food security exists when all

people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (*Food And Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*). The concept of food security also often stresses the importance of agency, dignity and self-respect – qualities that are generally lacking when emergency food aid is the proposed solution to hunger and food insecurity (*Ryerson Centre for Studies in Food Security*). The Stop and FoodShare long ago recognized that emergency food distribution is not an appropriate solution to the problem of food insecurity, and NFFTT was formed not only with an understanding of this fact, but also with the knowledge that many urban citizens – including those who are affluent – do not necessarily have access to fresh produce, or fresh, locally grown fruit in particular. In addition to a wide variety of specifically food-related concerns that are shared and valued by the three case study organizations, all of these food security organizations also place great importance on the potential for community building that can be negotiated through food. Scharf, from the Stop mentioned an important aspect of their work is, “Community development around food, bringing people together around food...” and Reinsborough from Not Far From The Tree echoed this sentiment in saying: “...I do see the community building piece as a huge part of this” (Scharf; Reinsborough, Personal Interview). Food security organizations in Toronto thus not only exhibit “shared beliefs and solidarity” in how they conceptualize food security and how to achieve it, but they also all share a commitment to building communities and strengthening neighbourhoods.

Diani further argues that social movements must take “collective action on conflictual issues,” and the way in which Toronto food security organizations fulfill this qualification is particularly evident in the ways that they challenge the capitalist economics that currently rule the food system. The focus of the food movement generally on alleviating some of the problems

associated with the capitalist production and distribution of food have already been discussed in this paper, and many of these opinions were reiterated by interview participants from the case study organizations. Scharf, from the Stop Community Food Centre, has already been quoted in this paper as suggesting that the major problem with the food industry is capitalism itself, and that an anti-capitalist focus is: "...what ties this mandate, these broad issues together..." (Scharf, see page 28). Scharf goes on to discuss the ways in which the philosophy of the Stop, and the particular aspects of the capitalist food system that they take issue with, challenge things like trade agreements that are particularly valuable to capitalists and corporations. Reinsborough, from NFFTT, also highlights particular aspects of capitalism that she and her organization take issue with, most notably mentioning the barrier of private property (Reinsborough, Personal Interview, see page 33). Reinsborough mentioned the barrier of private property more than once in the course of her interview, and given the theorizing of private property by Karl Marx as the inevitable result of alienated labour, it is perhaps safe to say that working against private property necessarily is historically rooted in anti-capitalist activism (Tucker 80). Toronto food security organizations work together – through various forms of collaboration – against the “conflictual issue” of the capitalist food system.

The last defining characteristic of social movements, as highlighted by Diani, is that movements include “action which displays largely outside the institutional sphere and the routine procedures of social life” (Diani 160). Certainly FoodShare could be perceived as operating more within the institutional spheres of society, in that they deal much more frequently with governments and with particular policy-making agendas; however, FoodShare’s role in this regard is primarily to advocate on behalf of those working for food security in Toronto, and can thus still be considered to be activism as part of a social movement. The actions taken by the

Stop and Not Far From The Tree certainly exist much more outside of the “institutional procedures” of society. Not Far From The Tree takes action against the traditional and arbitrary boundaries we’ve put up between people, around property, and between people and the food that they need to live healthy, happy lives. NFFTT also challenges the standard ways of distributing food, and their work highlights many people’s willingness to share the fresh fruit that only they have had access to in the past. FoodShare also works to change the way that people access fresh food – the Good Food Box program gives people the opportunity to obtain fresh fruits and vegetables from a source other than a large supermarket. Anybody can sign up for a Good Food Box and receive produce that is often primarily locally grown and organic, that is reasonably priced, that has no stigma attached to it the way some charity food operations do, and that is packed by volunteers, many of whom are recovering from financial or mental health difficulties and to whom the program provides an invaluable social and learning experience (Butler). The Stop Community Food Centre has reclaimed land that once belonged to abandoned TTC barns and has turned the site into a place where community members can shop directly from local farmers at the market, learn to cook affordable, healthy meals for their families, learn about new and more environmentally sound ways to both grow and dispose of food, and can interact with their neighbours. All three of these organizations are involved as well in advocacy for food-related projects – such as the community orchard project for which NFFTT has been fighting for city park space. These organizations all work within traditional institutional avenues as well as outside of them, but they are always working as activists who are fighting for better food security in Toronto.

Under Diani’s definition of a social movement, Toronto food security activism is undoubtedly a true movement; urban food activism’s status as a social movement is corroborated

as well by the presence of a possible countermovement, albeit one that is very subtle. All interview participants were asked whether they had encountered any opposition to the work they were doing, and while they all saw their work as relatively unopposed, they all mentioned one particular quality of resistance that they had encountered. To some degree, all of the interview participants reported a kind of reaction to their work – be it in the press or just by people they had talked to – that trivialized the work of the food security movement. Scharf from the Stop highlighted this kind of backlash in her interview: “Well the backlash may just be fatigue, right? People who are tired of yuppie kind of domination of the food movement and are just like “oh, enough already”. And I’ll show you this article...this just sounded so bang on to me: “Spoiled: Organic and Local is so 2008”” (Scharf). Scharf discusses the way in which the food movement is sometimes perceived and talked about as if it is merely a trend, a fashionable phase that surely the affluent will quickly outgrow. Reinsborough, from NFFTT, noticed that sometimes the work of her organization is perceived as “apolitical and inoffensive” and that people see it as simply a nice fruit-picking activity rather than as part of a social movement (Reinsborough, Personal Interview). Although neither respondent categorized these responses to their work as being part of a countermovement, opposition to social movements has often taken a similar form. Jean Goddu studied the media coverage of the women’s movement in Canada and noticed that frequently the media drew attention away from the political aspects of the movement by focusing on personal details of the activists. Rather than focusing on the speeches and political discussions by feminist leaders: ““...an emphasis on personality could be seen in the media’s reliance on details about the leader...: one president has pets, another reads mystery books, another’s favourite film is *Thelma and Louise*” (Goddu). The Canadian media routinely

trivialized the work of feminist organizations by focusing attention away from the political goals of the movement and onto the personal lives of the women involved.

Similarly, the Civil Rights Movement also encountered a media that sought to trivialize their activism; a notable case involves the coverage of the Rosa Parks bus incident. Most media reports of Parks's refusal to sit at the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955 suggested that Parks's behaviour was completely unplanned, when in reality, it was just the opposite:

This account is as mistaken as it is popular. Mrs. Parks was deeply rooted in the black protest tradition. Indeed, in the 1940s Mrs. Parks had refused several times to comply with segregation rules on the buses. In the early 1940s Mrs. Parks was ejected from a bus for failing to comply....In Mrs. Parks's words, "My resistance to being mistreated on the buses and anywhere else was just a regular thing with me and not just that day". (Morris 51)

The media's continuous portrayal of Mrs. Parks as merely a "quiet, dignified older lady" (Morris 51) rather than as a woman who had been extremely involved with movement organization and planning since some of the earliest days of black protesting and organizing in the American South serves to diminish the power of the civil rights movement itself. By suggesting that Parks's rebellion that day was a spur of the moment decision on her part, the media quietly suggest that there is no real threat to white supremacy because there is no concrete organizing by black activists occurring. While perhaps the media have not taken up an oppositional position quite as strong as this to the food security movement in Toronto, the perception by activists involved with the case study organizations that people perceive of their work as merely trendy or as apolitical should not be totally disregarded either. Countermovement organizing, as discussed

earlier, can also be an indication that a social movement exists; the presence of a subtle opposition, in addition to the various characteristics of the food movement outlined above, solidify the fact that food security activism in Toronto is indeed a true social movement.

8.0 Food security movement: Theoretical conclusions

The second aim of this research project was to determine whether it is a global, national, or local theoretical approach that is the most appropriate lens through which to examine the food security movement in Toronto. While all three geographic levels of theory are relevant in some way to the food security movement, it is the global level, and world system theory, that is the most appropriate theoretical tool with which to understand and analyze this particular movement. The national level and Habermas's theory of colonization dynamics is both not broad enough and not narrow enough; the attention paid to the welfare state and national structures excludes both the international connections forged by the food movement and the ways in which this food movement is about local interactions between individuals. Determining the theoretical model best suited to the food movement is thus a decision between theories at the global and the local level.

While the conclusion has been that the global theoretical model of world system theory is best for examining the food movement in Toronto, local structures are also a very useful lens as well. The food movement certainly does thematize local structures to a certain degree, and since it is a movement about food, activism necessarily occurs at the level of the individual. Individual actors make decisions about the type of food they buy, and in the context of the food movement this takes on a particularly political tone; choosing to buy local, or organic, or from a farmer's market, or participate in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), or urban gardening, are all ways in which individual actors act on larger political goals through small local actions.

However, the food security movement in Toronto does, to a certain degree, shy away from theorizing their work at the individual level. People have historically thought about food as something for which individuals are responsible – individuals can “vote with their dollar” and choose one product over another in the store (Miller 50). Theorizing food at the individual level becomes problematic, however, when people are hungry or food insecure – those who have no access to healthy, affordable food are often blamed for their own hunger. Relying on an individually-based understanding of food issues often leads to band-aid solutions such as food banks, that have been shown not to actually fix the problem of hunger (Scharf). Food security organizations in Toronto have thus been working to conceive of food issues as something to be tackled as a community, not by individuals. Interview respondents who were asked about the individual versus the collective all expressed that there were too many problems associated with working at the level of the individual, and that conceiving of food as a collective issue worked much better for a variety of reasons. This is perhaps the main reason why a local theoretical model is not the best fit for analyzing the food security movement, but it is also true that local models do not pay enough attention to the global economic system that Toronto food security organizations are all challenging.

The primary reason that the global theoretical model of world system theory was deemed the most appropriate model for examining the food security movement in Toronto is that all these organizations, to some degree, expressed the conviction that they are acting in opposition to a food system that is distinctly capitalist in nature. As has already been discussed, world system theory suggests that there is a global economic system that transcends national boundaries, and many sociological theorists are now arguing that in contemporary society, where there is a surfeit of transnational corporations, it is no longer useful to analyze social movements

using theories that are any narrower than the global in geographic scope. When activists involved with the food security movement in Toronto talk about their work in relation to capitalism, and when they mention the ways in which their work philosophically challenges things like trade agreements, a global theoretical approach seems to be the only appropriate way of looking at this movement. Furthermore, although this particular project examined only Toronto organizations, there are certainly similar organizations sprouting up all around the world, some of which even interact directly with organizations here in Toronto. Therefore, although two of the case study organizations – Not Far From The Tree and the Stop Community Food Centre – both suggested that their work focuses directly on local Toronto food security issues, they are inevitably situated in a larger movement that is challenging the bigger enemy of capitalism and global hunger and food insecurity. World system theory is thus the most appropriate theoretical model through which to examine the food security movement, both in Toronto and elsewhere in the world.

9.0 Conclusion

This research project set out to examine a potential new kind of social movement in urban food activism within Toronto, to determine whether it was indeed a social movement, and if so, what theoretical model would be the most appropriate to analyze said movement. A discussion of social movement definitions, of three geographic levels of social movement theory, of food security activism in Toronto and elsewhere combined with the original research data obtained by interviewing representatives from the Stop Community Food Centre, Not Far From The Tree, and FoodShare all contributed to an understanding of urban food activism in Toronto. While it was clear at the outset that all of these food security organizations under study were aiming to tackle social and political issues that extended beyond food, it was not entirely clear at

first if these organizations could be conceived of as collectively forming a social movement. Through this examination of sociological definitions of social movements as well as theories of social movements at the global, national, and local level, it became clear that not only can urban food activism in Toronto be conceived of as a social movement, but that this movement is global in scope, tackling capitalism and the capitalist food system in particular across national borders and boundaries.

This project sought to theorize and understand the food security movement for both academic and activist purposes. Scholarly research on new forms of social movements contributes both to sociological theory and to a greater understanding of social movements and the various forms that they may take. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier and outlined by Croteau, Hoynes, and Ryan, academic research on social movements also can be used by social movement actors themselves to better understand movement dynamics and to help formulate success strategies; social movement theorizing can, thus, also be considered a form of activism. Ultimately, while this research project has made significant conclusions, more research is needed – both on social movements generally and on the food security movement specifically. The original research undertaken by this project was noticeably small – only a few social movement actors were interviewed, and surely a larger sample may lead to very different conclusions. The food security movement seems to be continuously growing and changing, and is also taking many different forms in different places around the world. Success stories like the case of Belo Horizonte, Brazil are reassuring, but with growing numbers of people experiencing hunger, poverty, and food insecurity worldwide, a movement that fights for more universal access to healthy food is more important than ever.

Works Cited

- Belasco, Warren. *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry*. 2nd ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007.
- Berg, Bruce L.. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. 4th ed.. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2001.
- Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. “The Social Construction of Reality.” *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. Calhoun, Craig, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk, eds.. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2002. 42-50.
- Buechler, Steven M.. *Social Movements in Advanced Capitalism: The Political Economy and Cultural Construction of Social Activism*. Mankato, Minnesota: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Butler, Susan. Personal Interview. 7 April 2009.
- “Country Comparisons – GDP – per capita (PPP).” *Central Intelligence Agency: The World Factbook*. 23 April 2009. 30 April 2009. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html>>.
- Croteau, David, William Hoynes, and Charlotte Ryan, eds.. *Rhyming Hope and History: Activists, Academics, and Social Movement Scholarship*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- DeLind, Laura B. and Jim Bingen. “Be Careful What You Wish For: Democratic Challenges and Political Opportunities for the Michigan Organic Community.” *Remaking the North American Food System: Strategies for Sustainability*. Eds. C. Clare Hinrichs and Thomas A. Lyson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. 298-314.

Diani, Mario. "The Concept of Social Movement." *Readings in Contemporary Political Sociology*. Kate Nash, ed.. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 2000.

Flick, Uwe. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1998.

Food And Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2009. FAO. 25 April 2009.
<<http://www.fao.org/>>.

FoodShare: Field to Table. FoodShare. 10 November 2008.
<<http://www.foodshare.net/index.htm>>.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline & Punish and The Birth of the Prison*. Alan Sheridan, trans.. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

Freeman, Jo. "On the Origins of Social Movements." *Waves of Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties*. Freeman, Jo and Victoria Johnson, eds.. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999. 7-24.

Giddens, Anthony. *The Constituion of Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986.

Goddu, Jean. "'Powerless, Public-Spirited Women,' 'Angry Feminists,' and 'The Muffin Lobby': Newspaper and Magazine Coverage of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, and REAL Women of Canada." *Canadian Journal of Communication*. 24.1 (1999). Online.
<<http://www.cjconline.ca/index.php/journal/article/viewArticle/1084/990>>.

Goode, Luke. *Jürgen Habermas: Democracy and the Public Sphere*. London: Pluto Press, 2005.

Knox, Paul L.. "World cities in a world-system." *World Cities in a World System*. Knox, Paul L. and Peter J. Taylor, eds.. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 3-20.

- Lappé, Frances Moore. "The City that Ended Hunger." *Yes! Magazine*. Spring 2009. 1 April 2009. <<http://www.yesmagazine.org/article.asp?ID=3330>>.
- Melucci, Alberto. *Challenging Codes: Collective action in the information age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Meyer, David S. and Suzanne Staggenborg. "Movements, Countermovements, and the Structure of Political Opportunity." *The American Journal of Sociology*, 101.6 (1998): 1628-1660.
- Miller, Sally. *Edible Action: Food Activism & Alternative Economics*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2008.
- Morris, Aldon. *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*. New York: The Free Press, 1984.
- Patel, Raj. *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World's Food System*. Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 2007.
- Rebick, Judy. *Transforming Power: From the Personal to the Political*. Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2009.
- Reinsborough, Laura. "Not Far From The Tree." *Not Far From The Tree*. 5 April 2008. 12 June 2008. <http://www.notfarfromthetree.org/?page_id=2>.
- Reinsborough, Laura. Personal Interview. 3 April 2009.
- Rocha, Cecilia. "Urban Food Security Policy: The Case of Belo Horizonte, Brazil." *Journal for the Study of Food and Society*, 5.1 (2001): 36-47.
- Ryerson Centre for Studies in Food Security. 2009. Ryerson University. 15 April 2009. <<http://www.ryerson.ca/foodsecurity/>>.
- Scharf, Kathryn. Personal Interview. 2 April 2009.
- Sitton, John. *Habermas and Contemporary Society*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Smith, Jackie and Joe Bandy, eds.. *Coalitions Across Borders: Transnational Protest and the Neoliberal Order*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005.

“Starbucks Fair Trade Campaign Home.” *Organic Consumers Association: Campaigning for Health, Justice, Sustainability, Peace, and Democracy*. 9 September 2007. 15 April 2009. <<http://www.organicconsumers.org/starbucks/index.cfm>>.

Stewart, Charles J. and William B. Cash, Jr, eds.. *Interviewing: Principles and Practices*. 9th ed.. Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2000.

The Stop Community Food Centre. 2004. The Stop Community Food Centre. 15 November 2008. <<http://www.thestop.org/>>.

Tucker, Robert C., ed.. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. 2nd ed.. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1978.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*. New York: Academic Press, 1976.

Wiles, Janine L., Mark W. Rosenberg, and Robin A. Kearns. “Narrative Analysis as a Strategy for Understanding Interview Talk in Geographic Research.” *Area*, 37.1 (2005): 89-99.

Appendix I : Interview Checklist

1. What are the main goals of your organization, and how do you strive to achieve those goals?
2. What makes the work that you do different from organizations that rely solely on emergency food aid/distribution?
3. Was there any particular crisis that you think spurred the creation of this organization, or was there one that prompted you to become involved?
4. To what degree does your organization collaborate with other food security organizations in Toronto?
5. How political do you understand the nature of your work to be? Do you consider your organization to be a part of a social movement, or do you see the work being done by this organization as something else entirely?
6. Food issues have seen an increase in media coverage in the last few years, and the sense of urgency for many of these issues seems to be increasing with our current recession. Has this growing attention to food security issues changed anything about the way your organization operates? Have you seen any increases or decreases in volunteer participation with your organization?
7. Some people have proposed taking food, or at least basic foods, out of the marketplace entirely, so that people may have access to nutritious food regardless of income. Does your organization take a particular stance on this proposition? Do you see this option as being a real possibility for Canada?
8. Food security issues are a concern worldwide. As a Toronto organization, how do you see the geographic scope of your work? Is the focus of your work more heavily on local, national, or global issues, or do you see this work as somehow lying outside of these geographic distinctions?
9. What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces? Have you seen any kind of backlash against the work you're doing?